St Petersburg State University

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LINGUISTIC TAUTOLOGIES AND CONTRADICTIONS: INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIES (EVIDENCE FROM ENGLISH, RUSSIAN AND SPANISH)

Dissertation Summary
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The dissertation was prepared at St Petersburg State University.

Publications

Nine publications were selected for the defense. All publications are indexed in the Scopus or the Web of Science database; five articles are published in journals included in the first quartile of the Scopus; two articles are published in journals included in the second quartile of the Scopus.

1.   Escandell-Vidal V., Vilinbakhova E. Negated tautologies and copular contradictions: Interpretive strategies // International Review of Pragmatics. Vol. 11, № 2. 2019. P. 153–199. (Scopus Q2)

2.   Escandell-Vidal V., Vilinbakhova E. Coordinated tautologies in Spanish and Russian // Intercultural Pragmatics. Vol. 15, № 3. 2018. P. 315–348. (Scopus Q1)

3.   Vilinbakhova E. Kogda stat'ja – jeto ne stat'ja: "otricatel'nye tavtologii" v russkom jazyke [in Russian, When an article is not an article: Negated tautologies in Russian] // Computational Linguistics and Intellectual Technologies. Vol. 16. 2017. P. 441–452. (Scopus without quartile)

4.   Vilinbakhova E. Sopostavitel'nye tavtologii v russkom jazyke [in Russian, Coordinated tautologies in Russian] // Voprosy Jazykoznanija. Vol. 2. 2016. P. 61–74. (Scopus Q2)

5.   Vilinbakhova E. Stat'ja znachit stat'ja: ob odnom klasse tavtologicheskih konstrukcij v russkom jazyke [in Russian, Article means article: On one pattern of tautologies in Russian] // Computational Linguistics and Intellectual Technologies. Vol. 14. 2015. P. 626–637. (Scopus without quartile)

6.   Vilinbakhova E., Escandell-Vidal V., Zevakhina N. Tautologies, inferential processes and constraints on evoked knowledge // Journal of Pragmatics. Vol. 191. 2022. P. 55–66. (Scopus Q1)

7.   Vilinbakhova E., Escandell-Vidal V. Tautologies with proper names in discourse: Rhetorical relations and interpretation // Language and Communication. Vol. 76. 2021. P. 79–99. (Scopus Q1)

8.   Vilinbakhova E., Escandell-Vidal V. Interpreting nominal tautologies: Dimensions of knowledge and genericity // Journal of Pragmatics. Vol. 160. 2020. P. 97–113. (Scopus Q1)

9.   Vilinbakhova E., Escandell-Vidal V. "People are people to me": The interpretation of tautologies with frame-setters // Journal of Pragmatics. Vol. 143. 2019. P. 96–108. (Scopus Q1)

The results of the present study have also been presented in the following papers:

10.   Boguslavsky I., Vilinbakhova E. Imena sobstvennye v sfere dejstvija metajazykovogo otricanija [in Russian, Proper names in the scope of metalinguistic negation] // Computational Linguistics and Intellectual Technologies. Vol. 21. 2022. P. 132–140.

11.   Escandell-Vidal V., Vilinbakhova E. Contexto, conocimiento compartido y acomodación. A propósito de la interpretación de las tautologías // Boletín de Filología. Vol. 57. 2022. P. 345–394.

12.   Vilinbakhova E. Konstrukcii s leksicheskimi povtorami kak evidencial'nye strategii [in Russian, Constructions with lexical repetitions as evidential strategies] // Verus convictor, verus academicus. Festchrift for N. Kazansky / ed. by M. Kisilier. St Petersburg: ILS RAS, 2022. P. 100–109.

13.   Vilinbakhova E. Sravnitel'nye konstrukcii s tozhdestvennymi slovoformami v russkom jazyke [in Russian, Comparative constructions with identical word forms] // Computational Linguistics and Intellectual Technologies. Vol. 20. 2021. P. 1224–1232.

14.   Vilinbakhova E. Chto budet, to (i) budet: ob odnom klasse tavtologicheskih konstrukcij v russkom jazyke [in Russian, Chto budet, to (i) budet: On one pattern of tautologies in Russian] // Computational Linguistics and Intellectual Technologies. Vol. 17. 2018. P. 775–790.

15.   Vilinbakhova E., Kopotev M. "X est' X" znachit "X eto X"? Ishhem otvet v sinhronii i diahronii [in Russian, Does "X est' X" mean "X eto X"? Looking for an answer in synchrony and diachrony] // Voprosy Jazykoznanija. Vol. 3. 2017. P. 110–124.

16.   Vilinbakhova E. Kak govoritsja, stat'ja est' stat'ja: nekotorye aspekty funkcionirovanija tavtologij v kommunikacii [in Russian, As they say, an article is an article: Some aspects of use of tautologies in communication] // Computational Linguistics and Intellectual Technologies. Vol. 15. 2016. P. 817–829.

