

The syntax of presentational sentences in Russian

1. Presentational sentences: the data

The sentences in (1) describe the same event. (1a) formulates it as a statement about the referent of the grammatical subject, (1b) formulates it as a statement about the referent of the object:

- (1) a. Petja podaril Lene knigu
Petja-nom gave Lena-dat book acc
 'Petja gave Lena a book'
- b. knigu Petja podaril Lene
book-acc Petja-nom gave Lena-dat

However, (1a) can also be understood as a presentational sentence, i.e. it can describe the event without formulating it as a statement about any of the participants (cf. Kiss 2002)

1.1 Basic word order patterns

Important facts:

- Russian does not have expletives
- Russian is not a referential *pro* drop language

Q: What happened?

- transitives

- (2) a. kakoj-to mal'chik razbil okno SVO
some boy-nom broke window-acc
 'Some boy broke a window'
- b. #okno razbil kakoj-to mal'chik #OVS
window-acc broke some boy-nom
- c. *razbil kakoj-to mal'chik okno *VSO
broke some boy-nom window-acc

- unaccusatives

- (3) a. voznikli problemy VS
appeared problems-nom
 'There appeared problems'
- b. #problemy voznikli #SV
problems-nom appeared
- (4) a. prishlo pis'mo VS
came letter-nom
 'A letter came'
- b. #pis'mo prishlo #SV
letter-nom came

- unergatives:

(5)	a.	zaigrat	orkestr	VS
		<i>played</i>	<i>orchestra-nom</i>	
		'An orchestra started playing'		
	b.	#orkestr	zaigrat	#SV
		<i>orchestra-nom</i>	<i>played</i>	
(6)	a.	zaplakat	rebenok	VS
		<i>cried</i>	<i>child-nom</i>	
		'A child started crying'		
	b.	#rebenok	zaplakat	#SV
		<i>child-nom</i>	<i>cried</i>	

1.2 Adverbials

- whenever a locative/temporal adverbial is added to a VS sentence, it is obligatorily fronted:

(7)	a.	vskore	voznikli	problemy	AdvVS
		<i>soon</i>	<i>appeared</i>	<i>problems-nom</i>	
		'There appeared some problems soon'			
	b.	*voznikli	problemy	vskore	*VSAdv
		<i>appeared</i>	<i>problems-nom</i>	<i>soon</i>	
(8)	a.	v parke	zaigrat	orkestr	PPVS
		<i>in park</i>	<i>played</i>	<i>orchestra-nom</i>	
		'An orchestra started playing in the park'			
	b.	*zaigrat	orkestr	v parke	*VSPP
		<i>played</i>	<i>orchestra-nom</i>	<i>in park</i>	
(9)	a.	orkestr	zaigrat	pol'ku	SVO
		<i>orchestra-nom</i>	<i>played</i>	<i>polka-acc</i>	
		'An orchestra started playing a polka'			
	b.	#pol'ku	zaigrat	orkestr	#OVS
		<i>polka-acc</i>	<i>played</i>	<i>orchestra-nom</i>	
	c.	*zaigrat	orkestr	pol'ku	*VSO
		<i>played</i>	<i>orchestra-nom</i>	<i>polka-acc</i>	

- benefactive arguments also pattern with locative/temporal adverbials:

(10)	a.	tebe	prishlo	pis'mo	BenVS
		<i>you-dat</i>	<i>came</i>	<i>letter-nom</i>	
		'There's a letter for you'			
	b.	*prishlo	tebe	pis'mo	*VSBen
		<i>came</i>	<i>you-dat</i>	<i>letter-nom</i>	
	c.	*prishlo	pis'mo	tebe	*VBenS
		<i>came</i>	<i>letter-nom</i>	<i>you-dat</i>	

- not all PPs behave like locative PPs:

(11)	a.	rebenok	zaplakat	ot straxa
		<i>child-nom</i>	<i>cried</i>	<i>of fear</i>
		'A child started crying of fear'		

