# Russian *to*-conditionals as hanging topic constructions

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**Background:** Recent work (Ebert et al. 2014) has developed the view that conditionals can be understood as topics. Importantly, they argue that two classes of conditionals (normal conditionals, ex.1a, and relevance conditionals, ex.1b) correspond to two classes of topic constructions, namely, German Left Dislocation (GLD, ex.2a) and Hanging Topic Left Dislocation (HTLD, ex.2b).

(1)  a. If John doesn't come in 30 minutes, then his mom will be angry

    b. If you are hungry, there are biscuits in the fridge

(2)  a. *Den    Pfarrer, den   kann keiner  leiden.*
      The-acc pastor   RP-acc can   nobody  like
      'The pastor nobody likes.' (GLD)

    b. *Den    Pfarrer, keiner  kann ihm leiden.*
      The-acc pastor   nobody  can   him  like
      'The pastor nobody likes.' (HTLD)

**Main claim:** We suggest that Russian conditional antecedent clauses with the correlative pro-form *to* (ex.3) in the consequent should be analysed as hanging topics.

(3) *Esli babushka doma, to deti    ne golodnye.*
   If   grandma  home, to children not hungry
   'If grandma is home, the children are not hungry'

**Binding data:** It is known that quantifiers cannot bind pronouns in case of HTLD while being able to bind pronouns in case of GLD (ex.4) .

(4)  a. *Seinen$_i$ Vater, den   verehrt jeder$_i$.*
      His-acc father RP-acc admires everybody
      'Everybody admires his father.'

    b. *\*Sein(-en)$_i$ Vater, jeder$_i$   verehrt ihn.*
      His(-acc)   father everybody admires him
      Intended: (=4a)

Russian antecedents with *to* behave like HTLD in this respect (ex.5). Note that without *to* the sentence is grammatical, so binding into antecedents is possible in Russian.

(5) *Esli on$_i$ pridet pozdno, (\*to) kazhdyj student$_i$ rasstroit mamu.*
   if   he  come late,    to   every   student upset   mom.
   'Every student will upset his mom, if he comes late.'

**Weak crossover:** The contrast in ex.6 shows that the presence of *to* makes a left-dislocated antecedent with a co-indexed pro-form much more acceptable. We suggest that marginality of (6)

without *to* is due to weak crossover effect (Safir 2017), while the antecedent-as-hanging topic with *to* is base-generated, so no crossover occurs.

(6) *[Esli Tramp vyigraet vybory]$_i$, ??(to) posledstviya etogo$_i$ budut neobratimy*
    if   Trump wins   election to   consequences this.gen will.be irreversible
    'If Trump wins the election, the consequences will be irreversible.'

We should note that judgements on this are less robust: we tentatively suggest that this is due to *to* not being a necessary condition for the antecedent being a hanging topic. For example, when we combine binding into the antecedent (impossible with hanging topics) and the presence of the pro-form (impossible with moved antecedents) the resulting string is unacceptable regardless of *to*'s presence (7).

(7) *??[Esli on$_j$ chto-to ukradet]$_i$, (to) [kazhdyj shket]$_j$ za eto$_i$ poplatitsa*
    if   he something steals   to   every   kiddo for this pay
    Intended:'Every kiddo will pay, if he steals something.'

**Relevance constructions:** A piece of circumstantial evidence for our analysis comes from the fact that *to* is felicitous with a relevance construction *chto kasayetsa*, the Russian equivalent for *as for* (ex.8), which corresponds to semantics of hanging topics (Ebert et al. 2014 and references therein).

(8) *Chto kasaetsa menya, to ja na konferenziju ne edu*
    As   for   me,   to I  on conference   not come.
    'As for me, I am not going to the conference.'

**Then and *to*:** Izvorski (1996) suggests that English *then* is a correlative pro-form and Ebert et al. (2014) argue that they are resumptives in GLD. Our analysis predicts that Russian *to*, despite apparent similarities, will behave unlike *then*. This prediction is borne out: *to* is felicitous in relevance conditionals (ex.9) and with a true antecedent (either presupposed by *raz* or trivial) (ex.10), which are not appropriate contexts for English *then*.

(9)   a. If you are hungry, (#then) there are biscuits in the fridge.

      b. *Esli ty   goloden, to na stole est' pechenye*
         If   you hungry,   to on table is   cookies.
         'If you are hungry, there are cookies on the table.'

(10)  a. If John is dead or alive, (#then) I will find him.

      b. *Raz   Vasya linguist, to on pomozhet nam s   botom*
         Since V.   linguist, to he help   us   with bot
         'Since Vasya is a linguist, he will help us with the bot.'

**Syntax of *to*:** The question is, why is *to* impossible in the consequent without the if-clause being a hanging topic? We suggest that *to*'s syntactic position is above the final position of the moved antecedent but below the position for hanging topics in Russian. It may be associated with the HOP position of Scott 2012, but we abstain from making big claims here.

**Conclusion:** We have proposed that Russian antecedents clauses are hanging topics when there is *to* in the consequent clause. This move accounts for several properties of such conditionals and shows that Russian *to* should not be analyzed in a similar way to English *then*.

**References:**  • Ebert, C., Ebert, C., and Hinterwimmer, S. (2014). A unified analysis of conditionals as topics. *Linguistics and Philosophy*, 37:353–408. • Izvorski, R. (1996). The syntax and semantics of correlative proforms. In *North East Linguistics Society*, volume 26, page 11. • Safir, K. (2017). Weak crossover. *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Syntax, Second Edition*, pages 1–40. • Scott, T. (2012). *Whoever doesn't HOP must be Superior: The Russian left-periphery and the Emergence of Superiority*. PhD thesis, Stony Brook university.