

Presenter: Natalia Batova

Title: Russian Word Order: The Pragmatics of Verb-initial Types

Abstract:

Russian word order has been a matter of extensive research for decades. The differentiation between SV(O) and VS(O) (S - subject, V - verb and O – object) word order patterns is essential for current research. Most studies argue that SV(O) is the basic word order in Russian (Bailyn 2014), while verb-initial and OSV word orders have a degraded grammaticality status (Kallestinova 2007), allowing for their production in limited linguistic environment. From the functional perspective, the use of verb-initial variations in other genres is considered to be a “stylisation” of epic genres, such as folk tales (Yokoyama 1987). A number of researchers contradict this statement by arguing that the V – S ordering is not unconventional and/or is the basic word order (King 1995, Turner 2009).

The current research project, applying the principles of functional linguistics, as well as information packaging within a clause, analyses the performance of VSO, VOS and VS word order variations from the statistical and functioning-in-a-discourse perspectives. On the example of Russian written discourse of the 18th – 21st centuries, it was found that

- o Generally, VSO, VOS and VS occur infrequently;
- o VSO is consistently the most frequently occurring variation (of VSO, VOS and VS);
- o The use of verb-initial word order patterns has decreased considerably, over time;
- o The functioning of verb-initial word orders is not limited to “poeticity” and “stylisation” (Yokoyama 1987).

#### Bibliography

1. Bailyn, J.F., 2012. The syntax of Russian. Cambridge University Press.
2. Kallestinova, E.D., 2007. Aspects of word order in Russian. Theses and Dissertations, p.165.
3. King, T.H., 1995. Configuring topic and focus in Russian (Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University).
4. Turner, S., 2009. Russian as a VS language. Canadian Slavonic Papers Vol. LI No. 4
5. Yokoyama, O.T., 1987. Discourse and word order (Vol. 6). John Benjamins Publishing.