

THE MORPHOLGY-SYNTAX INTERFACE IN RUSSIAN IMPERATIVES*

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0. Introduction

In this paper I will deal with the syntax of Russian imperative verbs. More precisely, I will analyse the syntax of verbs with a distinctive imperative morphology, comparing it to the syntax of verbs that can be used in jussive or exhortative sentences but do not display a distinctive morphology, i.e. are morphologically identical to forms used in other paradigms. I will refer to the verbs of the first type as “true imperatives” and to those of the second type as “jussive forms”¹.

Firstly I will compare the syntax of Russian true imperatives with the syntax of imperatives of other languages with a distinctive imperative morphology. Since Russian true imperatives distribute syntactically like other finite verbs, it seems that Russian lacks a distinctive imperative syntax and behaves from this point of view like Ancient Greek or Serbo-Croatian.

On the other hand, the syntax of Russian jussive forms displays some very peculiar properties. I will take this fact as a piece of evidence that Russian has in fact a distinctive imperative syntax, but for some reason true imperatives are not subject to it. More precisely, I will propose that, while jussive forms must raise to the head of CP (or ForceP in a split-CP framework) in order to check the [imperative] feature of an imperative sentence, true imperatives remain lower in the clause structure and the [imperative] feature is checked at a distance (via LF movement or Agree).

I will take into consideration also analytic forms like *davaj pojdem* “let’s go” or *pust’ idet* “let him/her go”, and show that in these forms the functional verb is within CP, while the lexical verb remains lower. Therefore, analytic jussive forms display a third possibility: the [imperative] feature is checked by merging a *do*-support verb in the left periphery.

Rivero & Terzi (1995) have proposed to divide languages with distinctive imperative morphology into two different typological classes:

Class I: Imperative Verbs have a distinctive syntax.

Class II: Imperative Verbs lack a distinctive syntax.

In the languages of Class I, imperative verbs have unique and specific syntactic properties. In other words, in these languages imperative force is encoded by both

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¹ Zanuttini (1997), following Joseph & Philippaki-Warbuton (1987) and Rivero (1994), refers as “surrogate” or “suppletive” imperatives to forms that are morphologically ambiguous but are considered traditionally forms of the imperative paradigm. It’s the case, for example, of the second person plural imperative in Italian, as *telefonate!* “call”, which is identical to the second person plural present indicative (*voi telefonate* “you call”). I will deal also with forms that are not considered imperatives in traditional grammars.

morphology and syntax. In the languages of Class II, imperative verbs distribute like other finite verbs, and therefore imperative force is marked overtly only by morphology.

Two main tests are used to separate languages belonging to Class I from languages belonging to Class II: the interaction of imperatives with negation, and the position of clitics. Rivero & Terzi's analysis is based on four languages: Spanish, Serbo-Croatian, Ancient and Modern Greek.

In Class I languages imperative verbs are incompatible with pre-verbal negative markers. The contrast between imperatives and indicative verbs is shown in (1) and (2) (from Rivero & Terzi, 1995: 304)²:

- (1) a. *Den/mi diavase! (Modern Greek)
NEG read.IMP.2S
b. *No lee! (Spanish)
NEG read.IMP.2S
"Do not read!"
- (2) a. Den diavases.
NEG read.IND.2S
b. No leíste.
NEG read.IND.2S
"You did not read."

In Class II languages there is not a similar restriction, and therefore imperatives, even if morphologically unambiguous, can be negated, as it is shown in (3) (from Rivero & Terzi, 1995: 309, 313):

- (3) a. Ne čitajte! (Serbo-Croatian)
NEG read.IMP.2P
"Do not read."
b. Mê mega lege. (Ancient Greek)
NEG grandly say.IMP.2S
"Do not boast so."

The second test is the position of clitics. In class I languages imperatives are unique in preceding clitic pronouns, while verbs in other finite moods must follow them. This contrast is shown in (4) and (5) (from Rivero & Terzi, 1995:304):

- (4) a. Diavase to! (Modern Greek)
read.IMP.2S it
b. Léelo! (Spanish)
read.IMP.2S it
"Read it!"

² See also Tomić (1999).

- (5) a. To diavases./*Diavases to.
it read.IND.2S
b. Lo leiste./*Leístelo.
it read.IND.2S
“You read it.”

