

XVI. LINGUISTICS*

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A. REMARKS ON THE TRANSFORMATIONAL REDUCTION OF *esli*-CLAUSES IN RUSSIAN

Edward Klima has suggested that some apparent anomalies in English can be explained by postulating a transformational development of underlying "if-clauses." Thus, for example, the conjunction of imperative and indicative in 'Eat your dinner, or I'll send you to bed.' can be explained by assuming a deeper representation, 'If you don't eat your dinner, I'll send you to bed.' The following sentences show that a similar phenomenon occurs in Russian:¹

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| 1. Otkāzis' ona ot pensii, ej
nečem bylo by žit'! | Take away her pension – she wouldn't
have anything to live on. |
| 2. Kak ona ni plač', a tolku
ot slez ne budet. | Cry as much as she wants, there
still won't be reason in tears. |
| 3. Otpusti ja ego, delo by
ne vygorelo. | Had I let him loose, the business
affair would have failed. |

Note that the presence of nominatives (ona in 1 and 2, ja in 3) is immediately explained by postulating an underlying '*esli by ona/ja*'

The following "optative" sentences can be similarly derived:

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| 4. Čort ego poberi! | The devil take him (it)! |
| 5. Bud' on prokljat! | Curse him! |
| 6. Ne bud' nas, . . . | But for us, . . . |

Here again, the nominatives are immediately explained.²

The following sentences show the peculiar indicative-imperative conjunction mentioned above:

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|---|---|
| 7. Net druga – išči, a
najdes' – beregi. | There isn't a friend – search (for one),
and you'll find (one) – keep (him). |
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8. Xočes' est' kalači, You want to eat fancy bread – don't
ne leži na pečī. lie on the stove.

In addition to imperative surface forms like those mentioned above, Russian also permits the use of 2 sg. perf. fut. forms in sentences like the following:

9. Za dvumja zajcami You'll chase after two
pogoniš'sja – ni odnogo hares – you won't catch
ne pojmaeš'. even one.

The sentences of type 9, however, contain underlying factual conditional clauses ('Ešli pogoniš'sja . . .'), whereas the sentences in 1-8 contain contrary-to-fact clauses.

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References

1. Sentences 1 through 6 are taken from A. A. Šaxmatov, Sintaksis russkogo jazyka (Leningrad, 1925-27); sentences 7 through 9 are well-known proverbs.
2. In the surface representations, only 4 and 5 contain nominatives (čort and on, respectively). In the underlying representations, however, the genitive nas in sentence 6 must be construed as a nominative my; for discussion of this use of the genitive in negative sentences, see B. C. Hall, "Remarks on 'some' and 'any' in negation and interrogative constructions with a note on negation in Russian," pp. 15-16 (mimeographed, 1963).