

'I say ...': *Some aspects of 19th-century Russian syntax*

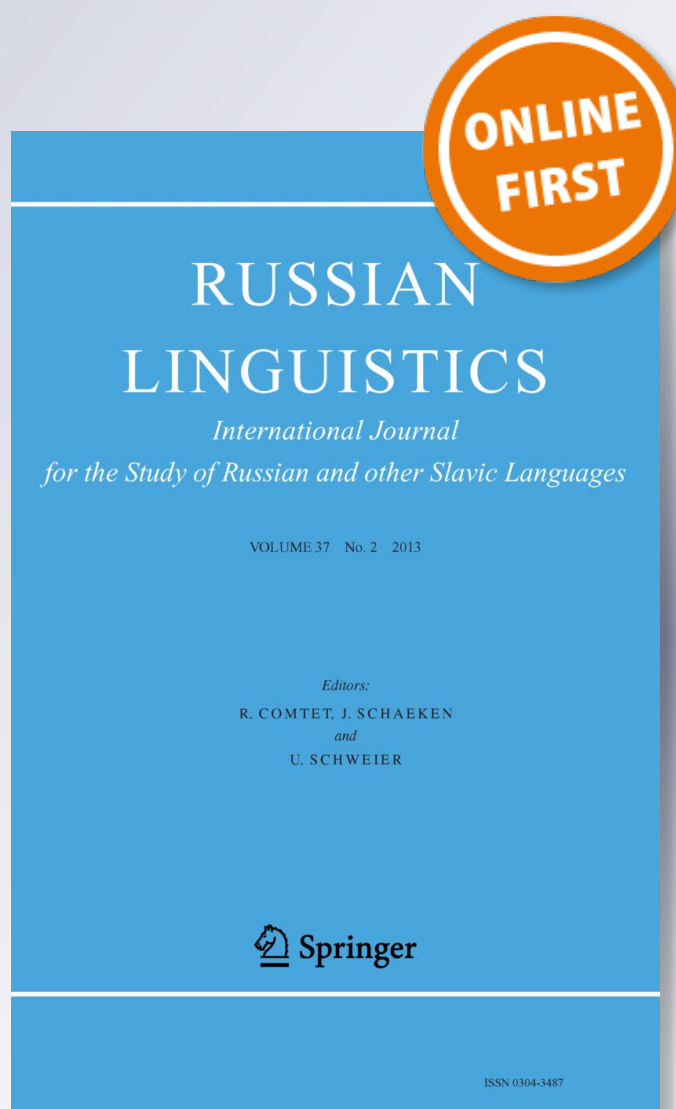
Vladimir Plungian & Ekaterina Rakhilina

Russian Linguistics

International Journal for the Study of Russian and other Slavic Languages

ISSN 0304-3487

Russ Linguist
DOI 10.1007/s11185-018-9192-x



Your article is protected by copyright and all rights are held exclusively by Springer Science+Business Media B.V., part of Springer Nature. This e-offprint is for personal use only and shall not be self-archived in electronic repositories. If you wish to self-archive your article, please use the accepted manuscript version for posting on your own website. You may further deposit the accepted manuscript version in any repository, provided it is only made publicly available 12 months after official publication or later and provided acknowledgement is given to the original source of publication and a link is inserted to the published article on Springer's website. The link must be accompanied by the following text: "The final publication is available at link.springer.com".

'I say ...': Some aspects of 19th-century Russian syntax

'Говорю я ...': из наблюдений над синтаксисом русского языка XIX века

Vladimir Plungian¹ · Ekaterina Rakhilina²

© Springer Science+Business Media B.V., part of Springer Nature 2018

Abstract The paper deals with many problems related to our understanding of 19th-century Russian. Our main claim is that what may seem straightforward and nearly identical to the contemporary usage often displays significant difference in semantic and syntactic patterns. This difference, however, is usually 'latent', and special efforts are needed to unearth it. The paper is focused on one specific construction with a parenthetical *govorju ja* 'I say'. It is shown that 19-century usage differs from what a modern speaker of Russian would expect, both semantically and syntactically.

Аннотация Статья посвящена многообразным проблемам, связанным с интерпретацией русских текстов XIX века. Наш основной тезис состоит в том, что многое из того, что в этих текстах кажется простым и более или менее идентичным современному узусу, на самом деле скрывает существенные отличия в семантико-синтаксическом поведении, которые не всегда видны без специальных исследовательских усилий. Центральным материалом статьи является конструкция с вводным оборотом *говорю я*; показано, что его значение и структура в текстах XIX века существенно отличается от того, что мог бы ожидать современный носитель языка.

1 Introduction

Providing a description of nineteenth century Russian is a task that is important in many respects; yet, contemporary linguistics and contemporary literary studies (probably, the latter

The present study is an output of a research project implemented as part of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE), Moscow.

✉ V. Plungian
plungian@iling-ran.ru

E. Rakhilina
erakhilina@hse.ru

¹ Vinogradov Institute for Russian Language, RAS, Lomonosov Moscow State University, Moscow, Russia

² Vinogradov Institute for Russian Language, RAS, National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia

in particular) seem to underestimate its significance. Of course, the body of research on the language of that time appears substantial and includes classical works such as Bulaxovskij (1954, 1957) and especially Vinogradov and Švedova (1964). These works feature massive empirical material and outline a number of major discrepancies in vocabulary and grammar between nineteenth century Russian and the Russian spoken later. Consider also the more recent research on the periods in the history of Modern Russian that precede (Živov 2004) or follow the period under consideration (Comrie, Stone and Polinsky 1996; Krysin 2008 etc.). Nevertheless, the predominant view still holds 'modern' Russian of the last two or three centuries to be a largely homogeneous language (occasionally admitting slight internal differences in some minor aspects). We claim that this viewpoint should be considered an oversimplification.

