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Research article

Syntactic features of Russian speech of two generations of bilinguals and monolinguals: a complex sentence

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Abstract. The study is devoted to the syntactic characteristics of the Russian speech at the level of a complex sentence of two generations of Russian-German bilinguals: the speakers of inherited Russian, aged 10–15, who were born in Germany or came to Germany at an early age, and their parents, aged 35–50, who moved to Germany in 1990–2010, and the Russian monolinguals of the same age, living in Russia. The relevance of the study is due to the importance of exploring complex sentences in oral speech, as well as the need to analyze the syntactic level of Russian speech of the inherited language speakers. The aim of the study is to analyze the deviations in using complex sentences in the stories of two generations of Russian-German bilinguals and to compare them with similar deviations in the stories of Russian monolinguals. Research material: transcripts of story recordings based on pictures from the book “Frog, where are you?” by M. Mayer. Linguistic observation, descriptive, statistical and comparative methods were applied. The average share of deviations from syntactic norms in the informants' stories was revealed, the violations were ranked according to their structural types. The most typical deviations, connected with the organization of a complex sentence parts, the use of connective and correlative words, were established. It is noted, that the speech of children has much more deviations from syntactic norms, than the speech of their parents. This fact is explained by a higher level of education of parents. In the speech of bilinguals, more deviations from syntactic norms were revealed than in the speech of monolinguals, which is caused by the different status of the Russian language in Germany and Russia. The conclusion is made about the perspective of the structural approach to the analysis of the syntactic features of the oral speech of different categories of Russian native speakers at the level of a complex sentence.

Keywords: experimental studies, Russian language, deviations from the norms, bilingualism, Germany, Russian-German bilinguals, Russian monolinguals, intergenerational changes

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Introduction

Complex sentences are communicative and informative units of the Russian language, expressing the idea more precisely, arguing one's point of view, justifying it. They are mostly used in written speech, and simple sentences and incomplete constructions are more common in oral speech. However, complex sentences are also used in oral speech, both dialogical and monological.

Complex sentences are the most important means of expressing conditionality, opposition, comparison, simultaneity, sequence and other syntactic relations. The ability to construct a complex sentence (especially when creating a narrative) is one of the main indicators of speaking proficiency. Therefore it is important to experimentally study the use of complex sentences in Russian oral speech in different generations of informants, both bilinguals and monolinguals. The need for such research makes this article relevant.

The widespread belief that complex sentences are not characteristic of spoken language leads to the fact that they are rarely considered in experimental research. Thus, a number of studies have been conducted abroad on the grammatical aspect of Russian oral speech of bilinguals, but they mainly address the categories of noun and verb: gender (Polinsky, 2008a; Laleko, 2018; Lemmerth, Hopp, 2019), case system (Janssen, 2016), aspect (Anstatt, 2008; Polinsky, 2008b; Laleko, 2011, 2015; Mikhailova, 2011). At the level of the simple sentence, word order in the stories of bilinguals and monolinguals is investigated (Laleko, Dubinina, 2018). At the same time, the peculiarities of complex sentences in the stories of bilinguals are not considered in the works of foreign researchers.

However, studies of the use of complex sentences in Russian oral speech have been and are being conducted in Russia. The results are presented in works devoted to urban speech (Erofeeva, 2009; Sirotinina, 2009; Korotaev, 2016), children's speech (Gvozdev, 2007; Ceytlin, 2009; Eliseeva, 2015), speech of Russian (Arefieva, 1998; Sergeev, 2010, etc.) and non-Russian students (Tsarikaeva, 2015; Shkhatseva, 2016; Chebodaeva, 2017; Ceytlin, Kruglyakova, 2019; Tskhovrebov, 2020 etc.). Although they do not address the syntactic features of the speech of Russian-German bilinguals, the research approaches, methods and patterns of analysis presented formed the basis for the present study.

Thus, the experimental study of the peculiarities of using a complex sentence in the speech of two generations of Russian-German bilinguals and Russian monolinguals is not only relevant, but also has scientific novelty.

The aim of the present study is to analyze the deviations in using complex sentences in the stories of two generations of Russian-German bilinguals living in Germany and to compare them with similar phenomena in the stories of Russian monolinguals living in Russia.