17.   Vilinbakhova E. K voprosu o tavtologicheskoj konstrukcii vida koshach'ja koshka v internet-istochnikah (na materiale russkogo jazyka) [in Russian, Tautologies of type koshachja koshka (cattish cat) in Russian internet language] // Acta Linguistica Petropolitana. Transactions of the Institute for Linguistic Studies. Vol. VI. № 3. 2010. P. 26–30.

Conference talks

The main findings of the study were discussed in 2010–2022 at 35 international conferences, including the following:

• International conference on computational linguistics and intellectual technologies "Dialogue" (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2021, 2022);

• International Symposium on Intercultural, Cognitive and Social Pragmatics (EPICS) (2018, 2020, 2022);

• Simposio de la Sociedad Española de Lingüística (2022);

• Moscow HSE Pragmatics Workshop (2021);

• International Pragmatics Association Conference (IPRA) (2017, 2019, 2021);

- HSE Semantics and Pragmatics Workshop (2018, 2020);
- Stance, (Inter)Subjectivity, Identity in Discourse (2020);
- Annual meeting of the Slavic Linguistic Society (2020);
- Conference "Language issues: a young scholars' perspective" organized by the Institute of Linguistics, RAS (2014, 2019);
- Conference "Russian language: construction and lexico-semantic approaches" organized by the Institute of Linguistic Studies, RAS (2013, 2019);
- International conference "Comparative Approaches to Pragmatics" (2018);
- Constructional semantics: Cognitive, functional and typological approaches (2018);
- 15th Slavic Cognitive Linguistics Conference (2017);
- International Philological Research Conference of St Petersburg State University (2015, 2017);
- Lodz Symposium "New Developments in Linguistic Pragmatics" (2015, 2017);
- 7th International Conference on Intercultural Pragmatics and Communication (INPRA) (2016);
- Conference on Typology and Grammar for Young Scholars (2010).

Funding and awards

- Scholarship Giner de los Ríos funded by the University of Alcalá (2020, 2022).

  The study was recognised by the following awards:

- St Petersburg State University Award for scientific works (Premija "Za nauchnye trudy"), December 2018.

- International Award of the Academy of Europe for young scientists 'Academia Europeae Prize' in Humanities, December 2016.

1. Introduction

This study discusses linguistic tautologies and contradictions, such as *Friends are friends* and *Venice is not Venice*. Their usage in speech constitutes a challenge to theories of language use and interpretation. Tautological and contradictory sentences state propositions that are either necessarily true or necessarily false and appear to be non-informative. However, in everyday communication they manage to contribute meaning in a variety of ways in different discourse contexts.

We analyse the interpretation of tautological and contradictory utterances within the framework of a number of state-of-the-art linguistic theories concerning, in particular, metalinguistic negation (Horn 1985, 1989; Burton-Roberts 1989; Carston 1996; Geurts 1998; Larrivée 2018; Moeschler 2018), subjectivity (Lasersohn 2005; Stephenson 2007; Stojanovic 2007; Moltmann 2010; Pearson 2013; Bylinina 2014, 2017; Umbach 2016; Solt 2018), the interpretation of generic sentences (Lawler 1973; Carlson 1977; 1995; Cohen 2001; Krifka 2013; Leslie and Lerner 2016), and rhetorical relations (Mann and Thompson 1988; Jasinskaja and Karagjosova 2021).

The study includes nine articles, which are divided into five sections, dedicated to the role of general knowledge in the interpretation of tautologies; rhetorical relations, in which tautologies are involved; the contribution of modifiers of various types, such as judge prepositional phrases and functional standard *for*-phrases, spatiotemporal modifiers and universal quantifiers, to the interpretation of tautologies; the distinction between negative tautologies, which reject the message transmitted by the corresponding affirmative tautology, and formally identical contradictions, which do not require the evocation of an affirmative tautology; structural and semantic features of coordinated tautologies, which include two or more equative tautologies *X cop X*.

The general **aim** of the study is a multidimensional analysis of linguistic tautologies and contradictions based on corpus and experimental data from Russian, English and Spanish from the viewpoint of contemporary linguistic theories actively discussed in the semantic and pragmatic literature; this determines the **relevance** of our work for theoretical linguistics.