One of the major complications in this area is caused by the deceptive understandability of 19th century texts as perceived by contemporary language users. This effect mainly arises when changes affect the semantics of individual words or constructions that continue to exist in the contemporary language in practically the same contexts, but with a different meaning. A language user, unaware of the change in meaning, unintentionally reads the contemporary meaning into the text and thus overlooks the original purport of the author.¹

Such a shift is observed, for example, in constructions with the verb *uspet'*. In the language of the 19th century this verb still preserved its old meaning 'to achieve smth as a result of one's efforts; to manage, to succeed' (along with the more recent meaning 'to achieve smth in a short space of time, by a certain deadline; to make it' which is the prevalent meaning in contemporary usage). In many contexts, the difference between the two meanings is not conspicuous enough, and a contemporary reader can easily fail to realize that a difference exists. Consider (1) in which Lermontov's context is quite unambiguous in signaling the new meaning of the verb, while Puškin in (2) leaves room for alternative interpretations, to say the least: to obtain consent for an appointment the main character has to make quite an effort and not act hastily, and a contemporary reader usually misses this component. Meanwhile, both of these texts belong to approximately the same period, as they were created within less than ten years of each other:

- (1) Osetin-izvozčik neutomimo pogonjal lošadej, čto *uspet'* do noči vzobrat'sja na Kojšaurskuju goru, i vo vse gorlo raspeval pesni.

(RNC: M. Lermontov. *Geroj našego vremeni*. 1839–1841)

'In order to *accomplish* the ascent of Mount Koišaur by nightfall, my driver, an Osete, urged on the horses indefatigably, singing zealously the while at the top of his voice.'

(M. Lermontov. *A hero of our time*. Transl. by J. H. Wisdom and M. Murray)²

- (2) Ne prošlo trex nedel' s toj pory, kak ona v pervyj raz uvidela v okoško molodogo človeka,—i uže ona byla s nim v perepiske,—i on *uspel* vytrebovat' ot nee nočnoe svidanie!
(RNC: A. S. Puškin. *Pikovaja dama*. 1833)

¹Cf. the phenomenon of the 'short-term semantic evolution' discussed by Anna A. Zaliznjak. According to the author, it often leads to 'misunderstanding of the text, which originates when the reader fails to recognize the semantic shift which had occurred in a word or a construction of her mother tongue, and interprets their meaning in contemporary terms' (Zaliznjak 2013, p. 300).

²Hereafter, we use the translation of Lermontov's *A hero of our time* by J. H. Wisdom and Marr Murray (Gutenberg project: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/913/913-h/913-h.htm#link2H_4_0002).

'Scarcely three weeks had passed since she had first seen the young officer from her window, and already she had written to him, and he *had succeeded* in inducing her to make an appointment.'

(A. S. Puškin. *The Queen of Spades*. Transl. by S. Edwards)³

In cases of type (2) the scope of the change is relatively small, so that language users may not perceive it at all. However, even when users do recognize such changes, they are not always able to interpret the outdated usage correctly. For instance, in (3) the use of the verb *torgovat'* 'to trade' distinctly conflicts with the contemporary norm, but the nature of this contradiction is mainly syntactic, as in Modern Russian this verb takes objects in the Instrumental case (cf. *torgovat' xlebom* ≈ 'to trade in bread [on a commercial scale]'). Language users notice the violation of the verbal case government in (3), but they cannot readily discern the semantic change behind it, although it does take place. According to our recent study (Raxilina, Reznikova, and Borodina 2016), school students nowadays are inclined to think that the meaning of the verb in (3) does not change.

- (3) Včera ja ee vstretil v magazine Čelaxova; ona *torgovala* čudesnyj persidskij kover. [. . .] Ja dal sorok rublej lišnix i perekupil ego; za što ja byl voznağrağžen vzgljadom, gde blistalo samoe vosxitiitel'noe bešenstvo.

(M. Lermontov. *Geroj našego vremeni*. 1839–1841)

'I met her yesterday in Chelakhov's shop. She was *bargaining for* a marvellous Persian rug [. . .]. I outbid her by forty rubles, and bought it over her head. I was rewarded with a glance in which the most delightful fury sparkled.'

Of course, this interpretation is erroneous (the meaning conveyed by Lermontov's *torgovat'* can be roughly defined as 'to negotiate the price of the object one wants to buy'—cf. the close meaning of reflexive *torgovat'sja* in Modern Russian, which, however, does not allow for the explicit object). More than that, such interpretation also contradicts its context which plainly indicates that the heroine wished to buy the carpet, not to sell it. Nonetheless, this passage proves to be obscure for an unprepared reader.

The perspective we outlined above strongly suggests that comprehension of 19th century texts is not a merely linguistic but rather a socio-cultural problem (although it is rooted in the facts of language evolution); thus, such texts comprise the majority of the required reading list for schools. As a matter of fact, the most insightful commentators have already pointed out that contemporary readers (teenagers and adults alike) have a tendency to misinterpret the meaning of many classical texts due to the significant differences in their language. However, the commentaries largely tended to foreground the obscurities in the historical and cultural realities of that time rather than in the linguistic expression; see, e.g., the well-known commentary on *Evgenij Onegin* by Lotman (1980). The language of Puškin's works is understandable in the spotlight of such efforts (for a relatively recent analysis, see Dobrovol'skij 2001; Pen'kovskij 2005; among others). But Puškin's language is generally perceived as a borderline phenomenon forming the watershed between the archaic norm of the 18th century and the contemporary norm that emerged in his texts. Other authors of the 19th century enjoy much less attention, and their language is believed to be more 'understandable'. Yet, even the complete comprehension of authors from the first half of the 20th century may turn out to be an illusion, as a recent study by a contemporary researcher indicates: "The farther we are distanced in time from a text, the more ready we are to exercise our caution. When reading a text written in a comparatively recent period, less than a century ago, the language aberrations

³<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/55024/55024-h/55024-h.htm> (February 2018).

tions are less noticeable, creating a false feeling of understandability” (Bobrik 2018, p. 25, offers an in-depth analysis of the language of Mandelstam’s prose of the 1920s).

