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## Peculiarities of the comparative expression in Russian proverbs with a comparative degree of adverb

**Eseniya P. Pavlotski**

Master student,

Novosibirsk State Pedagogical University,

630126, 28 Vilyuiskaya st., Novosibirsk, Russian Federation;

e-mail: eseniia.p@gmail.com

### Abstract

The article describes structures with forms of comparative degree of adverbs used in Russian proverbs. The author analyzes the specificity of these constructions, conditioned by the property of qualitative adverbs to adhere to the verb, as well as by the genre nature of proverbs that have a high degree of laconicism and implicitness. Verbs are mainly the objects of comparison (comparats) in adverbs, and the second verb is often omitted in proverbs. To analyze such structures, the author restores all the necessary structural components. The classification of comparison objects is based on a number of parameters: the number of situations to be compared (the situation with one action and the subject-reference / situation with several compared actions); the actors, producing actions (situations with one subject / different subjects); the uniformity (occurring in different circumstances) / non-uniformity of actions, etc. In the characteristic of each variety of investigated designs, the author determines standard semantics and linguistic ways of expressing objects of comparison and comparatives (parametric, evaluative, etc.). The article fixes the cases that can not be uniquely interpreted. The study makes it possible to identify both the peculiarities of proverbs as a special genre and constructions with comparatives of adverbs, based on the stable structures of linguistic consciousness.

### For citation

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**Keywords**

Russian proverbs, forms of comparative degree, comparative, adverb, objects of comparison.

**Introduction**

The article is devoted to the study of the components of the situation of comparison in constructions with a comparative adverb on the material of Russian proverbs, such as: God is not as your brother, he would rather help; The bad wheel cracks stronger than the good one.

The relevance of the research is due to the need to study the specifics of structures with a comparative degree of adverbs, which are still insufficiently described [cf. Dobrya, 2004; Vorotnikov, 2000; Panova, Gorshkova, 2001], since most of the works focus on adjective comparatives [Vinogradov, 1972; Berkov, 1996; Bondarko, 2000; Knyazev, 2007 and others]. It is important to consider the functioning of these constructions in proverbs, which preserve the basic structures of linguistic consciousness and help to understand the features of the expression of the comparative situation with adverbial forms in the modern Russian language.

This article pays special attention to the specifics of objects of comparison in sentences with adverbial comparative, as well as to the features of proverbial constructions that have a high degree of implicitness. We won't analyze with two comparatives like: The more you drive, the faster the track is; More talk, more sin. They require special study.

So, the purpose of the article is the selection and general characteristics of objects of comparison in constructions with comparative adverbs in proverbs.

The main source of empirical material was 450 Russian proverbs, taken Dahl's collection "Proverbs of the Russian people" (1984).

V.I. Dahl defined the proverbs as follows: "A proverb is a short sentence, more in the form of a parable, an allegory, or in the form of a life sentence which teaches" [Dahl, 1984, 11]. Modern researchers note following features of this genre: 1) brevity, conciseness, expressed in the formal aspect - sentence; 2) figurativeness, allegory; 3) teaching character; 4) "conscious reference to the collective experience of previous generations" [Anichkov, 1997, 34]; 5) connections between phenomena are established by human intelligence and have a timeless force. N.D. Arutyunova points aphoristic as a property of a proverb, which is expressed in the ability of the utterance to be perceived as implicitly containing broader information than that explicitly expressed directly in its text. It makes the proverb to "compress sentences to one representative of each situation or to its symbol" [Arutyunova, 1979, 245]. The specificity of the propositional structure of proverbs is studied by N.A. Dyachkova [Dyachkova, 2002], who notes that

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proverbs are characterized by the presentation of an incomplete sentence structure and reveal the general patterns of its reconstruction. It is important for our language material.

### **Types of objects in constructions with adverb comparative**

The logical structure of comparison includes three main elements. The first element is the subject being compared (comparative<sub>1</sub>), the second element is the subject, or comparison standard (comparative<sub>2</sub>), the third element is the comparison ratio, usually combined with the chosen aspect of comparison. The specificity of the adverb comparative is related to the fact that the object of comparison is not the object with its properties, but the action or the whole situation. For example: If half of a shoulder, the work is hard: if you use both - it is easier to handle; A good man is more likely to do something than an angry one. In the first case, a comparative adverb is used to compare two situations: 1) the work done by someone who uses only half of power; 2) action in full force (when you use both shoulders). In the second case, two generalized actions (to do the work) of two people are compared, although the second action is not called.