Serbo-Croatian and Ancient Greek display a different pattern: any verb, even an imperative, can follow a clitic pronoun or particle, as in (6) (from Rivero & Terzi, 1995: 310, 314):

- (6) a. Knjige im čitajte! (Serbo-Croatian)
Books to.them read.IMP.2P
“You (P) read books to them!”
b. Ta men poiei, ta de mê poiei. (Ancient Greek)
these P do.IMP.2S these P NEG do.IMP.2S
“Do this, but do not do that.”

It should be pointed out that both Serbo-Croatian and Ancient Greek are Wackernagel languages and clitics do not appear in the first position in a sentence. The sentences in (6) are grammatical, since there is an element moved to the first position (*knjige* and *ta* respectively) which satisfies the second-position requirement of clitics (*im* in (6a), *men* and *de* in (6b)). If there are not other elements which can be raised to satisfy this requirement, any verb (indicative, imperative, etc.) is raised overtly, as a last resort operation, to the sentence initial position. Thus, in Serbo-Croatian and Ancient Greek a true imperative can precede a clitic pronoun or particle, but not in any context as it can be observed in class I languages.

These data are analysed in the following way. In class I languages the [imperative] feature in CP is strong and must be checked overtly by verb movement to C°, or Force° if we adopt a split-CP framework in the spirit of Rizzi's (1997) proposal. Thus, in class I languages true imperatives raise to a position higher than clitics or negation. The former allow this movement, the latter blocks it³:

- (7) [ForceP *V_i [CP [NegP Neg [IP V_i]]]
←———— * —————

In class II languages the [imperative] feature does not need to be checked in overt syntax. Rivero & Terzi argue that in these languages there is not an [imperative] feature in CP. I would rather say that in these languages the [imperative] feature in ForceP is checked covertly, at LF level, or, assuming a more recent framework (Chomsky, 1995; 2001), there is an Agree relation between the imperative verb in IP and the [imperative] feature in ForceP. In Wackernagel languages any verb, even imperatives, can raise to the CP to satisfy the second-position requirement of clitics. I will not discuss here all the aspects of this topic, but it is evident that this movement has nothing to do with the [imperative] feature.

³ Other analyses, as Han's (2000), suggest that negative imperatives are ruled out for interpretational reasons, not for syntactic ones. The data in section 1.3 will show that, at least in Russian, the interaction of negation with imperatives is sensitive to syntactic structures.

1.1 Russian Imperatives and Jussive Forms

Consider now true imperatives and jussive forms in Russian. I summarize these forms in table 1 (the verb is *vzjat* ‘to take’ perfective):

	True imperatives	Indicative Jussives	Analytic Forms	Other Forms
1sg		Voz'mu(ka)		
2sg	Voz'mi			(A nu) vzjal
3sg			Pust' voz'met	
1du		Voz'mem	Davaj voz'mem	
1pl	Voz'memte		Davajte voz'mem	Vzjali
2pl	Voz'mite			(A nu) vzjali
3pl			Pust' voz'mut	

Table 1

The forms in the first column are true imperatives, that is verbs that have unambiguous morphology. The second person forms sg. *voz'mi*, pl. *voz'mite* constitute the paradigm of the Imperative mood in traditional grammars. The peculiar first person plural form *voz'memte* ‘let’s take (you PL. and me)’ is derived adding the affix *-te* to the first person plural of the present/future indicative. It’s considered a rare case of agglutinative morphology in an indo-european language. Jakobson (1985) argued that in this form every pertinent feature is associated with a single morpheme: the morpheme *-em-* marks the feature [+speaker](the speaker takes part in the action), while *-te* marks the feature [+plural addressee]. For the moment, consider this form a true imperative since its morphology is clearly distinctive. The forms in the second column are present/future indicatives, which can be used as first person exhortatives. Following an intuition by Birjulin (1994), I will consider forms like *voz'mem* ‘let’s take (you SG. and me)’ as first person duals. These forms, when used as exhortatives, are appropriate only when there is only one hearer. According to Jakobson’s analysis, *voz'mem* and *voz'memte* are distinguished only by the value of the [plural addressee] feature, which is expressed by the affix *-te* when positive. The first person singular form is used for exhortations or encouragements the speaker addresses to him/herself. The enclitic particle *-ka* (usually used to make an order less prescriptive) is optional but very frequent with this form. The constructions in the third column are analytic jussive forms, used for first and third persons. Third person forms are constructed with a functional invariable verb, *pust'* or less frequently *puskaj* (lit. ‘let’.IMP.2S), and the lexical verb in the third person singular or plural of the present/future indicative: therefore, for instance, *pust' voz'mut* is literally ‘let (they) take’. First person forms are constructed with the verb *davat'* ‘give’ in the imperative, and the lexical verb in the first person plural of the future indicative. The functional verb has singular agreement if there is only one hearer, otherwise it has plural agreement: therefore, for instance, *davajte voz'mem* ‘let’s take (you PL. and me)’ is literally ‘you give.IMP.2P we will take’. Note that first person analytic forms are equivalent to the corresponding forms in the second column; in other words, Russian distinguishes a singular and a plural addressee in both syntetic and analytic forms of the first person plural exhortative:

(8) *voz'mem / davaj voz'mem* ‘let’s take (you SG. and me)

voz'memte / davajte voz'mem 'let's take (you PL. and me)

In the fourth column there are some past forms, which can be used as jussives. A plural past form, like *vzjali*, can be used as a first person plural exhortative. A singular or plural past form (with optional emphatic particles as *a nu*) can be used as a very rude order to second persons (*pošel otsjuda!* 'go away from here!'). In Russian also non-finite forms can be used to express orders or exhortations, but I will not deal here with similar constructions.

1.2 The Syntax of Russian Imperatives

As it has been shown in the previous section, Russian has distinctive morphology for imperatives. At this point it's possible to check whether it has also distinctive syntax for them. Firstly I will analyse the syntax of true imperatives, then I will turn to the other jussive forms.

As it is shown in (9), Russian true imperatives can be negated⁴:

- (9) a. Ne voz'mi eto!
 NEG take.IMP.2S this
 "Watch you (S) don't take this!"
 b. Ne voz'mite eto!
 NEG take.IMP.2P this
 "Watch you (P) don't take this!"

Thus, Russian behaves like Serbo-Croatian and Ancient Greek. In other words, it seems that Russian is a class II language. On the other hand, Russian is not a Wackernagel language and lacks clitic pronouns, and therefore it is not possible to apply the clitic-position test to Russian. I propose a similar test. Recall that, according to the hypothesis I have adopted here, the distinctive imperative syntax of class I languages derives from the raising of imperative verbs to Force°. The result of this movement is a structure with the verb higher than the subject position, let's assume [Spec, IP]:

- (10) [Force V_t [CP [Spec Subj [IP t]]]]

In class I languages, true imperatives are not compatible with subject pronouns, unless they are vocatives or receive a contrastive list interpretation (Mauck & Zanuttini, 2004). This is shown by the Italian example in (11):

- (11) Tu prendi questo, voi prendete l'altro! (Italian)
 you.S take.IMP.2S this you.P take.IMP.2P the-other
 "You (S) take this one, you (P) take the other one!"

Examples like (11) suggest that, in those languages that raise imperative verbs to Force°, subject pronouns block the movement of the verb when they are in [Spec, IP]

⁴ There is an interesting pragmatic interaction between the presence of the negation and the aspect of the verb. While imperfective verbs, when negated, express a prohibition, negated perfective verbs indicate a "warning against an event the speaker considers imminent" (Timberlake, 2004: 374). I will not deal here with this phenomenon, since from a syntactic point of view it is always possible to negate a true imperative. See also Kučera (1985).

(like preverbal negative markers in Neg^o), and allow it when they are merged higher. Benincà & Poletto (2004) have proposed a precise position for listed XPs inside the topic-field within CP. Mauck & Zanuttini (2004) claim that subject pronouns appearing with imperatives are located in AddresseeP, a very high projection within CP. I will not discuss here all details of this matter, but I will assume that in class I languages like Italian [Spec, IP] cannot contain phonetic material if the verb is an imperative. On the other hand, if non-distinctive syntax of imperatives in class II language derives from the lack of verb movement, subject pronouns should always be possible with imperatives verbs. In Russian, true imperatives allow subject pronouns, even without a contrastive list interpretation:

- (12)a. Ty voz'mi eto!
you.S take.IMP.2S this
"Take it!"
- b. Vy voz'mite eto!
you.P take.IMP.2P this
"You (P) take it!"
- c. ...ty ix zasun' v korobočku! (from Timberlake, 2004: 374)
you.S them stick.IMP.2S in box
"Stick them in this box!"