In view of what has been said, a comprehensive linguistic analysis of nineteenth century Russian can be claimed to be an important and highly relevant task (cf. also Dobrušina and Daniél’ 2016). In our opinion, it should be tackled with a whole range of linguistic instruments, corpus-based research being one of them. The present study is based on the material from the new annotated corpus of the 19th century Russian, which is being developed as a part of the project ‘Russian language on the borderline’. The corpus is primarily intended for the research of ‘microdiachronic’ events, such as minor semantic shifts and changes in vocabulary, word formation, patterns of government, word order, etc., as well as in weakly compositional and idiomatic constructions of various kinds.

Before we proceed to discuss the issues of our immediate interest to us, we would like to provide a brief summary of our corpus. The texts in the 19th century corpus are POS-tagged automatically; after that, they undergo comprehensive manual annotation by two or three independent annotators, who identify deviations of the 19th-century norm from the contemporary norm. We have developed a set of tags which are used in the current version of the corpus during the annotation process. The tagset provides an inventory of the major changes in the system of the Russian language over the last 200 years and highlights the predominant tendencies. The tagset is comprised of 30 types of tag reflecting the parameters whose values diverge from the contemporary norm. Some of the tags are explained below (all our examples are from Lermontov’s *Geroj našego vremeni* ‘A hero of our time’):

asp (changes in verbal aspect)

- (4) *Kogda ja emu zametil, čto on mog by pobespokoit’sja v pol’zu xotja moego čemodana, za kotorym ja vovse ne želal lazit’ (→ lezt’) v ètu bezdnu [...].*
 ‘When I remarked to him that he might put himself out a bit, at least in the interests of my portmanteau, for which I had not the slightest desire *to clamber* down into the abyss [...].’

compar (changes in the form or the construction of the comparative degree of adjectives)

- (5) [...] *žizn’ moja stanovitsja pustee (→ vse bolee pustoj) den’ oto dnja [...].*
 ‘[...] my life grows *emptier* day by day [...].’

deriv (change of the derivational model or morpheme)

- (6) *Čtob dokončit’ (→ zakončit’) portret, ja skažu, čto u nego byl nemnogo vzdernutyj nos, zuby oslepitel’noj belizny i karie glaza [...].*
 ‘To *complete* the portrait, I will add that he had a slightly turned-up nose, teeth of dazzling whiteness, and brown eyes [...].’

num (differences in the use of number forms)

- (7) [...] *ono ili služit ob”jasnieniem celi sočinenija, ili opravdaniem i otvetom na kritiki. (→ kritiku)*
 ‘[...] it affords the author an opportunity of explaining the object of the work, or of vindicating himself and replying to his *critics*.’

wo (changes in word order)

- (8) *On skeptik i materialist, kak vse počti mediki [...]. (→ počti vse)*
 ‘Like *almost all* medical men he is a sceptic and a materialist.’

It should be noted that systematic descriptions of 19th century Russian are quite scarce. Earlier research mainly focused on individual, particularly salient lexical and syntactical features. Besides, researchers in the past did not have the opportunity to test their hypotheses on a larger scale, of the sort that is available nowadays thanks to corpus-based investigations, including the retrospective corpus analysis. Importantly also, the authors of the classical works on the early modern period of standard literary Russian took the now-outdated usage of the mid (or even early) 20th century as their reference point. The dramatic changes in the Russian language that took place at the end of the last century are also well-known facts (cf., for instance, Krysin 2008); however, that has not been fully acknowledged by contemporary researchers (not to mention the general public).

We have used the Russian National Corpus (RNC) to compare grammatical forms and constructions from the 19th century with contemporary Russian forms and constructions. We also use the RNC to assess the uniqueness of an observed linguistic effect by searching for it in other texts from the same or an earlier period. Thus, the RNC provides an indispensable point of reference for this vein of research. The opportunities offered by the RNC have still not been utilized to their full potential: the data from the 20th century needs to be scrutinized and new data needs to be obtained, as very little is known of how far the classical Russian literature, for example, has drifted away from us in terms of the language norm. The annotated 19th-century corpus reported here is a special instrument designed to address precisely this issue.

We used *Geroj našego vremeni* 'A hero of our time' by Mixail Lermontov as our pilot text, which is a novel that is part of the fixed syllabus at all high schools throughout Russia. This text is commonly considered to be easily understandable even today and to be accessible for school students, almost as if it were written in our time. Quite naturally, difficulties with regards to understanding arise from the military and other domain-specific terminology used, and other obsolete vocabulary found in this text, which in a contemporary edition need to be explained in the historical commentary, e.g. *kaftan* ('kaftan or tunic, a traditional long coat, usually worn by men'), *štabs-kapitan* ('staff-captain, officer rank in the Russian army before 1917'), *desjatina* ('non-metric unit of land measurement, approx. 10.9 sq.m'), *pyž* ('smoking wad in archaic firearm cartridges'), *razvodnaja vanna* ('mud bath'), *lornet* ('lorgnette'), *slobodka* ('suburban settlement'), etc. Such vocabulary denotes realities that are no longer existent; it cannot be excluded from the novel or 'translated' into contemporary Russian. However, there are examples such as (9), in which meaning comprehension is based on something else entirely:

- (9) Sami posudite, čto ž ja mog otvečat' protiv ètogo?
'Judge for yourself, what could I say to that?'

They contain several forms that violate the contemporary norm, but such that they can be modified to comply with it, as in (9a), if we 'correct' the interrogative construction *čto ž* by removing the particle *ž* (→ *čto*), and also change the aspectual form *otvečat'* (→ *otvetit'*), and the government of the verb: *otvetit' protiv ètogo* → *otvetit' na èto*, cf.:

- (9a) Sami posudite, čto ja mog otvetit' na èto?

The task of this type of 'translation' into the contemporary language acquires linguistic substance only when we are able to investigate the causes behind the observed changes in the language.

