

Russian Subjunctive Puzzles

Andrei Antonenko

Stony Brook University

The discussion of the differences between indicative and subjunctive clauses and their properties generated a body of the literature, mainly with respect to Romance languages. I address several asymmetries with respect to the indicative/subjunctive distinction in Russian, and show what consequences my proposal has crosslinguistically.

The phenomenon of subject obviation (Avrutin and Babyonyshev 1997), is demonstrated in Russian example (1). If the embedded clause is subjunctive, its pronominal subject cannot be coreferent with the matrix subject. Such coreference is allowed in (1-b), where the embedded clause is indicative.

Further, in Russian, subject *wh*-extraction out of subjunctive complements is notably better than out of indicative clauses. Notice, that the mild deviance of the example (2a) is reminiscent of English subjacency violations, while the extraction out of indicative clauses as in (2b) is strictly prohibited. However, the object *wh*-extraction examples (not shown here) do not show such asymmetries.

Further differences between indicative and subjunctive embedded clauses are related to long-distance scrambling (LDS). As an example (3) shows, LDS out of indicative clauses is unacceptable in Russian, as opposed to the LDS out of subjunctive clauses. Also, the LDS of objects (examples are omitted) does not show asymmetries with respect to indicative/subjunctive, and the sentences are mildly deviant.

Another difference is demonstrated in example (4). The reflexive which has undergone LDS out of subjunctive clause can obtain a new binder in the matrix clause, while it is not possible if it was scrambled out of indicative clause.

I go on to propose a unified account for these asymmetries. Using the framework of Pesetsky and Torrego, 2001, 2004, I propose that the main difference between subjunctive and indicative clauses is that the subjunctive form of the verb bears an unvalued T-feature, while for the indicative verbs the T-feature is valued. I argue that there necessarily needs to be a Tense-sharing between the matrix and embedded verbs, which in the adopted framework would result in the movement of the featural complex of the embedded nominative subject to the matrix clause.

I propose, following Watanabe 2000 and Branigan 2000, that binding can operate on featural complexes; that allows for explanation of the obviation phenomenon. In the example (1a), the features of the pronoun *on* 'he' are moved into the matrix clause, which would result in the violation of Principle B under the reading with coreference. In (1b) no featural movement takes place and thus the features of the embedded pronominal subject are not visible for the matrix clause binder, and no violation of a Principle B occurs. Further, this analysis allows to capture the fact that there are no obviation effects when the subject of the embedded clause is dative, as in (5) (cf. Bailyn 2004). In the framework of Pesetsky and Torrego 2001, nominative, and not dative elements have a T-feature, and therefore, dative subjects cannot participate in the process of T-feature sharing.

In order to account for further asymmetries, such as availability of subject *wh*-extraction in subjunctive clauses, as in (2a), I go on to propose that the Russian *čto* 'that', is in fact located in Spec,CP position (notice that this form is actually homonymous to the question word *čto* 'what'), and is not C. This argument readily allows to account for the subjacency effects in the cases of *wh*-extraction and LD scrambling of objects, since the extracted element would have to raise past the occupied Spec,CP.

Unavailability of the subject scrambling and *wh*-movement in indicative clauses can be accounted under "freezing" theories, such as in Rizzi, 2004 and Rizzi and Shlonsky 2007. The subjunctive complementizer *čtoby* can be viewed as morphologically complex, consisting of elements *čto* and *by*. I claim, that the particle *by* is located in C position. Evidence for that comes from the fact that *by* often appears in the absence of *čto*, and (almost) always occupies the second position in the clause. I claim that *by* can satisfy the EPP feature of embedded T (cf. Chomsky 2005/8), and therefore the subject is not subject to criterial freezing. That would allow for subject to extract, with only mild subjacency violation.

At the conclusion, I suggest why Balkan languages do not exhibit obviation effects in subjunctive clauses. I propose that when the embedded clause subject is phonologically empty (as it must be in

Balkan languages) it is PRO (and not *pro*), and therefore lacks nominative case. As such, it cannot participate in Tense-sharing, similarly to Russian dative subject constructions.

(1) Obviation:

- a. Volodja xočet čtoby on poceloval Nadju.
V. wants that-Subj he kissed N.
'Volodja_i wants that he_{i/j} kisses Nadja' (Subjunctive)
- b. Volodja skazal čto on poceloval Nadju.
V. said that he kissed N.
'Volodja_i said that he_{i/j} kissed Nadja' (Indicative)

(2) Subject *wh*-extraction:

- a. ?Kto Ivan xočet čtoby poceloval Mašu?
Who I. wants that-Subj kissed M.
'Who does Ivan want to kiss Maša?' (Subjunctive)
- b. *Kto Ivan slyšal čto poceloval Mašu?
Who I. heard that kissed M.
'Who did Ivan heard kissed Maša?' (Indicative)

(3) Subject long-distance scrambling:

- a. ?Ty doktor xočeš čtoby priexal.
you doctor want that-Subj come
'You want the doctor to come' (Subjunctive)
- b. *Ty doktor slyšal čto priexal.
you doctor heard that came
'You heard that doctor came.' (Indicative)

- (4) a. Ty_i [knigi o sebe_i] xočeš čtoby opublikovali ?
You_i books about self_i want that-Subj publish
'Do you want the books about yourself to be published?' (Subjunctive)
- b. *Ty_i [knigi o sebe_i] slyšal čto opublikovali ?
You_i books about self_i heard that publish
'Have you heard that they published books about you?' (Indicative)

- (5) Ivan_i xočet čtoby emu_{i/j} bylo xorošo.
I. wants that-Subj he-Dat was good
'Ivan wants to feel good' (Subjunctive)

References

- Avrutin, Sergey, and Maria Babyonyshev. 1997. Obviation in Subjunctive Clauses and AGR: Evidence from Russian. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 15:229-262.
- Bailyn, John Frederick. 2004. Generalized Inversion. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 22:1-49.
- Chomsky, Noam. 2005/2008. On phases. In *Foundational Issues in Linguistic Theory*, ed. Robert Freidin, Carlos P. Otero, and Maria Luisa Zubizarreta. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press
- Müller, Gereon, and Wolfgang Sternefeld. 1993. Improper Movement and Unambiguous Binding. *Linguistic Inquiry* 24:461-507.
- Pesetsky, David, and Esther Torrego. 2001. T-to-C Movement: Causes and Consequences. In *Ken Hale: A life in language*, ed. Michael J. Kenstowicz, 355-426. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.
- Pesetsky, David, and Esther Torrego. 2004. The Syntax of Valuation and the Interpretability of Features. Ms.
- Rizzi, Luigi. 2004. On the Form of Chains: Criterial Positions and ECP Effects. Ms.
- Rizzi, Luigi, and Ur Shlonsky. 2007. Strategies of Subject Extraction. In *Interfaces +Recursion=Language?* ed. Uli Sauerland, Hans-Martin Gaertner. Mouton de Gruyter.