It should be pointed out that subject pronouns can appear before and after the imperative verb (with some pragmatic differences), but since this is true for any other finite verb, the syntax of Russian true imperatives seems to be non-distinctive at all.

To summarize:

- Russian true imperatives can be negated (by the means of a preverbal negation marker);
- Russian true imperatives allow subject pronouns.

I will take these facts as pieces of evidence that Russian true imperatives do not move to the CP. Thus, it seems that Russian is a class II language.

1.3 The Syntax of Russian Jussive Forms

If we apply the negation test and the subject test to the peculiar "agglutinative" form *voz'memte*, we observe a different pattern. *Voz'memte* cannot be negated and is not compatible with a subject pronoun:

- (13)a. *Ne voz'memte eto!
NEG take.IND.1P.2P this
"Watch we do not take this!"
- b. *My voz'memte eto!
We take.IND.1P.2P this
"Let's take this!"

Therefore, it seems that this form has both distinctive morphology *and* distinctive syntax. In other words, it seems that this form is moved to Force^o. If this hypothesis is correct, Russian displays both strategies of checking the [imperative] feature in Force^o: Agree and Move.

If we consider now all the forms which can be used to give orders or exhortations, but do not have distinctive morphology, we observe that all are not compatible with negation and subject pronouns:

- (14)a. *Ne voz'mem eto!
NEG take.IND.1P this
"Watch we do not take this!"
b. (*My) voz'mem eto!
we take.IND.1P this
"Let's take this!"
- (15)a. *Ne vzjal eto!
NEG take.PAST.M.S this
"Watch you (S) do not take this!"
b. A nu (*ty) vzjal eto!
PART PART you.S take.PAST.M.S this
"Take it!" (rude)
- (16)a. *Ne vzjali eto!
NEG take.PAST.P this
"Watch we/you (P) do not take this!"
b. (A nu) (*my)(*vy) vzjali eto!
PART PART we you.P take.PAST.P this
"Let's take this!" / "You (P) take this" (rude)

Of course, these restrictions are active only when these verbs are used as jussives. Thus, for instance, *ne voz'mem eto* is perfectly grammatical when it means "we will not take this", or *vy vzjali eto* when it means "you (P) took this".

I will consider the data in (14-16) as pieces of evidence that Russian jussive forms move to Force^o in order to check the [imperative] feature. It should be pointed out that morphological distinctiveness is not correlated with syntactic distinctiveness, since the unambiguous form *voz'memte* distributes like the ambiguous forms.

This analysis seems to be plausible if we take into consideration the analytic jussive forms. Analytic forms are compatible with negation and with subject pronouns, but only if these elements are inserted between the functional and the lexical verb, as it is shown in (17-18). A subject pronoun can precede the functional verb, but in this case it has a contrastive list interpretation:

- (17)a. Pust' ne voz'met eto!
let NEG take.IND.3S this
"He should not take this!"
b. Pust' on voz'met eto!
Let he take.IND.3S this
"Let him take this!"
c. *Ne pust' voz'met eto!
d. *On pust' voz'met eto!

- (18) a. Davajte ne voz'mem eto!
 give.IMP.2P NEG take.IND.1P this
 “Let’s not take this!”
 b. Davajte my voz'mem eto!
 give.IMP.2P we take.IND.1P this
 “Let’s take this!”
 c. *Ne davajte voz'mem eto!
 d. *My davajte voz'mem eto!

Furthermore, consider the distribution of affixes in the syntetic/analytic pairs as *voz'memte/davajte voz'mem*; in the first form *-em-* precedes *-te-*, in the second one the order is the opposite, since *-te-* is on the higher functional verb, while *-em-* is on the lower lexical one. This fact recalls some phenomena of languages with incorporative morphosyntax, which are the basis of the descriptive generalization known as Mirror Principle (Baker, 1985; 1988):

- (19) The Mirror Principle: Morphological derivations must directly reflect syntactic derivations (and vice versa).