Materials and methods

The research methods include: a) linguistic observation – the contexts of complex sentences in transcripts of picture narratives of native Russian speakers (bilingual and monolingual) are analysed, deviations are qualified; b) descriptive method – the deviations are consistently described and systematized; c) statistical method – the share of these deviations in each transcript and the average value (in %) in each group of informants is established; d) comparative method – deviations in constructing complex sentences in four groups of informants on the whole and by each type of deviation were compared and interpreted.

The research material was the speech transcripts of 48 bilinguals living in Germany (22 adults and 26 children) and 42 monolinguals living in Russia (19 adults and 23 children). These were transcripts of oral stories based on pictures from M. Mayer's book "Frog, Where Are You?".¹ Each group of informants was assigned an index: bilingual parents (BP), bilingual children (BC), monolingual parents (MP), monolingual children (MC). The number going with the index, e.g., BC-14, indicates the number of the family in the order of their entries. If stories of both parents or children were recorded, this was also reflected in the index, for example: (BC-16-2).

The objects of the study were the syntactic features of the speech of these groups of informants at the level of the complex sentence. These included deviations from Russian literary norms, with the specifics of oral speech taken into account: the analysis focused on the use of syndetic sentences (complex and compound), asyndetic sentences were not considered, since it is impossible to identify them in the transcripts of oral speech. At the same time, deviations from syntactic norms included cases of conjunctive words omission, as well as incomplete sentences characteristic of oral spontaneous speech (elliptical constructions), but inappropriate in the narrative. The structures of complex sentences were defined in the transcripts with the help of pauses, conjunctions, and union words.

In all the examples in the article, the original structure of the oral text fragments, sentences and words was preserved. The peculiarities of complex sentences were grouped according to the following structural types: 1) deviations in organization of complex sentence parts; 2) deviations from norms in using conjunctions and conjunctive words; 3) deviations in using correlative words.

¹ Mayer, M. (1969). *Frog, where are you?* New York: Penguin Young Readers Group.

In the analysis, the proportion of deviations from syntactic norms in the transcript of each informant was calculated (the number of complex sentences was taken as 100%), then the average value for each category was calculated.

Results

Deviations in the construction of a complex sentence were noted in the stories of all four groups of informants. At the same time, the stories of bilinguals contained more deviations in the construction of a complex sentence, than in the stories of monolinguals, and in the stories of children – more deviations than in the stories of adults. The main factors contributing to these differences are the volume of communication in Russian (the volume of the input) and the level of education of the informants.

The authors constructed a structural typology of deviations in using a complex sentence, including deviations in organizing the parts of a complex sentence, the use of conjunctions and conjunctive words, the use of correlative words. In the parents' stories, deviations in the use of correlative words are most common, and in the children's stories – deviations in the organization of the parts of a complex sentence.

Deviations in the organization of the parts of a complex sentence include the use of syntactically incomplete parts of a complex sentence, omission of the main part of a complex sentence, deviations in the arrangement and construction of subordinate clauses. Deviations in using conjunctions and conjunctive words include their replacement and overuse, omission of conjunctive words, replacement of the case form of a conjunctive word. Deviations in using correlative words include their substitutions, overuse and omissions, replacement of the case form of a correlative word.

In the stories of all groups of informants, especially bilingual children, deviations in constructing a complex sentence with attributive (with the conjunctive word *which*), explanatory, modifying clauses (time, purpose, condition, reason) are noted.

Similar deviations from syntactic norms in the stories of all groups of informants at the level of a complex sentence are manifested in the substitution of conjunctions and conjunctive words, in their excessive use, in the construction and arrangement of subordinate clauses. Only bilinguals make mistakes in using verb tenses in a complex sentence (verbs in different clauses do not correlate to one another according to tense and aspect), double the subject or the object in a complex sentence (often it is the personal pronoun *he*), confuse coordinate and subordinate clauses.

Discussion

The average values of deviations in the construction of a complex sentence in the four groups of informants are presented in Table 1.