The first hypothesis we will test in each of these cases is the 'trace' of calquing from French. In fact, this line of reasoning is suggested by the linguistic situation at that time, as in the early 1800s the interference between French in Russian was very strong, but in the

subsequent decades it declined. The dramatic change of the sociolinguistic situation could serve as a natural cause of the divergence between the Russian language of the time and contemporary Russian. This brief study examines several issues associated with the influence of French on Russian in the first three decades of the 19th century.

2 Calques

The discourse of the novel sounds natural and vivid to a contemporary Russian reader. However, calques do occur in it, primarily in syntactic constructions and word order.⁴ Example (10) is demonstrative in this regard:

- (10) Ja slez i podkraljsja k oknu: neplotno pritivorenyj staven' *pozvolil mne videt'* pirujuščix [...].
 'I dismounted and crept up to the window. The shutter had not been made fast, and I could see the banqueters [...].' (lit.: the shutter left ajar *allowed me to see*)

Such constructions in which the modal verb *pozvolit'* 'let, allow' takes an inanimate subject, and the subject of the subordinate situation is in the Dative case sound odd from the point of view of the contemporary Russian norm. In a typical high-frequency case, the subject of *pozvolit'* is an abstract nominal entity, not an inanimate physical item (like *pomošč* 'help', *pribyl'* 'income', *proekt* 'project', *razvitie* 'development', etc.) or a person / group of persons (*ego prevosxoditel'svo* 'His Excellency', *obščestvo* 'the society', etc.). For an inactive subject, Russian favours the impersonal construction, as in (10a):

- (10a) Skvoz' neplotno pritivorenyj staven' ja mog videt' vs. *možno bylo uvidet'* vs. *bylo vidno* pirujuščix [...]. (lit.: 'through the shutter left ajar I could see / *it could be seen*').

On the contrary, in similar contexts, the French language (it also holds true about the French of that period) applies a distribution of syntactic roles that is fully identical to Lermontov's pattern. Example (11) is sound proof of this:

- (11) Une autre porte entrebaillée *me laissa voir* un vieillard, une Bible à la main...⁵
 'Another door that is ajar *allows me to see* an old man, a Bible in his hand.'

Word order is also a part of the syntactic field in which calques are not unexpected. Attributive and adverbial constructions are particularly interesting in this respect; cf., for instance, (12) in which one of the adjectives from a chain of coordinated adjectives is found in postposition:

- (12) So vsex storon *gory nepristupnye*, krasnovatyje skaly, obveščannye zelenym pljuščom i uvenčannye kupami činar, želtje obryvy [...].
 'On every hand are *inaccessible mountains*, steep, yellow slopes scored by water-channels, and reddish rocks draped with green ivy and crowned with clusters of plane-trees.'

In contemporary discourse, such postposition pertains to the specific style of obsolete and elevated tale narrations, cf. (13), but then this style is maintained throughout the textual fragment:

⁴But also vocabulary as such, where, according to Viktor Živov, 'semantic calquing combines with the processing of the semantics inherited from the earlier epochs' (Živov 2009, p. 19), which is not covered in this research.

⁵<http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b10321781v> (March 2018).

- (13) I vzošel ja na *goru vysokuju*, gde ni solnce ne sijaet, ni dreva net, ni trava ne rastet, tol'ko gady i zmei, sviščuščie i skrežeščuščie zubami.

(RNC: Mixail Šiškin. *Venerin volos*. 2004)

'And I walked up the *tall mountain* where there was neither sunshine nor a tree or grass growing, but only amphibians and reptiles were there, hissing and grinding their teeth.'

In Example (12) the direct word order in the attributive construction appears just as natural as an inversed word order, and is entirely neutral. For Lermontov, it had nothing to do with stylistic marking; it is, most likely, induced by French and can be rightly regarded as a syntactic calque (Uspenskij 1994 and others).

Note that the postposition of adjectives looks more natural if we consider the numerous (and unnatural for contemporary Russian) cases of the postposition of adverbs in adjectival constructions that are extensively represented in our corpus; cf., for example, (14)–(17):

- (14) Tut *tolpilos'* *šumno* desjatka dva gruzin i gorcev; poblzosti karavan verbljudov ostanovilsja dlja nočlega. (→ *šumno tolpilos'*)

'About a score of Georgians and mountaineers were gathered there in a noisy crowd (lit. *crowded noisily*), and, close by, a caravan of camels had halted for the night.'

- (15) [...] i skoro čajnik *zašipel privetlivo*. (→ *privetlivo zašipel*)

'[...] and soon the teapot was *singing invitingly*.'

- (16) [...] i ja bojalsja v nej *isčeznut' soveršenno*. (→ *soveršenno isčeznut'*)

'[...] in which I was afraid of *being lost to sight altogether*.'

- (17) Vy *ošibaetes' opjat'*: ja vovse ne gastronom. (→ *opjat' ošibaetes'*)

'You are *mistaken again*: I am by no means an epicure.'

3 Non-calques

Calquing does not explain all the divergences in the syntactic structure of texts dating from the 19th and the 20th centuries. For instance, it is widely accepted that the postposition of the pronominal subjects of verbs or possessors generally imparts a distinct archaic coloring to a text, as in (18)–(20):

- (18) Vot *prisel ja* u zabora i stal prislušivat'sja, starajas' ne propustit' ni odnogo slova. (→ *Ja prisel . . . i stal prislušivat'sja*)

'*I squatted down* beside the fence and proceeded to play the eavesdropper, trying not to let slip a single word.'

- (19) [...] *popolz ja* po gustoj trave vdol' po ovragu [...]. (→ *Ja popolz [...] vdol' po ovragu*)

'[...] *I crept* along the hollow through the thick grass [...].'

- (20) Ispolniv *dolg svoj, sel ja* k nemu na krovat' [...]. (→ *Ispolniv svoj dolg, ja sel k nemu na krovat'*)

'My duty discharged, *I sat down* on the bed [...].'