The **innovative aspects** of the study, which have not been explored in the previous work, can be summarised as follows. First, while tautologies with prepositional phrases that overtly introduce the individual or set of individuals to which the asserted content is related, i.e., *people are people to me*, are commonly used in discourse, the contribution of prepositional phrases to the interpretation of tautologies has not been analysed in the previous literature. This is done in

our work. Next, while in most studies the crucial role of context for the interpretation of tautologies is taken for granted, so far different types of contexts haven't been studied in detail. We were the first to look at the relations of tautologies with preceding and following discourse in the framework of Rhetorical Structure Theory. This allows to provide a taxonomy of different kinds of contexts in which tautologies are encountered and explore tendencies and limitations both qualitatively and quantitively. We found that the claim made in the previous work about the implicit evocation of common knowledge as the important benefit of the usage of tautologies does not always hold, and overt verbalization of the evoked properties is in fact not unusual. What is more, in our study we analysed the interaction between different dimensions of knowledge evoked by tautologies, and were the first to demonstrate the existing constraints for metalinguistic tautologies: they transmit general linguistic rules, but not local inductive generalizations. Besides, we provided a justified distinction between negated tautologies and copular contradictions. Finally, the use of contemporary linguistic theories, concerning metalinguistic negation, subjectivity, genericity, and rhetorical relations is a new approach to the analysis of linguistic tautologies, which allows to go beyond the description of specific language expressions and make wider generalizations.

The following **theses** are proposed for the defense:

(1) Tautologies as generic statements evoke the following types of knowledge: (i) knowledge about the world (encyclopaedic) vs. knowledge about language (metalinguistic); (ii) normative vs. descriptive knowledge; (iii) common vs. local knowledge. While tautologies referring to properties of the real-world entities can evoke both common and local knowledge, which can be in turn either normative or descriptive, metalinguistic tautologies can only be normative and refer to common linguistic knowledge.

(2) Common knowledge is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for the interpretation of tautologies. On the one hand, the referent's properties can be either inferred from the context or altogether irrelevant for the transmitted message. For instance, so-called formal tautologies are employed as a response for information-seeking questions when one of the interlocutors overtly shows the lack of knowledge and the other refuses to provide the requested information. On the other hand, common knowledge is not sufficient, as there are constraints on the properties evoked by tautologies: only permanent properties, but not temporary states, are allowed.

(3) Tautologies exhibit no constraints on the rhetorical relations, in which they are involved, including the relation of *Elaboration*, when the conveyed message is provided explicitly in the

surrounding context. Therefore, the implicit transmission of information, presented in the literature as justification for the use of tautologies in discourse (Miki 1996), is neither the main nor the only function of tautologies.

(4) For tautologies occurring with frame-setting adjuncts different types of modifiers contribute to their overall interpretation. First, judge *for/to*-phrases indicate the opinion-holder endorsing the content of the tautology, while functional-standard *for*-phrases point to the specific individual to whom the tautology applies. Next, spatiotemporal frames implicate that the tautology holds in a particular period of time or location or identify the source of the belief expressed by the tautology. Finally, universal quantifier adverbs, along with functional-standard *for*-phrases, guide the addressee towards the literal, non-vague interpretation of the tautology.

(5) The class of utterances with the structure *A is not A* is heterogeneous: it includes negated tautologies and contradictions. Negated tautologies involve identification of the corresponding affirmative tautology and rejection of the assumptions derived from it. The interpretation of contradictions is based on distinguishing each of the occurrences of the repeated constituent as describing (a) one single referent with different properties; (b) two different referents satisfying the same description; (c) two different referents with different properties.

(6) Coordinated tautologies such as *Kids are kids and adults are adults* are compositional structures. On the one hand, their contrastive interpretation described in the previous work is not linked to the single fixed form: it can be conveyed by more than two conjoined tautologies, there can be other coordinating conjunctions, and there can be no conjunction at all. On the other hand, coordinated tautologies are employed to reinforce points of view grounded on the similarity of conjuncts, not their differences, hence, the contrastive interpretation is not the only possibility.

2. Tautologies and shared knowledge

2.1. Dimensions of knowledge evoked by tautologies and their interaction

Papers selected for the defense: (Vilinbakhova 2015; Vilinbakhova and Escandell-Vidal 2020).

In the literature on nominal tautologies it is standardly assumed that they evoke shared knowledge of the interlocutors (Fraser 1988; Escandell-Vidal 1990; Gibbs and McCarrell 1990; Wierzbicka 1991; Farghal 1992; Okamoto 1993; Miki 1996; Autenrieth 1997; Meibauer 2008; Rhodes 2009; Kwon 2014). However, the exact nature of this knowledge has not been examined in detail. Based on the comments in the previous work, three different dimensions of knowledge can be identified: (i) knowledge about the world (encyclopaedic) *vs.* knowledge about language (metalinguistic); (ii) normative *vs.* descriptive knowledge; (iii) common *vs.* local knowledge. So

far only the first dimension was discussed in detail (Miki 1996; Bulygina and Shmelev 1997; Bulhof and Gimbel 2001; Meibauer 2008), while two other dimensions did not get much attention. Besides, the interplay between these dimensions and possible combinations of different types of knowledge was not previously examined. In this study, based on the Russian and English languages[1], we aimed to fill this gap.