The most detailed classification of objects of comparison in statements with an adverb comparative is presented by M.Ya. Dobrya, who chooses the number of subjects-actors as the main classification criterion: "From the point of view of objects to be compared, the verbal-comparative constructions are divided into two general types: 1) constructions that compare the degree of manifestation of an attribute of action (actions) related to one actor-subject: Malyuta went out and sighed more freely (A. Tolstoy); 2) constructions in which the degree of manifestation of an action (actions) connected with different subjects is compared: Uncertainty crushed more than expectation (G. Belykh, L. Panteleyev)". For actions performed by one subject, the following grounds are used for further reasons for subcategorization: 1) another time; 2) another circumstances; 3) attitude to another object; 4) different tools; 5) different actions and etc. [Dobrya, 2004, 12]. Considering the results of the research, let us disagree with some points: the specificity of constructions with comparative adverbs is due to the fact that both actions with a few exceptions are situations. These actions, for which different nominations are used, may be fundamentally different (buy - sell, live - go hungry, lie down - turn around, etc.), and may be nominatively of the same type (heal 1 - heal 2, see 1 - see 2), and in such cases the second action (komparat<sub>2</sub>) in the text is usually not repeated, making it difficult to detect. At the same time, one can hardly speak of the identity of the two actions of comparators. The second action differs in the parameters of its environment, which is indicated in some studies as (comparative<sub>2</sub>).

An analysis of the proverbs showed that in most cases the second comparat of the adverb is often implicit, representing a rolled-up proposition. For the analysis, all propositional elements of the proverb

are restored, the second comparative is revealed and explicated. For example: Be satisfied with small – will get more → Be satisfied with small, and then you will receive more than you receive now. A good child will start lying soon → A good child will start lying sooner than a sly one. Thus, we are able to reveal the complete structure of the proverbial text and to discover all the elements that need analysis.

So, according to the number of compared situations, we distinguish two main types: 1) constructions, where the comparison takes place within the framework of one situation (with one action): You cannot jump over your head; 2) constructions in which two situations are compared (two actions): Live the old way – you will live longer; The greedy loses more (than not greedy).

The first type is a small group of proverbs, where both comparators are explicitly represented, one of which is a verb containing these movements (be sent, run, walk, etc.), and the second is a reference object (sun, gate, forehead, head). Here the comparative has spatial semantics: They will not be sent further than the Sun; You can't grow higher than yourself. In such cases, as a rule, the impossibility of action is transmitted, which is realized with the help of a negative particle and the choice of an appropriate comparator<sub>2</sub>: Ears do not grow on the forehead; The horse does not jump higher than it can. Such constructions often use as benchmarks either parts of the human body (forehead, nose, head), which cannot be manipulated due to anatomical features, or objects recognized by the language community as obviously unattainable (natural objects - the Moon, the Sun, or some abstract concept - measure, divine will): I will sew a tongue below heels; You can't be above the will of God. If the benchmark is achievable, then the conditionality of such an achievement is indicated, according to which this action is limited: A drunk man doesn't spit on the lips (doesn't spit, because he is drunk); If you do not take a breath, you will not reach farther than the gate (you will not run so far because you have not taken a breath).

The second type, where two situations are correlated, has several subtypes: 1) situations with different types of actions (It is bad to live in bad weather, but to starve is even worse); 2) situations with the same type of actions (Grind in a new way - you will get more).

Situations with different types of actions rarely occur, and here there is one subject: A practical person sells more than he buys. Various actions serve as its characteristic: the subject is dubious because he sells more than he buys. Comparatives appear in such constructions: more / less, better / worse, and as comparators antonyms are used (find / lose, inflate / blow out): You will not blow out a big flame, and will inflate even more: and converse (give / take, sell / buy) as in the example above. The inconsistency of such constructions in proverbs can be explained by such properties as rhythmization and symmetry, which leads to two-comparativeness, although one comparative is meaningful enough: Say less, you will hear more.

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The following subtype includes proverbs where similar actions (situations) are compared: A fast horse will stop quicker; Big sin is forgiven quicker than small one. In this case, the comparative<sub>2</sub> is not verbalized and restored from the construction with the comparator<sub>1</sub>. It happens not only in “transparent” cases, but also when the verb’s recovery is not so straightforward: Change bread for wine, live happier → you will live happier than you live if you don’t change bread for wine. Skipping the predicate of the same name gives the proverb conciseness and energy.

The same type of action is compared in proverbs in the following cases: 1) if actions are performed by different subjects (Good fame goes far, but bad goes further; A greedy man loses more) and 2) if one person performs actions, but in different circumstances (For soul it’s enough, but eyes ask more and more; If you go behind, you will find more).

Speaking of proverbs, where actions are compared with different subjects, we note that this is a double comparison: of actions and subjects. These subjects may differ in quality (have different properties) and they are usually contrasted. The opposition can be expressed by antonyms or can be hidden: The eye sees far, and the mind sees even further → the mind is more alert than the eye; God knows better what to give and what not to give - the divine principle is opposed to the human. Objects of the situation exhibit properties similar to antonyms: there is no language antonymy, but subjects have common properties and are in contrast. Comparates here can be very diverse (crack, make, disappear), there are no restrictions. Properties of the subject, including unnamed or indirectly indicated, can be represented by words with an estimated value (good / skinny), with a permanent or temporary trait value (mean / close / far, fast / slow), indicating relativeness (their / ours), the place of residence (in Moscow, in the city), belonging to one thematic group (mind, eye). If the nomination of a subject is presented explicitly (directly or indirectly), then the connection between the subjects is more diverse: People in the city do not weave, spin, and they go better than we go → urban go better than we do; They say Siberia is terrible, but people live better than we do → people in Siberia live better than we live. If the second subject is omitted, then, as a rule, it is restored according to the principle of antonymy which is characteristic of the proverb: The bad wheel cracks more → than the whole wheel cracks; A near dog will rather bite → a near dog will bite rather than a long distance dog.