Such an effect is explained by the gradual transformation of these forms from unaccented clitics to fully accented lexical units in Russian (Zaloznjak 2008 examines this process in great detail, among others). By the 21st century this process was long over and such examples

are now possible only in a stylized text, but in the first decades of the 19th century it was not yet complete, and *Geroj našego vremena* abounds in such examples.

It is this standpoint that should be taken into account when considering the cases of the so-called ‘Pro-drop’ in Lermontov’s text.

‘Pro-drop’ is a term that is used to describe the omission of pronominal subjects on verbs, as in the Latin *veni, vidi, vici* in contrast to the English *I came, I saw, I conquered* (the term goes back to Chomsky’s ‘null subject’ phenomenon, cf., for example, Jaeggli and Safir 1989; Testelets 2001, p. 287). The languages that allow of such omissions are called ‘Pro-drop languages’. Russian is one of these languages, unlike French and many other European languages, cf.:

(21) Fr. *J’arrive* ~ Rus. *Idu*

Certainly, in practice, each individual language provides a number of more specific conditions and limitations regulating the Pro-drop, so that even in the consummate Pro-drop languages not all contexts will license omissions (see, e.g., Fužeron and Brejar 2004 for more detail about Russian). Nevertheless, from the most general perspective, modern Russian and modern French are distinctly juxtaposed with regards to this. But then, we could justly expect to see reflexes of French interference in Russian in the past, two centuries ago. Meanwhile, an analysis of Lermontov’s prose demonstrates that, oddly enough, modern Russian is much closer to French than the Lermontov’s language in which omissions occur considerably more frequently than in today’s Russian, cf. (22)–(23):

(22) [...] i vse grustila, napevala svoi pesni vpolgolosa, tak čto, byvalo, i mne stanovilos’ grustno, *kogda slušal ee* iz sosednej komnaty. (→ *kogda ja slušal ee*)
‘[...] but she still pined and crooned her songs in an undertone, so that even I would feel heavy at heart when *I heard her* from the next room.’

(23) Pover’ mne, allax dlja vsex plemen odin i tot že, i esli on mne pozvoljaet ljubit’ tebja, *otčego že zapretit tebe platit’ mne vzaimnost’ju?* (→ *otčego že on zapretit*)
‘Believe me, Allah is one and the same for all races; and, if he permits me to love you, why, then, should he prohibit you from requiring me by returning my love?’

The explanation of the above phenomenon is quite simple, it is due to the extinction of the class of clitic pronouns mentioned above.

4 A special case: are they calques after all?

Now that we have acknowledged the complexity of the task of calque identification as demonstrated in the examples above, let us turn to the following passage of the novel:

(24) Nakonec—už bog znaet otkuda on javilsja, tol’ko ne iz okna, potomu čto ono ne otvorjalos’, a dolžno byt’, on vyšel v stekljannuju dver’, čto za kolonnoj,—nakonec, *govorju ja*, vidim my, sxodit kto-to s balkona . . .
‘At length—goodness knows, indeed, where he appeared from, but he must have come out by the glass door which is behind the pillar; it was not out of the window that he came, because the window had remained unopened—at length, *I say*, we saw someone getting down from the balcony...’

This passage contains multiple deviations from the contemporary norm that are of linguistic interest, but following the subject matter of this research we will focus on the last fragment of

it: *nakonec, govorju ja, vidim my, sxodit kto-to s balkona* 'at length, I say, we saw someone getting down from the balcony'.

In this fragment, we will take a closer look at the curious discourse insertion *govorju ja* ('I say', lit. 'say I') with its inverted word order. Similar markers are very frequent in Russian; they come in a variety of forms with different semantics.⁶ Firstly, that is *ja govorju* 'I say'—mainly with a direct word order, to introduce direct or reported speech. When the subject is a first-person pronoun, this phrase designates the narrator's words, the 'self-retelling' (or, rather an attempt to reproduce exactly) of what the narrator said earlier. This marker is necessary when a dialogue is being retold, e.g.:

- (25) «Čto, *ja govorju*, nrvitsja li on tebe?.. da govori pravdu. . . » Snačala zamjalas', nu, a potom priznalas', čto ty ej očen' nraviš'sja. Čto že, ty by už končal èto delo. . . Začem v dolgij jaščik otkladyvat' . . . (I. I. Panaev. *Opyt o xlyščax*. 1854–1857)
 '“Well, *I say*, do you have a liking for him?.. Come, speak the truth!..” She was reluctant at first, but then she confessed that she liked you very much. You should settle this business . . . Why keep putting it off?’

This meaning is attested in the RNC for the direct word order since the very first occurrences of this construction (i.e. since the 18th century), and it is still alive today.

However, contemporary Russian exhibits one more meaning of this marker. We can say that the same discourse indicator undergoes a minor semantic shift towards introducing a fragment of a monologue instead of that of a dialogue. In this case, what it usually marks is not a precise replication of the speaker's earlier text, but a brief summary of it. This summary is intended by the speaker to remind the other participants of the speech act of what had been said before the main narration was interrupted and the thread of it can be lost. By using this discourse marker the speaker takes the audience back to the initial topic, cf. (26):

- (26) Sam, grešnym delom, ljublju pospat' v rabočee vremja. Osobenno na učenyx sovetax. Zolotoj son!—Vinovat, tovarišč general!—A vy ne stesnajtjes'. Tak vot, *ja govorju*, spat' na učenom soвете—samoe miloe delo! Tol'ko ne nado raspuskat'sja: nosom klevat', izo rta puzyri puskat' i tak dalee. (I. Grekova. *Na ispytanijax*. 1967)
 'I like to indulge myself in a good daytime nap, I have to admit. Especially during academic council sessions. Golden sleep it is!—Sorry, comrade general!—Go ahead, don't be shy. So *I say*, napping at academic council session is damn good! You only ought to keep control, watch that your head is not drooping or you are not blowing bubbles from your mouth, and the like.'