In our study we are making use of Meibauer's (2008) distinction between enriching tautologies and restricting tautologies. Applying Levinson's (2000) neo-Gricean framework model to tautologies, Meibauer shows that enriching tautologies convey a generalized conversational I-implicature inviting stereotypical enrichment about real-world entities, while restricting tautologies are exploiting Q-heuristics, which induces a metalinguistic mode of inference, and deal with the interpretation of the repeated linguistic expression, narrowing it to its dictionary meaning. Meibauer regards both classes as parallel, but we demonstrate that this is not the case if we take other dimensions of knowledge into account.

In principle, the three dimensions of shared knowledge can be combined in eight possible configurations – four for enriching tautologies and four for restricting tautologies. However, adopting the observations from the literature on generic statements (Lawler 1973; Carlson 1977; 1995; Cohen 2001; Krifka 2013; Leslie and Lerner 2016), of which tautologies are a subset, we show that there are five possible combinations – four for enriching tautologies, and one for restricting tautologies.

Specifically, in enriching tautologies encyclopaedic knowledge can be combined with any value for the other two dimensions. An example of enriching descriptive tautologies is (1), invoking the well-known inductive generalization 'with your family you go through all kinds of things' (*descriptive & encyclopaedic & common knowledge*). In (2) the speaker employs an enriching normative tautology, invoking a commonly accepted moral rule 'gentlemen do not humiliate harmless people' (*normative & encyclopaedic & common knowledge*). (3) and (4) are enriching tautologies adducing a local inductive generalization about the speaker's father (*descriptive & encyclopaedic & local knowledge*) and a local rule about the speaker's time (*normative & encyclopaedic & local knowledge*).

(1) *"Do you ever argue and scream at family members?" he said. "It's called family biz. **Family is family**, and you go through all kinds of things, and if that's news to you then you're being delusional."* (COCA[2])

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(2) *"You should be ashamed of yourself." "What? For telling him he's a liar?" said her husband. "No gentleman would do such a thing," replied his wife. "**A liar's a liar**," said Mr. Platt. "**And a gentleman is a gentleman** and wouldn't say so," said his wife in unaccustomed rebellion.* (COCA)

(3) **My father being my father***, he tensely urges my mother to relax, will she, about the situation.* (COCA)

(4) *"Let me think about this," he says. "Of course," she says, "but if you agree, you must never encroach on my time. Ever. **My time is my time**."* (COCA)

On the other hand, restricting metalinguistic tautologies, in accordance with their discourse function of signalling a literal definitional use of a linguistic expression (Bulhof and Gimbel 2001; Meibauer 2008), can only be normative, that is, they can only express a linguistic rule à la Cohen (2001) and Krifka (2013), and refer to common linguistic knowledge, see (5) invoking a linguistic rule 'a problem is a question that demands solution' and a tautology *a liar's a liar* in (3) (*normative & metalinguistic & common knowledge*). In (Vilinbakhova 2015) metalinguistic tautologies are explored in detail using data from Russian.

(5) *"A teacher of mine always tells us there are no problems. We should call them challenges," Susan answered. "Oh, poppycock!" Grama snorted irritably. " [...] I prefer not to play that kind of word-game. **A problem is a problem.** Just that. A problem, like in mathematics, is a question that demands a solution."* (COCA)

We argue that this lack of parallelism between enriching and restricting tautologies is not surprising. First, the evocation of normative but not descriptive knowledge in restricting tautologies can be expected since they form a subset of definitional generics (Krifka 2013), which in turn belong to a broader class of rules-and-regulations generics (Cohen 2001). At the same time, enriching tautologies form a subset of both inductive generalizations and physical, biological, social or moral rules. In addition, the impossibility of evoking local knowledge in restricting tautologies follows from the fact that if a tautology *X is X* turns out to be restricting, its interpretation is immediately fully specified: the addressee will tend to understand the term *X* in its literal meaning (which is unique and known to every competent language speaker). In contrast, for enriching tautologies, when the addressee retrieves some encyclopaedic properties of X, the interpretation is not specified at all, since the number of such properties can be significant. Hence, added contextual assumptions, including local knowledge, are only useful for enriching tautologies, but not for restricting tautologies: in the event of a clash between common linguistic knowledge and local linguistic knowledge, the former always prevails. This explains

the impossibility of the evocation of local knowledge for restricting tautologies, and its availability for enriching tautologies.

2.2. Tautologies and constraints on evoked knowledge

<u>Papers selected for the defense</u>: (Vilinbakhova and Escandell-Vidal 2020; Vilinbakhova, Escandell-Vidal, Zevakhina 2022).

While in the previous study we examined the nature of shared knowledge evoked by the tautologies, in this study based on the English language[3] we discuss whether shared knowledge is a necessary ingredient in their interpretation. More specifically, we argue that invoking shared knowledge is at the same time too strict and too vague as a condition for the understanding of tautologies in context. This claim is spelled out in the following hypotheses. First, the hearer's previous knowledge about some specific set of properties of the entity referred to in the tautology is not always necessary. Lack of previous knowledge can be repaired by accommodating new assumptions or compensated by providing additional explicit content in discourse. Second, the hearer's previous knowledge about some specific set of properties of the entity referred to in the tautology is not always sufficient. Only permanent, classificatory properties can be evoked by a tautology; contingent states, by contrast, are systematically rejected, even if they constitute shared knowledge and are supported by the context.