Proverbs, which reflect two situations with the same type of actions performed by one subject, have an indication of any changes in the circumstances of the second action. From this point of view, there are several options: a) the second situation differs temporally from the first: Lie more, you will need it later → lie more than you lie now, b) it may be related to other conditions: If you go behind, you will find more → more than in another conditions.

Temporally different situations are indicated by lexical indicators (forward, then), verbs of the perfect form (As you have spend the night, you hear more), as well as imperative forms that have a futural perspective (Suck on, but don't ask again!) In such constructions, the result of the second action is sometimes fixed: If you lied, so twist up more (than you have already lied), which is repeated execution of the action: lied - twist: comparat<sub>2</sub> is represented by the derivative from comparat<sub>1</sub>.

The conditions under which the second action (unnamed) is performed can be expressed by various means. Firstly, by typical commonly used utterances, for example, complex subordination with subordinate conditions: You will get success, if you present something to the judge (than if you don't give him anything); by non-union sentences: Spit in the mouth, lie less (than he lies in the situation, if not spit in the mouth). Secondly, proverbs have specific ways of expressing conditions, which are adjectives that determine the state of affairs: Old and stupid are beaten more → if a person is old and stupid, he is beaten more than usually; A well-fed horse will eat less → a horse will eat less than it will eat if it is full.

### Conclusion

This list of possible comparatives in the analyzed structures is not limited. There are constructions in which the share of implicitness is so great that it is not possible to distinguish between objects, properties or situations. Therefore, there is a need to interpret them in all potential variants and to describe them on the basis of the interpretations obtained. For example: Autumn fly bites angrier. Autumn here means late, that is, a fly in a certain state (before it could have a different property), or another fly, opposed to an early or spring one. Features of the expression of comparators depend on this: the actions of different subjects, or of the same subject at different times, are compared.

Summing up, it can be noted that this research allows to establish some patterns characteristic of such structures. Proverbs use a limited number of adverbs, from which degrees of comparison are formed (unlike adjectives). Most often these are parametric words that have an estimated value: more, less, more often, less, higher, lower, longer, more likely, and similar. In the analyzed texts, absolute domination of the objects of comparison, which call the same type of action, is fixed, which means non-verbalization of the verb of the same name, of the second comparat. This mechanism is also characteristic of other expressions with the narrative comparative. The peculiarity of the second object of comparison (non-verbalized verb) is the change in the circumstances of its implementation: a change of subject, time or conditions for performing an action. These changed circumstances of repeated action are often as an indirect comparat.

The analyzed material makes it possible to clarify the grammatical features of proverbs as a particular genre, influencing their structure: brevity, which causes a high degree of implicitness of

various elements restored by communicants; the desire to establish logical and figurative connections between situations; the special role of the “extremes”, the antonymy of all the elements, between which the relations of gradation are established, which manifest themselves also as constructions with adverbial comparators.

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## **Особенности выражения компаратов в русских пословицах со сравнительной степенью наречия**

**Павлоцки Есения Павловна**

Магистрант,  
Новосибирский государственный педагогический университет,  
630126, Российская Федерация, Новосибирск, ул. Виллюйская, 28;  
e-mail: eseniia.p@gmail.com

### **Аннотация**

В статье характеризуются структуры с формами сравнительной степени наречия, используемые в русских пословицах. Устанавливается специфика этих конструкций, обусловленная свойством качественных наречий примыкать к глаголу, а также жанровой природой пословиц, обладающих высокой степенью лаконичности и имплицитности. В качестве объектов сравнения (компаратов) у наречий выступают преимущественно глаголы, второй из которых в пословицах часто опущен. Для анализа подобных конструкций восстанавливаются все структурно необходимые компоненты. Представлена классификация объектов сравнения на основании ряда параметров: количество сопоставляемых ситуаций (ситуация с одним действием и предметом-ориентиром / ситуации с несколькими сопоставляемыми действиями); субъектов, производящих действия (ситуации с одним субъектом / разными субъектами); однотипности (совершающиеся в разных обстоятельствах) / неоднотипности действий и др. В характеристике каждой разновидности исследуемых конструкций определяется типовая семантика и языковые способы выражения объектов сравнения и компаративов (параметрических, оценочных и др.). Фиксируются случаи, которые невозможно однозначно интерпретировать. Исследование позволяет выявить как особенности пословиц как особого жанра, так и конструкций с компаративами наречий, опирающихся на устойчивые структуры языкового сознания.



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**Ключевые слова**

Русские пословицы, формы сравнительной степени, компаратив, наречие, объекты сравнения.

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