"Two is Better than One: Reduplicative Phraseme Constructions in Russian and their Equivalents in German"

Reduplication is a universal mechanism exploited for various purposes in natural languages. In its narrower sense, reduplication is the immediate repetition of a word or a morpheme for grammatical or semantic purposes, which may, for instance, result in form building (e.g., plural marking), or word formation (e.g., diminutive marking) (Rubino 2013).

In a broader sense, reduplication also includes reduplicative patterns serving pragmatic functions (e.g., emphasis, creativity) and non-immediate (syndetic) repetition of elements. This kind of reduplication is particularly widespread in semi-formulaic idiomatic expressions, such as *boys will be boys, Fragen über Fragen* 'very many questions' (German), or *guljat' tak guljat* 'a walk is a walk' (Russian).

Our presentation focuses on a kind of immediate (asyndetic) idiomatic type of reduplication that has come to be known as "contrastive focus reduplication" (CFR) (Ghomeshi et al. 2004), "double" (Dray 1987, Horn 1993), or "lexical cloning" (Huang 2015, Horn 2018). CFR has been described primarily from the perspective of English (Ghomeshi et al. 2004), but is available also in other languages, including Russian:

(1)   *Ona takaja kisa-kisa.*
        'She is such a kitty-kitty.'
(2)   *U vas prjamo svad'ba-svad'ba byla, ili vy ograničivalis' registraciej i uzkim semejnym krugom?*
        'Did you have a wedding-wedding, or did you limit yourselves to civil ceremony and a small family circle?' (Giljarova 2010: 92)

Russian CFR does not necessarily imply a contrastive focus (cf. example (1)), which is why we prefer the label "reduplicative Phraseme Constructions" (RPhC). In (1), the reduplication intensifies the property metaphorically attributed to the subject referent. Example (2) illustrates a newly emerging type of reduplication in Russian, which indicates a prototype reading of the referent denoted by the reduplicative form. Although the above examples cannot be translated by means of RPhC into German, examples like (3) are by no means exceptional in German (contra Ghomeshi et al. 2004: 312):

(3)   Ich will KAFFEE-Kaffee und nicht diese Instantbrühe!
        'I want a COFFEE-coffee and not this instant brew.' [small caps in original]
        (Bross & Fraser 2020: 3)

Our talk presents the new, "prototype reading" of Russian RPhC, which, just like the German example given in (3), seems to be motivated by the productivity of this pattern in English. Specifically, we will provide answers to the following questions:
1) What semantic types of RPhC can be distinguished in Russian and German?
2) What formal types of RPhC can be distinguished in these languages? This includes an account of what modifications and what accent patterns of RPhC are available, and with which parts of speech or multi-word-expressions.
3) How can Russian RPhC be translated into German?
Methodologically, we make use of authentic language material taken, if available, from parallel corpora. As RPhC are rare, a bottom-up approach raises a number of questions related to the methodology of corpus linguistics and translation studies, some of which will be addressed in our talk.

In addition to Russian and German, we will give some exemplary contrastive data from other Slavic languages.

References

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