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The *Verb-Infinitive-Object* construction in Russian: Object Sharing or Backward Object Control?

Problem. In Russian, there are numerous usages of purpose infinitives with verbs like *prinesti* 'bring' and *vz'at* 'take', e.g:

(1)   Pet'a   prin'os   (Mashe)   podpisat'   bumagi
     Peter.NOM.SG   bring.PST.M.SG   Mary.DAT.SG sign.INF   paper.ACC.PL
     'Peter brought Mary papers to sign.'

At first glance, the NP *bumagi* seems to be the object of both the matrix verb (*prin'os*) and the infinitive (*podpisat'*). However, various theories of syntax prohibit such behaviour — an argument is expected to be governed by only one unit and each verb is expected to have all its arguments expressed (Chomsky 1981, Testelets 2001). This construction poses multiple questions regarding its structure and dependencies within it, specifically whether the object is a dependent of the matrix verb or the infinitive. In this work I will provide a possible analysis for the construction.

This topic concerns purpose infinitives, which have been covered for Russian in (Gusev 2004, Gradinarova 2006, Kozinskiy 1980). Similar types of usages have been briefly described in (Stoynova 2016; 2022), albeit with different matrix verbs and exclusively in regard to the control of PRO. This thesis is concerned specifically with cases where the objects of both verbs match, so contexts like *Pet'a prin'os ručku podpisat' bumagi* 'Pete brought a pen to sign the papers' are not included.

Data. In this section I will provide the results of syntactic tests arguing for mono-/biclausality of the construction. The infinitive and the object can form a constituent together and be a part of a conjunction, which hints not only at biclausality, but also at the object residing in the embedded clause:

(2)   Pet'a   prin'os   [podpisat'   bumagi]$_{\text{InfP}}$ i [postavit' na   nih
     Pete.NOM.SG bring.M.PST sign.INF   papers.ACC.SG and put.INF   on   3PL.ACC
     pečat']$_{\text{InfP}}$.
     stamp.ACC.SG
     'Pete brought papers to sign and put a stamp on them.'

The construction exhibits Non-obligatory Control (Williams 1980) since the covert infinitive subject can be coreferent not with an overt argument from the main clause but with a pragmatically salient, but not expressed participant (see Example (1), the dative NP *Mashe* is optional). There are some cases with both clauses having the same subject (or Subject

Control), however they depend on specific infinitives and/or matrix verbs and thus can't be used as an argument for monoclausality:

(3) Prin'os   pokazat'   L'vu Nikolaevichu   napisannoe   mnoju
    bring.M.PST   show.INF   Lev_Nikolaevich.DAT.SG   write.PTCP.PST 1SG.INSTR
    bol'shoe   pis'mo <…>. [V. F. Bulgakov. Dnevnik (1910)]
    big.N.SG   letter.SG
    '[I] brought Lev Nikolaevich a big letter written by me in order to show it to him'

It is possible to modify only the infinitive with an adverbial, which speaks of biclausality of the construction:

(4) […] <…>, vz'al **[perechityvat'** <u>escho raz</u>$_{Adv}$ **«Vojnu i mir» Tolstogo]**$_{Scope}$.
    [N. A. Morozov. Pis'ma iz Shlisselburgskoj kreposti (1900)][1]
    '[I] took Tolstoy's "War and Peace" **to reread (it)** <u>once more</u>'

All of the tests argue for biclausality. The only test arguing for monoclausality is negation:

(5) *Pet'a   prin'os   ne   podpisat'   bumagi
    Peter.Nom.Sg   bring.PST.M.Sg   NEG   sign.INF   paper.Acc.Pl

The inability to be negated is a property of the purpose infinitive in general (Gusev 2004), thus it can be disregarded and the construction can be considered fully biclausal.

Possible Analyses. As discussed in the previous section, there are several arguments to consider this construction biclausal and example (2) hints at the object residing in the infinitive clause, rather than in the matrix clause. But that poses a problem — the matrix verb has no overt object, while we expect all arguments to be expressed. To alleviate this problem, we can postulate a null object within the matrix clause, which will be coreferrent to the object within the infinitive clause. This results in a Backward Control construction (Polinsky & Potsdam 2002):

$$\text{Subj V } \text{Ø}_{OBJ} \text{ [Ø}_{PRO} \text{ Inf Obj]}$$

However, the term "Backward Control" (and "control" in general) is used when talking about the coreference between the infinitive subject and an NP in the matrix clause (Landau 2001), not object-to-object coreference. Also, Backward Control constructions usually appear with modal/phasal verbs like *begin, try, force* etc. (Greshler & Melnik 2017, Monahan 2003), which borrow their argument structure from the embedded verb. Some theories do extend the notion of control to other filler-gap dependencies and motivate control by whether the participant can take part in a consequent situation, however these theories are underdeveloped (Thematic Matching, Jones 1991; also see Farkas 1988 for a *responsibility*-based account).

One could say that the object NP is "shared" between the matrix verb and the infinitive, and such a phenomenon does exist in languages with serial verb constructions (Aikhenvald &

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[1] This and other examples with references were taken from The Russian National Corpus (ruscorpora.ru).

Dixon 2006, Baker 1989). However, the construction in Russian doesn't fit any of the SVC criteria: verbs exhibit morphological marking (each their own), denote separate, consecutive events and behave biclausally; thus it cannot be analysed in the same way.

Conclusions. The *Verb-Infinitive-Object* construction exhibits unexpected behaviour from the perspective of some syntax theories. Syntactic tests show that it is biclausal and exhibits Backward Control, since the overt object is in the infinitive clause. While more data is required to better model the structure of the construction, it is already quite unique — similar word order patterns have been seen in Baltic languages (Holvoet 2015), but it is unknown whether such analysis is possible for them. From a typological point of view, such behaviour of object in purpose clauses is also undocumented (see Schmidtke-Bode 2008 for typological data), and from the point of view of theory of Control, the object controlling a null object in a backward configuration is also a novel occurrence. This data may also contribute to the theory of control, expanding on the Thematic Matching theory (Jones 1991).

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