To test these hypotheses, we have focused on the subset of nominal tautologies with proper names. Due to the fact that the chosen tautologies involve proper names which do not have linguistic meaning (see Van Langendonck 2007: ch. 3 for an overview), they always refer to world-knowledge. This allows us to isolate some variables, such as the dichotomy between metalinguistic or real-world knowledge, and the interlocutors' acquaintance with general categories, such as natural kind terms, and focus on the constraints of shared knowledge.

First, we carried out a corpus study to find evidence for the absence of specific previous knowledge. We were interested in examples in which the evoked knowledge is not needed for the successful interpretation of tautologies. The design for English data is described in (Vilinbakhova, Escandell-Vidal, Zevakhina 2022).

The examination of the corpus data has shown that tautologies with proper names do not always require precise, preexisting shared assumptions to be felicitous. The exact property can either be irrelevant for the conveyed message, or is provided by the context, when tautologies are followed by overt cues about the intended interpretation. This indicates that the speaker is not

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[3] The study on this subject based on the Spanish language is described in Escandell-Vidal and Vilinbakhova (2022).

confident that the addressee can identify the specific assumption she is transmitting by means of the tautology only, so she makes it explicit, thus making the existence of previously shared assumptions unnecessary.

It is worth noting that in (Vilinbakhova and Escandell-Vidal 2020) we also discuss a class of formal tautologies, such as (6), in which shared knowledge cannot be invoked at all. Formal tautologies appear in contexts where the hearer admits his ignorance with regard to the properties of an entity and asks for clarification. It is mutually manifest to both the utterer of tautology and the addressee that the potential evocation of shared encyclopaedic or metalinguistic knowledge is ruled out, and hence the only available interpretation of the tautology is a literal one, an "empty" claim communicating the equation of two identical symbols. Formal tautologies can be used to avoid providing the requested information, due to either the speaker's inability or unwillingness to do so.

(6) *A: -What kind of person is your father?*
    *B: -Oh, **my father is my father**. (Meibauer 2008: 447)*

Next, we designed an experimental study, see (Vilinbakhova, Escandell-Vidal, Zevakhina 2022) for details. We asked the participants to identify the intended interpretation of the tautology between a permanent attribute and a transitory state. If the distinction is relevant, as we claimed, the prediction was that permanent, classificatory properties would be clearly preferred. As a result, critical items, in which the conveyed message included permanent properties, received significantly more yes-answers than critical items with transitory states. Therefore, our second hypothesis was confirmed.

In sum, the results of both the corpus study and the experimental study align with the predictions of our hypotheses. First, shared knowledge is not a necessary requirement for the felicitous use of tautologies. The corpus study showed that speakers frequently complement tautologies with additional material, which indicates that it is not the evocation of actually shared knowledge what is at stake here, but the presentation of an irrefutable truth (whether shared or not). Next, shared knowledge is not a sufficient condition either. The results of the experiments showed that only inherent or classificatory properties of an individual can be invoked by using a tautology with proper name.

3. Tautologies and rhetorical relations

Paper selected for the defense: (Vilinbakhova and Escandell-Vidal 2021).

In this study based on the English language[4] we focus on the use of tautologies in discourse. While in the previous work on tautologies the authors emphasize the importance of a wider context in the interpretation of tautologies (Levinson 1983; Gibbs and McCarrell 1990; Kwon 2014), so far different types of contexts haven't been studied in detail. Here we look at the relations of tautologies with preceding and following discourse in the framework of the theories of discourse structure (Mann and Thompson 1988; Jasinskaja and Karagjosova 2021). It allows to provide a taxonomy of different kinds of contexts in which tautologies are encountered and explore its tendencies and limitations. Just as in the study described above, we analysed a sample of nominal tautologies with proper names, since they make it possible to isolate and control most of the variables determining interpretation, such as the noun type or the kind of knowledge.

Following the tradition of Rhetorical Structure Theory, an influential account of discourse coherence relations developed by Mann and Thompson (Mann and Thompson 1988), and its followers (Asher and Vieu 2005; Zeevat 2011; Jasinskaja and Karagjosova 2021, a. o.), we focused on monologue texts[5]. The set of rhetorical relations was taken from Jasinskaja and Karagjosova (2021) and included *Contrast, Elaboration, Explanation, Narration, Parallel,* and *Result*. The choice of Jasinskaja and Karagjosova's (2021) proposal is explained by its cognitive plausibility and the support given to it by real linguistic phenomena.

