

THE PHENOMENON OF PARONYMS IN THE RUSSIAN LANGUAGE

Nematjonova Nafisa Bokhodirovna

Fergana State University, Lecturer

Muhammadjnova Shaxrizoda

Fergana State University, First-Year Student

Annotation: This article explores the phenomenon of paronyms in the Russian language, highlighting their definition, characteristics, and common examples. It examines the causes of confusion stemming from their similarity and offers strategies for avoiding errors in usage. The study of paronyms is essential for improving linguistic accuracy and fluency in Russian.

Keywords: Russian language, paronyms, vocabulary, linguistic confusion, word usage, language learning, semantic distinction

The Russian language is known for its richness and complexity, offering a vast array of words and expressions. One of the most intriguing and challenging aspects of Russian vocabulary is the phenomenon of paronyms. These are words that are similar in form but differ in meaning, often leading to confusion among both native speakers and learners.

Definition and Characteristics of Paronyms

Paronyms are words that share a similar sound or structure but convey different meanings. They may differ by just one letter or a single morpheme, yet this slight variation can result in a significant difference in usage. For example, the Russian words "адрес" (adres, meaning address) and "адресат" (adresat, meaning addressee) are paronyms. Although closely related in form, they serve distinct grammatical and semantic roles.

The similarity between paronyms often leads to errors in speech and writing, particularly when the context requires precise word choice. Misuse of paronyms can result in ambiguous or incorrect statements, making it crucial for users of the language to understand their proper usage.

Common Examples of Paronyms in Russian

Many commonly used paronyms illustrate how subtle differences can create entirely different meanings:

1. **Эффективный** (effektivnyy) vs. **эффектный** (effektnyy):
 - Эффективный means effective, referring to something that produces the desired result.
 - Эффектный means impressive or spectacular, describing something striking or eye-catching.
2. **Компетентный** (kompetentnyy) vs. **комплементарный** (komplementarnyy):
 - Компетентный refers to being knowledgeable or skilled in a particular area.
 - Комплементарный means complementary, describing elements that complete or enhance each other.
3. **Восполнить** (vosponit') vs. **Дополнить** (doponit'):
 - Восполнить means to replenish or to fill a deficit.
 - Дополнить means to add or to supplement.

Causes of Confusion and Misuse

The primary reason paronyms cause confusion is their phonetic and morphological similarity. This resemblance makes it easy for speakers to mistakenly substitute one word for another. Additionally, since Russian has many word roots that produce related but distinct terms through prefixes and suffixes, even minor alterations can result in entirely different meanings.

Another challenge is that some paronyms belong to specialized or formal registers of speech, making them less familiar to casual users of the language. For instance, артистический (artisticheskiy, artistic) and артистичный (artistichnyy, demonstrating artistry) are often confused due to their shared root, even though their usage contexts differ significantly.

Strategies for Correct Usage

To avoid mistakes with paronyms, language users can employ several strategies:

- **Study and Memorize Common Paronym Pairs:** Familiarity with frequently confused words can reduce errors.
- **Pay Attention to Context:** Understanding the context in which a word is used can clarify its intended meaning.
- **Consult Dictionaries and Language Resources:** Reference materials often provide detailed explanations and examples of paronym usage.

Conclusion

Paronyms enrich the Russian language by providing nuanced vocabulary choices but require careful attention to avoid confusion. Mastery of paronyms enhances both written and spoken communication, allowing for more precise and effective expression. For language learners and enthusiasts alike, understanding this phenomenon is an essential step toward fluency and linguistic competence.

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