Complex sentences, corresponding and not corresponding to the norms of literary language, in the stories of informants, %

Informants	Complex sentences, corresponding to the norms of literary language	Complex sentences, not corresponding to the norms of literary language
Bilingual parents	93.90	6.10
Bilingual children	81.84	18.16
Monolingual parents	96.71	3.29
Monolingual children	93.19	6.81

The table shows that in the stories of bilinguals there were more deviations in constructing a complex sentence than in the stories of monolinguals (in the stories of parents 1.8 times more, in the stories of children 2.7 times more). This allows us to say that the Russian educational system and the Russian language environment have a positive impact on the speech of Russian speakers in Russia, while the German language environment and the lack of systematic education in Russian contribute to linguistic changes in the speech of bilinguals. In addition, in the stories of adults there are fewer deviations than in the stories of children (3 times for bilinguals, 2 times for monolinguals), which can be explained by their higher level of education (according to the questionnaires and interviews almost all adult informants have a higher education).

The analysis of the transcripts identified the most typical deviations in constructing complex sentences in the stories of the four groups of informants. Let us consider them according to the structural types we have established.

Deviations in the organization of the complex sentence parts

The use of syntactically incomplete parts of a complex sentence. In the stories of monolingual children, the use of syntactically incomplete parts of a complex sentence is found: *they / they the name / which they gave to the frog / they // (BC-13); with various bees / which worked near their hive // (BC-16-2)*. Structurally incomplete sentence parts are also found in the stories of monolingual parents: *the dog / having dropped the hive / and the ferret came out of the mink // (MP-10-1)*. Each of these examples have one or both main parts of a complex sentence missing.

The omission of the main part of a complex sentence. There are examples in the stories of bilinguals where the main part of a complex sentence is missing: *If you look closely / there was a big green frog sitting there // (BP-5)* (instead of *If you look closely / you can see / that there was a big green frog sitting there*). Such deviations in construction of a complex sentence in some cases lead to violations of the statement logic: *Once they went to sleep / and quietly slept / the frog was smarter / than they thought // (BC-16-2)*. Violations of the logic also occur in the complex sentence: *The boy Petya / was sitting in his room / watching the frog / and he also has a faithful friend - a dog // (MC-13-1)*.

Deviations in the location of the subordinate clause. In the stories of monolingual parents there are deviations in the location of the subordinate clause in a complex sentence with the conjunctive word *which*: *Vasya tried to make / Zhulka not to make noise / which was flopping with its paws and tail on the water // (MP-2)*. This violation is also noted in the stories of bilingual parents: *which frog he caught in the street / brought it home from the street // (MP-16)*.

Deviations in the construction of subordinate clause. Cases of deviations in the construction of the subordinate clause were noted in the stories of bilingual children. In the sentence *in this utensil they were admiring the frog / who was very interestingly watching it // (BC-16-2)* the deviation in the construction of the subordinate clause violates the meaning of the statement: it is not clear who was watching whom.

In the example below, the norms for constructing subordinate clauses of purpose with the conjunction *in order to*: *Then he swam across one lake and / and told the dog / in order to you need to be quiet (BC-13)* are violated. Bilingual children do not take into account that the Russian language does not use the conjunction *in order to + you need*. In the sentence the subjects of the events in the parts are different, so in the subordinate clause the verb in the past tense is used (Formanovskaya, 1989: 151). The correct variant is: *I told the dog to be quiet*.

Deviations in the use of conjunctions and conjunctive words

Substitutions of conjunctions or conjunctive words. In the stories of bilingual children there are substitutions of the conjunction *when (while)* with the conjunction *as*: *as he lies in bed / on it lies his doggie // (BC-6)*; *as he looks over there / where the frog was / and noticed / that it is gone // (BC-12)*. Perhaps they are caused by the fact that in the German language the temporal conjunction *als*, an analogue of the conjunction *when (while)*, is sometimes used to mean *as*.²

In one example, the conjunction *when* was used to form a subordinate clause of purpose: *but then / when the hive fell down / he had to quickly run away to the water (BC-4)*. The substitution indicates the informant's difficulty in expressing the reason in the subordinate clause preceding the main clause.