Observations about the role of tautologies in discourse found in previous studies indicate their argumentative force induced by their literal truthfulness and implicit transmission of the intended message. These properties were expected to constrain the contexts in which tautologies with proper names are encountered and their relations with other discourse units. For instance, since tautologies serve as strong arguments, we would expect them to appear as justifications in the rhetorical relation of *Explanation*, but not as arguments in the first part of a *Contrast* relation, in which they would be overridden by the counterarguments in the second part. Similarly, tautologies are hardly be anticipated as nuclei in the rhetorical relation of *Elaboration*, as they are used precisely to avoid explicit mention of evoked properties of the referent.

However, it turned out that the tautologies with proper names analysed exhibited no constraints on the rhetorical relations in which they were involved, including *Contrast, Parallel, Narration, Result, Elaboration* and *Explanation*. In our English sample, as shown in (Vilinbakhova and Escandell-Vidal 2021), *Elaboration* is the most commonly occurring

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[4] The study of this topic based on the Spanish language is described in Escandell-Vidal and Vilinbakhova (2022).

[5] See also the comment of Zeevat: "It is often assumed that all the sentences in a text (but things do not change much if one switches to dialogue, **though it is less appropriate to call the relations 'discourse relations' or 'rhetorical relations' in that case** [our emphasis]) are related to other sentences by rhetorical relations." (Zeevat 2011: 416)

rhetorical relation, suggesting that overt verbalization of the evoked properties is in fact not unusual. On the other hand, the second most common role for tautologies with proper names as a decisive argument in rhetorical relations is that of *Contrast*. Moreover, we found tautologies with proper names occurring frequently as satellite-justifications in the relation of *Explanation*, which is consistent with the claims in the literature about the argumentative force of tautologies.

Overall, our findings point to the fact that tautologies with proper names have a wide variety of possible interpretations, and hence can be found in an unconstrained range of rhetorical relations. Their frequent role as nuclei in *Elaboration* rhetorical relations shows that the implicit evocation of a particular property cannot be inherent to tautologies, while their involvement in the rhetorical relations *Contrast* and *Explanation* supports the claim that it is their argumentative force that matters.

4. Tautologies with frame-setters

Paper selected for the defense: (Vilinbakhova and Escandell-Vidal 2019).

In this study based on English data we examine so called 'framed' tautologies, i.e. tautologies, which occur with frame-setters of three types, including (i) expressions that overtly introduce individuals to which the asserted content is related; (ii) spatiotemporal adjuncts; (iii) universal quantifiers. We explore possible interpretive strategies available for framed tautologies and the contribution of the frame-setters of each type.

First, we look at tautologies combined with *for/to*-phrases occurring in either initial or final position that restrict the validity of a tautology to a specific individual or group, see (7-8). We distinguish two kinds of frames: judge *for/to*-phrases, discussed in the literature on subjectivity (Lasersohn 2005; Stephenson 2007; Stojanovic 2007; Moltmann 2010; Pearson 2013; Bylinina 2014, 2017; Umbach 2016; Solt 2018) and functional-standard *for*-phrases, described in (Kagan, Alexejenko 2010; Bylinina 2012). They exhibit both structural and interpretive differences. While judge prepositional phrases combine both with enriching tautologies and restricting tautologies (or, in Bulhof and Gimbel's (2001) terminology, tautologies that convey implicatures and deep tautologies), functional-standard *for*-phrases are only available with restricting, or deep tautologies. Besides, judge prepositional phrases can be found with both prepositions *for* and *to*, which is not the case for functional-standard *for*-phrases. Finally, functional-standard *for*-phrases can refer to inanimate entities, while judge *for*-phrases can only denote individuals, and the responsibility for endorsing a particular attitude is found in judge prepositional phrases, but not necessarily in functional-standard *for*-phrases.

(7) *For me* **money is money** *and I don't mind my parents borrowing money from me on occasions and not paying back right away.* (https://forums.soompi.com/en/topic/260421-money-argument/)

(8) *LETTER:* **Rules are rules** *for Doty Park tennis courts.*
(https://www.journalscene.com/opinion/letter-rules-are-rules-for-doty-park-tennis-courts/article_e89e10ec-90ec-11e8-a264-439abb298d7c.html)

Next, we discuss spatiotemporal frame-setters. According to Maienborn and Schäfer, their role is to put explicit restrictions on the validity of the assertion, and their omission usually does not preserve truth, see (Maienborn 2001; Maienborn and Schäfer 2012; Ernst 2016). The scope of locative and temporal phrases is not fully specified by the grammar; rather, it has to be fixed inferentially: it can be the whole sentence as an abstract object, a discourse-salient implicit topic, identified as the attitude-holder or the source of the belief expressed, and the subject of the tautology, see (9-11).