As we discussed in Sect. 3, the position of a pronoun in relation to a verb can vary depending on the period of time to which the example under consideration belongs. In the 19th century the pronoun is often found in postposition to the verb, therefore we could expect example (24) to fall into one of these classes.

Yet, neither of the suggested interpretations of 'I say' fits example (24). Sentence (24) does not relate a dialogue but a monologue given by Grušnicki; however, this monologue was never interrupted. *Govorju ja* is placed in the very center of Grušnicki's narration where the utterance climaxes. The discourse role of this phrase places it among the markers of maintaining contact with the audience, intended to emphasize the current moment in narration. In contemporary discourse the parenthetic *govorju ja* would sound unnatural in this context and

⁶Bezjaeva (1997) provides an exhaustive overview of the full array of phraseologized constructions with verbs of speech in contemporary Russian. Cf. also an insightful diachronic analysis in Brinton (2005) of a partly similar marker in English.

would require a different marker, something like: *predstavljajte?* ‘imagine?’ It is exactly this function that is fulfilled by the actively circulating slangish *Karl!* ‘Carl!’⁷ The extraordinary popularity of this meme proves that contemporary language is in need of such a discourse device.

Examples of postpositive *govorju ja* used with exactly these semantics do exist in the early 19th century, cf., for instance, (27) in which the speaker deliberately places the emphasis on the fact that now everything is different from what it used to be (‘now, Carl!’):

- (27) Kuda ž prežnee devalos’? I sam ne znaju, a čuvstvuju, što ego net bolee, i uveren, što, uvidja predmet, pri vospominanii o ktorom prežde duša moja pylala sladostnym ognem, i vse bytie pereroždalos’,—teper’, *govorju ja*, ne inače vzgljanu na predmet tot, kak na listy bumagi, na kotoryx krasnym karandašom pačkal ja xaricy v pervye mesjacy učeničestva [...].

(V. T. Narežnyj. *Rossijskij Žilblaz, ili Poxoždenija knjazja Gavrily Simonoviča Čistjakova*. 1814)

‘Where is the bygone passion? I am not aware myself; but I feel that it is gone now, and I am sure that on seeing the object on remembrance of which my soul used to blaze with the fire of delight and my whole being was reborn—now, *I say*, I will merely cast a glance at that object as if it were the sheets of paper on which I used to scribble faces in the first months of my studentship [...].’

We hypothesize that such usage is an (incomplete) calque from the French language of that period. This hypothesis can be corroborated by certain examples, as in (28):

- (28) M. Jules vit entrer dans son cabinet Fouquereau tout radieux. “Monsieur, il vient de venir une vieille femme, mais soignée, *je dis*, une fine mouche. Elle a demandé Monsieur, a paru contrariée de ne point le trouver, et m’a donné pour Madame une lettre que voici”.

(Honoré de Balzac. *Ferragus*. 1833)⁸

- (28a) K Žjulju v kabinet vošel sijajuščij Fukero.—Sudar’, tol’ko čo prixodila staruxa, gladkaja takaja. Produvnaja bestija, *doložu ja vam*. Sprašivala vas i slovno by ogorčilas’, što vas doma net, a baryne velela vot éto pis’mo peredat’⁹

(notice the obsolete bookish construction *doložu ja vam* ‘I report you’ employed by the Russian translator which also used to convey this meaning in the 19th century).

Cf. the English translation by Katharine Prescott Wormeley (23b), where the translator has used a very different construction:

- (28b) Fouquereau entered the study, quite radiant with his news. “Monsieur, an old woman has come, but very cautiously; *I think* she’s a sly one. She asked for monsieur, and seemed much annoyed when I told her he was out; then she gave me a letter for madame, and here it is.”¹⁰

⁷According to Krongauz (2016, p. 51), ‘The original version of the meme contains several panes from *The Walking Dead* series representing the main character Rick Grimes and his son Carl; Rick gradually approaches Carl addressing him with an emotional speech’. However, the specific discourse usage of the name Carl is peculiar to the Russian reception of these scenes, and it emerged from Russian internet culture.

⁸<https://books.google.ru/> (March 2018).

⁹Translated into Russian by Maria Kazas: Ferragus, predvoditel’ devorantov. In Onore Bal’zak, *Sobranie sočinenij v 24 tomax. Tom 11: Čelovečeskaja komedija*. Moskva, 1960, pp. 13–130.

¹⁰<https://books.google.ru/> (March 2018).

This instance is rather peculiar, because, on the one hand, in contemporary French one cannot say it exactly this way; and on the other hand, as we know, in contemporary Russian this meaning was also lost. In order to reliably confirm it, additional research is required. So far, we can suggest that this is a plausible assumption: the French influence on the Russian language noticeably wanes after the 1840s (Bulaxovskij 1957; Uspenskij 1994; and others). The fate of the obsolete calques (such calques ought to exist) is extremely interesting from a linguistic point of view.

5 Further research

It is worthy noting that the same semantics are encountered in the first three decades of the 19th century in the other, modified version of this marker, i.e. *ja vam govorju* 'I am telling you', where the pronoun is placed before the verb, and the addressee is explicitly manifested, cf. (29). Similarly to Grušnicki's monologue (24) which was the starting point for our discussion, this marker functions as an additional discourse indicator of reinforcing the contact with the audience by attracting the attention to what has been said and how it has been said. Cf. also (30)–(31):

- (29) Javlenie XIV. Prežnie i Alinskoj.
[Aleksandr Ivanovič Alinskij] (v nektorom zamešatel'stve). Ja nikak ne mog uexat' bez togo, čtoby ne zasvidetel'stvovat' vam lično moej blagodarnosti. . . i ne izvinit'sja pered vami.

[Konstantin Proxorovič Jauzov] (veselo i družeski) Ruku, sosed! Čto tut za blagodarnost' i izvinenija. My daveča vas nasmešili, *ja vam govorju*, ne pravda li?