Excessive use of conjunctions and conjunctive words (repetition and insertion of unnecessary means of connection). In the stories of all four groups of informants there are cases of repetition of conjunctions, for example: *then the boy and the dog / went to look in the hollow tree / no / on the trunk of the empty tree / no / on the empty tree trunk / and the dog looked behind the trunk and saw two*

² Lein, K., Maltseva, D.G., Zuev, A.N., Minina, N.M., Dobrovolskii, D.O., Kuzavlev, V.E., Tsvilling, M.Ya., Prigoniker, I.B., Zorina, T.P., Pankin, A.V., Lerman, M.L., Liperovskaya, N.A., & Basova, N.P. (2006). *Big German-Russian dictionary. Grosswörterbuch deutsch-russisch: About 95 000 words and 200 000 word combinations* (p. 53) (13th ed.). Moscow: Russkij Yazyk Media.

*frogs / **and** the boy saw the children of these frogs / **and** took one of them with him / **and** waved goodbye to the other frogs // (BP-2); the dog was looking in the hive / and the boy in the hollow tree / and the mole looked in the hole (BC-3).* In the first sentence there is a tautological use of the conjunction, which is also typical for Russian school students (Sergeev, 2010: 79), in the second – there is a combination of the same closed-type structures with the use of conjunction *and*. The conjunction *and*, which introduces a comparative-connective meaning into the sentence, makes up the closed-type structures. Tautology does not comply with the rules of constructing this type of complex sentences and is considered a deviation (Ceytlin, 2009).

In the story of an adult monolingual there is a case of tautology of the conjunctive word *that*: *But he was noticed / or heard / by a small marmot / or a mouse / that lived in the hole / into that Sergei was screaming //; when Sergei realized / that it was not a frog / he went to look further // (MP-7-1).*

Extra conjunctions are found in the stories of all groups of informants, but more often in the stories of monolingual children: *The next day / in the morning / Maxim and Bobik were very much surprised / **that** / **that** did the frog manage to slip away / (MC-9-1); And at that time the frog / which they had / it ran away / while **that** Maxim and Fyodor / Maxim's dog was sleeping (MC-11); he thought / **that** whether there was a frog / and shouted // (MC-12); one evening / when they had had a look at Jumpy / **and** the boy went to bed // (BP-18).*

Under the influence of complex sentences with subordinate clause of condition and the complex conjunction *if... then...*, the second part of this conjunction is used in complex sentences with a subordinate clause of time: *When they went to bed / then the frog ran out of the can / (MC-10-2); while the boy was shouting to the frog in the mink / then the dog tried to get the hive / (MC-10-2).*

There is one case of excessive use of the conjunction *therefore* in a complex sentence where there is no causal connection between its parts: *he was tired / went to bed / but the frog escaped from the glass / therefore the boy / therefore the boy with / woke up // (BC-13).* Perhaps the conjunction *therefore* is used instead of the similar-sounding adverb *then*, denoting a sequence of actions.

An interesting example with the omission of the conjunction *while* in the subordinate clause and with its transfer to the main sentence is noted in the story of an adult monolingual: *the boy Vasya and the dog nika went to bed / while the frog escaped // (MP-2).* In this sentence the correlation of the verb aspects is also violated.

Conjunctive word omissions. Conjunctive words are rarely omitted, and it happens only in the stories of bilingual children. For example, in a complex sentence with an substantive-attributive clause the conjunctive word *which* is sometimes omitted: *further on / in the next picture / we see a boy / got up prob-*

ably // (BC-6). Scientists note that such deviations are also common in the oral and written speech of Russian schoolchildren (Arefieva, 1998; Sergeev, 2010).

Replacing the case form of a conjunctive word with other forms of this word. A special case of deviations in using conjunctions and conjunctive words are substitutions of the case form of the conjunctive word *which*: *well / at this moment the hive / with which the dog liked better / suddenly fell to the ground // (BP-18)*; *One evening two friends / dog Bobik and her master Maxim / were watching a frog / which was caught they in the afternoon // (MC-9-1)*. These deviations are found in the stories of all groups of informants, but more often in the stories of adult bilinguals. This fact shows that living in a German-speaking environment they already violate the norms of using attributive sentences with the above-mentioned conjunctive word.