(9) *Working too much made me turn to eating. I don't take work home anymore because I know where that leads-to not taking care of myself and bingeing.* *Now* **work is work** *and home is peace, or at least the pursuit thereof.* (COCA)

(10) *A: How are U.S. born Latino-Americans perceived abroad, particularly Europe?*
B: There is absolutely no opinion at all *here in Europe* **people are people***, exactly how it should be.* (https://www.quora.com/How-are-U-S-born-Latino-Americans-perceived-abroad-particularly-Europe)

(11) *In Russia* **a friend is a friend,** *in happy times and in difficulties. People support each other in any circumstances. I cannot say the same about foreigners.* (etheses.bham.ac.uk/3164/2/Gladkikh_11_PhD.pdf)

Finally, when universal quantifier adverbs act as frames of a tautology, their role is to guide the addressee towards its literal, non-vague interpretation, see (12), where the adverbial *always* points towards a literal interpretation of the tautology (a deep-tautology reading): 'words are (nothing more than) words'.

(12) *Well,* **words are** *always* **words***, and if words are not backed by deeds, then I'm not inclined to trust them, all the more so since we are dealing with a politician, a major political figure whose words on numerous occasions have diverged from deeds.* (COCA)

We conclude that interpreting a framed tautology is a matter of reconciling the mismatch between the semantics of an analytic proposition with that of a contingent frame – one that is either too restrictive or redundant.

5. Negated tautologies and contradictions

Papers selected for the defense: (Vilinbakhova 2017; Escandell-Vidal and Vilinbakhova 2019).

In the present study we discuss the class of utterances with the structure *X is not X*. Relying on the notions of descriptive and metalinguistic negation, we demonstrate that they fall into two distinct subsets: negated tautologies and copular contradictions. Our theoretical proposal is supported by examples from Russian and Spanish, as well as examples from English and German attested in the literature.

First, we examine the interpretation of negated tautologies, which draws on the understanding of formal and interpretive properties of their affirmative counterparts – tautologies with the structure *X is X*. The negative operator has scope over an affirmative tautology in the form of a public or mental lower-order representation, see Carston (2002). For instance, Horn's example (13) is the direct denial of a previously introduced tautology *Motor oil is motor oil*, and a negated tautology *Motor oil is definitely NOT motor oil* conveys a rejection of the set of assumptions conveyed via the corresponding affirmative tautology: more specifically, quantity-based implicature of sameness of motor oils notwithstanding their brand (Horn 1989: 562). It is an instance of metalinguistic negation used to register "objections to a previous utterance (not proposition) on any grounds whatever, including the way it was pronounced" (Horn 1985: 121), see also (Horn 1989; Burton-Roberts 1989; Carston 1996; Chapman 1996; Geurts 1998; Larrivée 2018; Moeschler 2018, a. o.).

(13) *A: What brand of motor oil do you use?*   (Horn 1989: 562)
     *B [starting car engine]: **Motor oil is motor oil**.*
      [Smoke belches out of B's exhaust.]
     *Voice-over: **Motor oil is** definitely **NOT motor oil** (from a commercial for Quaker State Motor Oil).*

In our study we show that not all classes of tautologies can be negated: only metalinguistic, or deep, tautologies, which point to the literal use of a word, can appear as lower-order representations in analysed utterances. Therefore, negated tautologies inherit some constraints from their affirmative counterparts, such as non-acceptance of proper names, or linguistic expressions with different meaning or use, and form only a subset of utterances with the structure *X is not X*.

Then we turn to the second class – copular contradictions. Their understanding is based on distinguishing each of the occurrences of the repeated constituent in a way that can both explain the similarities (in order to legitimate the use of a single linguistic expression for both of them) and the differences (as required to eliminate the contradiction). We describe three strategies to differentiate the two occurrences of the same constituent. Within the first strategy the referent is the same for both occurrences, but its properties are different for each of them depending on the circumstances of evaluation, including the temporal, the modal and the epistemic domain. In (14) the referent is examined at two different moments in time (past and present) and the narrator notices that his properties are not exactly the same, including his position and social status.

(14) *Vdrug on uvidel jasno:* **Arsiuška** *daleko uže* **ne Arsiuška**. *<...> Arsenij Iustinovič Florinsky, deistvitel'nyi tainyi sovetnik, senator, vhož k gosudariu, odin iz zapravil departamenta.* (RNC[6])

'Suddenly he understood clearly that Arsiuška is not at all Arsiuška <…> Arsenij Iustinovič Florinsky, a privy councillor and a senator, is allowed to address the monarch and is one of the most important people in the Department.'

Within the second strategy the referents are different for each occurrence depending on the circumstances of evaluation, but the set of properties is the same. In (15) the referent that will be picked out by a speaker of American English for the NP *the first floor* does not correspond to the description 'the first floor' for a British speaker. The correction clause offers the description that better translates the set of features of the intended referent.

(15) *A:* **The first floor is not the first floor**, *it's the second floor*.   (Noh 1998: 193)
B: Oh, now I remember that the first floor is the ground floor in London

Within the third strategy both the referents and their properties are different for each occurrence, but the linguistic expression used happens to be the same, see (16). In the context of the rules of photographic composition the speaker explains that the centre of interest of the picture should not be placed in the geometrical centre of the picture. Thus, two different meanings of the word *centre* are used, each picking out a different kind of referent.