(RNC: D. T. Lenskij. *Xoroša i durna, i glupa i umna*. 1833)

'Act XIV. Enter Alinskoy.

[Alexander Ivanovich Alinskoy] (in slight embarrassment). I couldn't possibly depart without expressing in person my gratitude to you. . . and without giving you my apologies.

[Konstantin Prokhhorovich Yauzov] (in a jovial and amicable manner). Give me your hand, neighbor! Why thank and apologize? We made you laugh the other day, *I'm telling you*, didn't we?

- (30) Éto delaetsja dlja togo tol'ko, *ja tebe govorju*, čtoby izbežat' oglaski.
'We do it only to avoid publicity, *I'm telling you*.' (ibid.)

- (31) Udivitel'noe, *ja tebe govorju*, stečenie obstoitel'stv! . . .
(RNC: A. F. Pisemskij. *Masonry*. 1880)
'What a remarkable turn of event, *I'm telling you*!'

In contemporary Russian, *ja tebe govorju* also exists as a discourse marker; however, it has changed both its discourse meaning and sphere of usage: *ja (tebe / vam) govorju* 'I am telling you [sg / pl]' is well preserved in the imperative as a marker of the 'strictness' of a command, cf. (32)–(34):

- (32) Gorkin emu strogo govorit: «Vasja, *ja tebe govorju*, usni!»
(RNC: I. S. Šmelev. *Leto Gospodne*. 1927–1944)

'Gorkin strictly says to him: "Vasya, sleep, *I'm telling you*!"'

- (33) – Net, Asja, – uže strogo skazala mat', *ja tebe govorju*, soveršenno odinakovyje.
(M. I. Cvetaeva. *Skazka materi*. 1934)
'– No, Asya, – mother's voice grew strict, *I'm telling you*, they are just the same.'

- (34) – Vstavaj, *ja tebe govorju*, išak kavkazskij, idiot osetinskij!
 (A. I. Kuprin. *Jama*. 1909–1915)
 ‘– Get up, *I’m telling you*, you Caucasus donkey, Ossetian idiot!’

As a rule, the strictness of the order in the imperative is achieved through the persistence of the speaker who stresses the fact that the demand made some time ago (but not satisfied) is now being reiterated. The idea of persistence and the imperative repetition related to it can also be traced in the semantics of this marker in certain indirect, non-imperative orders/requests, as in (35) or in (36):

- (35) – Vreš’, *ja tebe govorju*, merzavec! Ty Ksenofont!
 (RNC: A. A. Škljarevskij. *Russkij Tičborn (Iz ugolovnoj xroniki)*. 1903)
 ‘You liar, *I’m telling you*, bastard! You are Xenophon!’
- (36) Èto Saša, *ja vam govorju*, èto Saša!
 (RNC: V. M. Belousova. *Vtoroj vystrel*. 2000)
 ‘This is Sasha, *I’m telling you*, it’s Sasha!’ ≈ ‘<you must> believe me, I repeat, that this is Sasha (not anybody else)’.

In order to properly define these kind of imperatives we might suggest the specific category of ‘strict imperative’. In the broad sense, however, the ‘strict imperative’ belongs to the same class of discourse markers as ‘I say’ or ‘Carl!’, although it needs to be adjusted for the requirements of the imperative context in which persistence is often coupled with repetition. Or, to put it differently, in Construction Grammar terms we can say that the known effect of *coercion* is at work here, when the structure and the semantics of the construction (the imperative, in this case) affects the linguistic unit (the discourse marker) that is embedded into it.

To sum it up, we can propose the following trajectory for the evolution of the Russian discourse markers associated with the recapitulation of the content of an utterance made previously (as a reminder to the addressee or for other communicative purposes).

Evidently, it began with the respective construction (*ja govorju / govorju ja*) emerging in Russian, highly probably due to the influence of the French *je dis*. It co-existed with its own native Russian variation and featured a syntactically explicit addressee (*ja tebe / vam govorju*) where the pronoun is weakly cliticized and does not take phrasal stress). Initially, the semantics and the usage contexts of both variants were close and even coincided, but they diverged over time. For all that, Russian has preserved both of the constructions, unlike contemporary French in which this discourse marker (as it is presented here) has definitely been lost.

Later on in contemporary Russian, the construction with the ‘reduced’ arguments shifted towards the sphere of ‘self-retelling’ (as direct self-citation or as a somehow reworked summary of one’s own words); in fact, explicating the addressee appears redundant in these contexts, and the construction with the ‘reduced’ argument structure proves optimal. As for the construction with the explicit addressee, it has moved to the area where the presence of the addressee is semantically reasonable, i.e. towards expressing a categorical command (either direct—in combination with the imperative, or oblique—in combination with other verbal forms). The emphatic construction in this case has virtually turned into a quasi-grammatical indication of the imperative of a peculiar kind—the ‘strict’, or persistent, imperative.

This transition is extremely interesting on its own, from the point of view of typology, as meanings often tend to pass from the area of subjective modality (this is how the original meaning of *ja [tebe / vam] govorju* should be categorized) to the locutive (speaker-oriented) domain where it becomes the source of imperative marking. This can even be observed in Russian, in simple examples with the particle *by*, cf.:

- (37) Prines by vody—čaju popili by → Vit', prines by vody!
 'Should you fetch some water, we could drink tea' (irrealis) → 'Vitya, could you fetch some water!' (imperative).

In this way, the behaviour of the phraseologized construction conforms with the well-attested and typologically relevant transition that is characteristic of grammatical units.

6 Conclusion

We consider the pilot project of the 19th century corpus to be a linguistic tool that will enable the investigation of an uncharted field of research, 'microdiachronic' changes. Microdiachrony will outline new linguistic objectives by means of comparing two language norms that are separated by the span of several centuries. The present study embraces three perspectives that are important to us in that they determine the possible future directions for research.

The first is the immense complexity of the mutual influence between the Russian and French languages of that time, which calls for more in-depth professional investigation.