Deviations in the use of correlative words

Substitutions of correlative words. In the stories of the informants, individual cases of relative words substitutions are noted. In the sentence *the boy climbs the tree / and looks into the hollow / and the dog looks into the hive / because / where many bees fly // (BC-8)* instead of the relative word *there* the conjunction *because* was used. In the example *and he was so frightened / when he saw people / so Borja decided / that he would take him home // (MP-13-2)* the correlative word in the main part does not correspond to the conjunction in the subordinate clause. In this case, both are grammatically possible: *so frightened / when* and *this way frightened / when*. They differ in their shades of meaning.

Excessive use of relational words. In children, both bilinguals and monolinguals, excessive use of the correlative word *what*: *then we went outside / we called her and thought that / what she was in the forest // (BC-11-1)*; *then we thought that / what she was with other frogs // (BC-11-1)*; *when the boy Styopa and Barbos woke up / they saw that / what there was nobody in the jar / and started looking for her house // (MC-3-2)*; but when he ran // he noticed what that in the tunnel / which Maxim was looking / lived a marmot // (MC-9-1). Excessive use of correlative words is often found in the stories of monolingual parents.

Omission of correlative words. Relative words are rarely omitted in one of the predicative parts of a complex sentence and they occur only among bilinguals: *In the following picture you can see / how the boy and the little dog went outside / and look / as they want to call the frog // (BC-12)*. The sentence omits the correlative word *if*: *and look like / as if they want to call the frog*.

Replacing the case of the correlative word. All categories of informants violate the norms of using the case form of the correlative word in the main part of the sentence: *one of them was his frog / which he found yesterday / and it was*

*sitting with the other one / **which** is the bigger one // (BP-20); then we were glad **what** we found / and I took the frog back then / and told them goodbye / the others // (BC-11-1); they were sitting / watching / and were glad **what** / that the frog found its way back / to its family // (MP-11-1); they were very glad **what** / that they now have a very strong and friendly family // (MC-13-1).* These errors are not caused by the specificity of the complex sentence, but by deviations in verb control.

Table 2 presents the analysis of complex sentences in the stories of Russian speakers (bilinguals and monolinguals) according to structural types.

Table 2

Deviations in the use of complex sentences in the stories of the four groups of informants, average values, %

Informants	Total number of deviations in using complex sentences	Deviations in the organization of complex sentence parts	Deviations in using conjunctions and conjunctive words	Deviations in the use of correlative words
Bilingual parents	6.10	1.95	1.75	2.40
Bilingual children	18.16	9.44	5.52	3.20
Monolingual parents	3.29	0.70	0.98	1.61
Monolingual children	6.81	2.88	1.23	2.70

Let us comment on the results of the analysis of deviations in constructing complex sentences by their structural types.

Deviations in the organization of the complex sentence parts are found in the stories of all categories of informants. Syntactically incomplete sentences are more frequently noted in the stories of bilingual children and monolingual parents. In the first case it can be explained by the lack of means of expression, in the second – by the influence of oral spontaneous speech, which is characterized with incomplete sentences. Inconsistency of predicate parts of a complex sentence resulting in violation of the statement logic, is more frequent in the stories of bilingual and monolingual children.

Deviations in the use of conjunctions and conjunctive words are manifested as follows. Substitutions of conjunctions and conjunctive words and omissions of the conjunctive word are more frequent in the stories of bilingual children, which indicates their lack of mastery, loss or uncertainty of the informant about the correctness of their choice. Excessive conjunctions and conjunctive words are noted in the stories of all categories of informants. The replacement of the case form of the conjunctive word is also observed in the stories of all categories of informants, but mainly in the stories of bilingual parents, which can be explained, on the one hand, by the law of attrition – the loss of native language elements in the German-speaking environment, on the other hand, by the influence of spoken language, where deviations from literary norms are quite common.

Deviations in the use of correlative words were also found in the stories of all four groups of informants. At the same time excessive correlative words and

their omissions are mostly observed in children, both bilingual and monolingual. Violations related to the discrepancy between the correlative word in the main part and the conjunction in the subordinate clause are characteristic mainly of monolingual parents and bilingual children.