(16) *…volvemos a nuestra segunda regla. Composición:* **el centro no es el centro**. (https://nomadistas23.rssing.com/chan-16729993/all_p2.html)
'…we come back to our second rule. Composition: the centre is not the centre.'

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[6] The Russian National Corpus, URL: www.ruscorpora.ru

In sum, we conclude that the utterances with the structure *X is not X* can be fully informative and are felicitously used and understood in discourse, and their interpretation is based on general principles of how human cognition works.

6. Coordinated tautologies

<u>Papers selected for the defense</u>: (Vilinbakhova 2016; Escandell-Vidal and Vilinbakhova 2018).

In this study we make a contribution to the discussion of the properties and the behavior of coordinated tautologies with the structure *X is X and Y is Y*. It was first described by Wierzbicka (1991) referring to it as 'double tautologies' with the associated meaning of "irreducible difference" and later elaborated by Meibauer (2008) on German data. In our works we address the issue of compositionality in the construction and interpretation of coordinated tautologies based on evidence from Russian and Spanish.

First, we demonstrate that coordinated tautologies are not necessarily a pair of *and*-conjoined equative tautologies. We encounter examples where there are more than two members, as in (17), there are other coordinating conjunctions, as in (18), and there is no conjunction at all, as in (19). Thus, the idea that coordinated tautologies are a sort of fixed idiom construction suggested by Wierzbicka (1991) and Meibauer (2008) loses a central source of support.

(17) *Ya, pero es lo que hay... **la tele es la tele, los libros son los libros y la pela es la pela**. Habrá que aceptar que son cosas distintas, aunque empezara como una adaptación fiel se está convirtiendo en... otra cosa.* (https://www.lashorasperdidas.com/index.php/2014/05/29/la-quinta-temporada-de-juego-de-tronos-se-rodara-parcialmente-en-espana/)
'Yes, but this is how it works… TV is TV, books are books and dough is dough. One should accept that these are different things, although it starts as a faithful adaptation, it then turns into … another thing.'

(18) ***Fišer – eto Fišer, no kon' – eto kon'.*** (http://kavkaz-chess.ru/?p = 19817)
'Fischer is Fischer, but a knight is a knight.'

(19) *Sprašivajut, čto lučše – Moskva ili Piter? Oni očen' raznye, nikakoj iz nix dlja menja ne lučše i ne huže. **Moskva – eto Moskva, Piter – eto Piter**.* (RNC)
'They ask me what is better – Moscow or St Petersburg. They are very distinct, for me none of them is better or worse. Moscow is Moscow, St Petersburg is St Petersburg.'

Next, we demonstrate that coordinated tautologies exhibit a range of interpretations which is more diverse than described in the literature. For instance, the contrastive interpretation, recognized as prototypical for coordinated tautologies in Wierzbicka (1991) and Meibauer

(2008), can be elaborated in many ways. Entities under discussion can be perceived as symmetrically different, as in (17) and (19), or, on the contrary, suggest a clear preference for one member over the other(s), as in (18). What is more, contrastive interpretation is not the only possibility: coordinated tautologies can be employed to reinforce points of view grounded on the similarity of conjuncts. Consider (20), which describes people who are not afraid of legal proceedings and have confidence that they will be released soon, and coordinated tautologies just enumerate two stages of legal proceedings that are not in opposition, but in a sequence. This suggests that there is no constant form/meaning association, so coordinated tautologies are not subject to conventional interpretation.

(20) *...tienen confianza en sus amigos, en su abogado, en su causa, en su dinero y **olvidan que un calabozo es un calabozo y un proceso un proceso,** y que tanto podrán salir en libertad dentro de dos horas como dentro de dos meses o de dos años* (https://jeffersonal. issuu.com/rositanavarretegaete/docs/93513257-hijo_de_ladr_n_4_/239)

'… they believe in their friends, their attorney, their rights, their money and forget that prison is prison and a trial is a trial, and that they can get out not only in two hours, but also in two months or two years.'

Therefore, we conclude that coordinated tautologies are compositional with respect to both form and interpretation. The various readings that can be found are the result of pragmatic inference combining the unspecified encoded meaning and the information obtained from the context.

7. Conclusions

The purpose of our studies has been to analyse the variety of interpretive strategies of linguistic tautologies and contradictions. To this end, we applied to our corpus and experimental data relevant observations from works on metalinguistic negation, subjectivity, generic sentences, and rhetorical relations. A number of research topics were examined for the first time, including the constraints on shared knowledge in the interpretation of tautologies, their role in rhetorical relations, the use of tautologies with frame-setters, the distinction between negated tautologies and contradictions. Our results suggest that the way in which tautologies and contradictions are interpreted follows general paths of utterance interpretation in which linguistic form, previous knowledge and contextual factors merge.

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