In other words, “the morphological changes take place in exactly the same order as the associated syntactic changes” (Baker, 1988: 13). I propose that syntetic and analytic forms like *voz'memte/davajte voz'mem* are derived from the same structure (20):

- (20) [ForceP (-te) [CP [NegP [IP *voz'mem*]]]]

The [imperative] feature in ForceP is checked in two ways: movement of the lexical verb to ForceP or merging of a do-support verb in Force°. The result of the first operation is the syntetic form, the result of the second operation is the analytic one. Subject pronouns and negation block the movement of the lexical verb but allow the insertion of functional verbs in Force°. The resulting structures according to this analysis are represented in (21), which corresponds to the sentences (18a) and (18b), and (22):

- (21) a.
 b.
- Tree (21a) structure: ForceP branches into *davajte* and NegP. NegP branches into *ne* and IP. IP branches into *voz'mem* and VP.
- Tree (21b) structure: ForceP branches into *davajte* and IP. IP branches into *my* and I'. I' branches into I° (*voz'mem*) and VP.

- (22)
- Tree (22) structure: ForceP branches into *voz'mem-te* and IP. IP branches into ~~*voz'mem*~~ and VP.

The other analytic forms are derived in a similar way.

To summarize:

- Russian jussive forms have distinctive syntax.
- Both Move and Merge are used to check the [imperative] feature in ForceP.

These facts show that Russian has a mixed system. Second person imperatives behave like imperatives in class II languages, all the other jussive verbs behave like imperatives in class I languages.

2. Some Considerations on the Affix *-te*

If the analysis I have presented here is correct, the morpheme *-te* which can appear on the verb *davat* ‘give’ when it is used as a functional verb, or in the syntetic forms like *voz’memte*, is not merged in IP, but in a higher position. This means that *-te*, in this cases, is not a true inflectional morpheme (like the *-te* on second person plural indicatives, which is, thus, a homophonous form). A fact that strongly supports this claim is that in colloquial Russian *-te* can be found not only on verbs, but also on exhortative particles, like *na* ‘take (this)’, *brys* ‘go away!’, *cyc* ‘silence!’. When present, *-te* indicates that the particle is referred to a plural addressee:

- (23) a. Na-te!
 “You (P) take this!”
 b. Brys’-te!
 “You (P) go away from here!”
 c. Cyc-te!
 “You (P) be quiet!”

Jakobson (1985) noted that in some sub-standard varieties of Russian, when a past verb is used to give a rude command to more than one addressee, it’s not used a past plural form like in standard Russian, but a singular form plus *-te*:

- (24) Pošel-te von! (standard Russian: Pošli von!)
 go.PAST.M.S.TE away
 “You (P) go away from here!”

Considering these facts and following Jakobson’s (1985) intuition, I argue that *-te* is not a true verbal inflectional morpheme merged in IP, but it is a ‘plural addressee’ marker, merged in the left periphery. We can postulate that it is merged in ForceP or in a projection associated with the hearer, let’s say AddresseeP (among others, Mauck & Zanuttini, 2004) or JussiveP (Zanuttini, 2007).

3. Conclusive Remarks

As we have seen, the [imperative] feature in ForceP can be checked either by verb movement, like in Spanish or Modern Greek (Rivero & Terzi’s class I), either by an Agree relation with the verb in IP, like in Serbo-Croatian or Ancient Greek (class II). A third possibility is to merge a functional verb directly in ForceP.

At this point the problem is to understand why only second person imperatives remain in IP. As we have seen, morphology is only partially involved, since unambiguous forms like *voz’memte* raise to ForceP like forms without distinctive morphology. As we have seen the morpheme *-te* is not an inflectional affix, so one

could say that even *voz'memte* is morphologically ambiguous, but this does not solve properly our problem. An alternative solution could be to assume that, since in second person imperatives the recipient of the prescription corresponds to the addressee, only when there is not this correspondence, the verb raises. This hypothesis entails that movement is driven by an [Addressee] feature, and not [imperative]. This solution seems compatible with a recent proposal by Zanuttini (2007), who argues that in all imperative sentences a high projection associated with the addressee is activated. She labels it Jussive Phrase. It seems that in Russian, when the subject has not the same features of the addressee (let's assume these are [-speaker], [+hearer] and [±plural]), the latter ones in the JussiveP can be interpreted only if the verb moves to or an auxiliary is merged in JussiveP. However, past forms used as jussive verbs raise even when the subject corresponds to the addressee. I leave this problem to further research.

To summarize, I have shown that:

- Russian has both distinctive and non-distinctive imperative syntax.
- Synonymous analytic and syntetic jussive forms derive from the same structure.
- *-te* is not an inflectional morpheme, but a 'plural addressee' marker.

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