The second perspective deals with the constructions that possess compound and non-compositional semantics; their semantic complexity stands out only when it strikes our eye, as readers or as linguists, by its incomplete compliance with the contemporary norm. In fact, the phrases *ja (tebe) govorju, govorju ja*, as well as the verbs of speech which have been long and thoroughly studied by linguists sound so habitual that it takes a special instrument to expose their non-triviality.

And finally, the third perspective deals with the semantic trajectory of the micro-changes of our construction, which also proves to be motivated (as well as the construction's meaning itself). As a matter of fact, it is quite predictable that the use of a construction with an initially very generic discourse meaning should be narrowed down over time. It has become 'frozen' in the two conspicuous discourse-significant and encompassing constructions—that of self-citation and of categorical incentive, and it undergoes different changes in their contexts. But this direction of development points to a widespread transition from a general modal meaning of intensity towards the development of an 'intersubjective' meaning of the locutionary (speaker-oriented) modality, a transition that is thought to be characteristic of the grammaticalization of pre-modal meanings in general (cf. Bybee, Perkins, and Pagliuca 1994, pp. 210–212; van der Auwera and Plungian 1998).

References

- Bezjaeva, M. G. (1997). "Kak vam skazat'?" Ob učastii konstrukcij s glagolami reči v formirovanii kommunikativnoj celeustanovki vyskazyvanija. *Vestnik MGU. Serija 9: Filologija*, 2, 62–87.
- Brinton, L. J. (2005). Processes underlying the development of pragmatic markers. The case of (*I*) say. In J. Skaffari, M. Peikola, R. Carroll, R. Hiltunen, & B. Wårvik (Eds.), *Opening windows on texts and discourses of the past* (Pragmatics / Beyond New Series, 134, pp. 279–299). Amsterdam, Philadelphia. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.134.23bri>.
- Bobrik, M. A. (2018). *Proza Osipa Mandel'stama 'Xolodnoe leto' (1923). Jazykovej kommentarij*. St. Petersburg.
- Bulaxovskij, L. A. (1954). *Russkij literaturnyj jazyk pervoj poloviny XIX veka. Fonetika. Morfologija. Udarenie. Sintaksis* (2nd ed.). Kiev.
- Bulaxovskij, L. A. (1957). *Russkij literaturnyj jazyk pervoj poloviny XIX veka. Leksika i obščie zamečanja o sloge* (2nd ed.). Kiev.

- Bybee, J., Perkins, R., & Pagliuca, W. (1994). *The evolution of grammar. Tense, aspect, and modality in the languages of the world*. Chicago.
- Comrie, B., Stone, G., & Polinsky, M. (1996). *The Russian language in the twentieth century*. Oxford.
- Dobrovol'skij, D. O. (2001). K dinamike uzusa (jazyk Puškina i sovremennoe slovuopotreblenie). *Russkij jazyk v naučnom osveščeenii*, 1, 161–178.
- Dobrušina, N. R., & Daniël, M. A. (Eds.) (2016). *Dva veka v dvadcati slovač*. Moskva.
- Fužeron, I. I., & Brejar, Ž. [Fougeron I. I., & Breuillard, J.] (2004). Mestoimenie 'ja' i postroenie diskursivnyx svjazej v sovremennom russkom jazyke. In T. M. Nikolaeva (Ed.), *Verbal'naja i neverbal'naja opory prostranstva mežfrazovyx svjazej. Kollektivnaja monografija* (pp. 147–165). Moskva.
- Jaeggli, O., & Safir, K. J. (1989). *The null subject parameter* (Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory, 15). Dordrecht.
- Krongauz, M. A. (Ed.) (2016). *Slovar' jazyka interneta.ru*. Moskva.
- Krysin, L. P. (Ed.) (2008). *Sovremennyy russkij jazyk. Aktivnye processy na rubeže XX–XXI vekov*. Moskva.
- Lotman, J. M. (1980). *Roman A. S. Puškina 'Evgenij Onegin'. Kommentarij. Posobie dlja učitelja*. Leningrad.
- Pen'kovskij, A. B. (2005). *Zagadki puškinskogo teksta i slovarja. Opyt filologičeskoj germenevtiki*. Moskva.
- Raxilina, E. V., Reznikova, T. I., & Borodina, M. A. (2016). 'Taman' segodnja'. Korpusnoe issledovanie russkogo jazyka XIX veka. In A. M. Moldovan (Ed.), *Materialy meždunarodnoj naučnoj konferencii 'Grammatičeskie processy i sistemy v sinxronii i diaxronii' 20 maja–1 ijunja 2016 g.* (Trudy instituta russkogo jazyka im V. V. Vinogradova, 10, pp. 242–255). Moskva.
- Testelefs, Ja. G. (2001). *Vvedenie v obščij sintaksis*. Moskva.
- Uspenskij, B. A. (1994). *Kratkij očerk istorii russkogo literaturnogo jazyka (XI–XIX vv.)*. Moskva.
- van der Auwera, J., & Plungian, V. A. (1998). Modality's semantic map. *Linguistic typology*, 2(1), 79–124.
- Vinogradov, V. V., & Švedova, N. Ju. (Eds.) (1964). *Očerki po istoričeskoj grammatike russkogo literaturnogo jazyka XIX veka*. (Vols. 1–5). Moskva.
- Zaliznjak, Andrej A. (2008). *Drevnerusskie enklitiki*. Moskva.
- Zaliznjak, Anna A. (2013). *Russkaja semantika v tipologičeskoj perspektive*. Moskva.
- Živov, V. M. (2004). *Očerki istoričeskoj morfologii russkogo jazyka XVII–XVIII vekov*. Moskva.
- Živov, V. M. (2009). Istorija ponjatij, istorija kul'tury, istorija obščestva. In V. M. Živov (Ed.), *Očerki istoričeskoj semantiki russkogo jazyka rannego novogo vremeni* (pp. 5–26). Moskva.