Conclusion

1. Complex sentences are used in the oral narratives of all four groups of informants. This fact allows us to question the widespread opinion that complex sentences hardly ever occur in oral speech. Not only do they occur, but they also fit logically into the context of the narrative. We can assume that their absence would significantly impoverish any coherent narrative. Their communicative significance is confirmed by the fact that representatives of all four groups of informants, whose stories were analyzed, possess these syntactic units, although they sometimes deviate from norms in their use. Even in the speech of bilingual children, 81.84% of complex sentences corresponding to the norms of the Russian literary language are noted.

2. The methodology developed in this study for the analysis of complex sentences, including the types and kinds of deviations from the norms, can be used by other researchers in the future. In this article, the types and kinds of deviations are considered in the aspect of their structural typology, which is based on identifying syntactic unit replacements, their omissions and excessive use. At the same time, the linguistic specificity of complex sentences made it necessary to identify separate groups of deviations associated with the replacement of the case form of the conjunctive or correlative word.

This structural approach does not mean that the authors underestimate the functional typology of complex sentences. It was not the purpose of the present study, since its analysis was limited to stimulus material – pictures from M. Mayer's book. The research established that in the speech of the informants complex sentences with subordinate clauses of time, place, purpose, condition, cause, consequence, with explanatory and determinative clauses are used, and there were many deviations in the organization of the complex sentence parts, the use of conjunctions and conjunctive words, the use of correlative words. These deviations are found in the stories of all four groups of informants. There are more of them in the speech of children than in the speech of their parents, which is caused by the higher level of education of their parents, and there are more in the speech of bilinguals than in the speech of monolinguals, which is caused by different conditions of communication in Russian and Russian language teaching, different status of Russian in Germany and Russia.

3. The data on deviations in the stories of bilingual children indicate that the system of complex sentences of the inherited Russian language is preserved

in this category of informants. Individual cases of deviations, which can be explained by the influence of the German language, are not systematic at the level of complex sentences. Similar cases of deviations in the stories of all groups of informants allow us to assume that they are the result of general laws of speech development. These data can be used to develop Russian language textbooks for bilingual children living in foreign countries.

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Bio notes:

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Научная статья

Сложное предложение в русской речи билингов и монолингов: анализ отклонений от нормы

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Аннотация. Рассматриваются синтаксические особенности русской речи на уровне сложного предложения двух поколений русско-немецких билингов: носителей унаследованного русского языка в возрасте 10–15 лет, родившихся в Германии или прибывших в нее в раннем возрасте, и их родителей в возрасте 35–50 лет, переселившихся в Германию в 1990–2010-х гг., а также аналогичных по возрасту русских монолингов, проживающих в России. Актуальность исследования обусловлена важностью изучения

сложного предложения в устной речи и необходимостью анализа синтаксического уровня русской речи носителей унаследованного языка. Цель исследования – анализ отклонений от норм употребления сложного предложения в рассказах двух поколений русско-немецких билингвов и их сравнение с аналогичными отклонениями от норм в рассказах русских монолингвов. Материалом послужили транскрипты записей рассказов по картинкам из книги М. Майера «Лягушка, где ты?». Применялись описательный, статистический и сравнительный методы и лингвистическое наблюдение. Выявлены средняя доля отклонений от синтаксических норм в рассказах информантов, нарушения ранжированы по структурным типам. Установлены наиболее типичные отклонения, связанные с организацией частей сложного предложения, употреблением средств связи и соотносительных слов. В речи детей отмечается намного больше отклонений от синтаксических норм, чем в речи их родителей, что объясняется более высоким уровнем образования родителей. В речи билингвов выявлено намного больше отклонений от синтаксических норм, чем в речи монолингвов, что обусловлено разным статусом русского языка в Германии и России. Сделан вывод о перспективности предложенного в работе структурного подхода к анализу синтаксических особенностей устной речи разных категорий носителей русского языка на уровне сложного предложения.

Ключевые слова: экспериментальные исследования, русский язык, билингвизм, Германия, русско-немецкие билингвы, русские монолингвы, межпоколенческие изменения

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