- (17) sestru toshnilo ot ryby
sister-acc nauseated from fish
 'The sister got nauseated from the fish'

vi. dative experiencers

DatVS

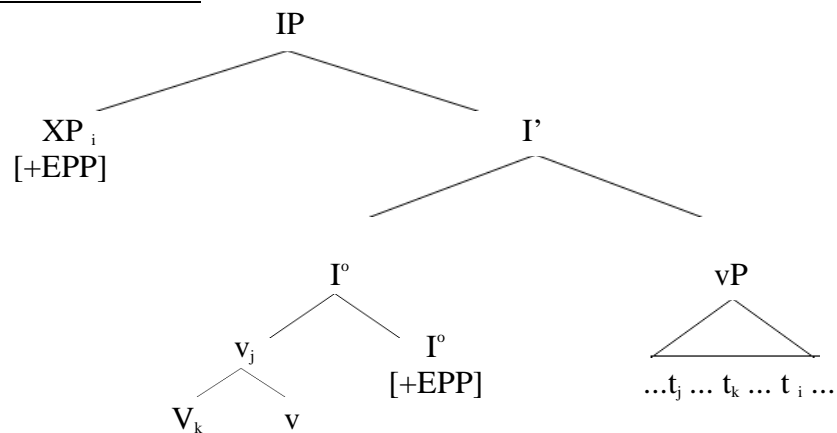
- (18)a. Sashe nnavjatsja deti
Sasha-dat like-3pl children-nom
 'Sasha likes children'
 b. emu zhal' sosedej
him-dat sorry neighbours-acc
 'He feels sorry for the neighbours'

vii. quotative inversion

QuotVS

- (19) "Nichego sebe!" skazal Petja
-exclamation- said Petja-nom
 "'Wow' said Petja."

(20) Schematic View of Inversion:



(21) Characteristics of the Inversion Construction:

- A non-Nominative XP raises into the SpecIP position
- The finite Verb raises to I
- The Nominative subject (if there is one) remains internal to the complement of I
- There is no agreement between the constituent in SpecIP and the tensed verb

Bailyn assumes that the SpecIP position in Russian is not a case position, and Nominative case is valued in the lower functional projection (vP). An Agree relationship is established between I and the (lower) Nominative subject without any overt movement.

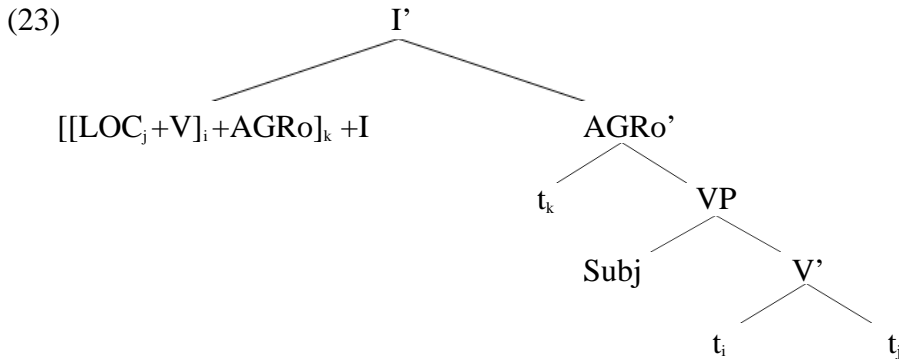
According to Bailyn, obligatory verb movement in inversion construction is required by *The Overt Tense Condition*: An uninterpretable [+T] feature must be checked by overt movement. In Russian, this condition can be satisfied either with a Nominative subject moving to SpecIP or by a raised tensed verb (head movement).

- problem: the position of adverbs in inversion contexts provides no evidence for verb movement and resulting spec-head configuration:

- (22) s polki opjat' upala kniga
from shelf again fell book-nom
 'A book fell from the shelf again'

3. EPP satisfied by LOC

Pinto 1997 observes that in Italian wide focus reading is not always available in VS sentences. Pinto suggests that the availability of this reading depends on whether the verb can select a locative/temporal argument. She proposes the following analysis for inversion constructions in Italian:



In inversion construction the subject remains in its base position. The EPP is satisfied by LOC¹, the loco-temporal argument selected by the verb, which can be either overt (realized as a PP) or covert. The presence of covert LOC triggers deictic (speaker-oriented) interpretation of the sentence.

Russian:

- not all VS sentences are felicitous in presentational contexts:

- (24) What happened?
- | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----|
| a. | vorishki | pokrasneli | SV |
| | <i>little thieves-nom</i> | <i>blushed</i> | |
| | 'Little thieves blushed' | | |
| b. | #pokrasneli | vorishki | #VS |
| | <i>blushed</i> | <i>little thieves-nom</i> | |
-
- (25) a. deti ulybnulis'
children-nom smiled
'Children smiled' SV
- b. #ulybnulis' deti #VS
smiled children-nom

- sentences that contain a covert LOC are interpreted as being about 'here and now':

- (26) a. rabotajut ljudi
work people-nom
'People are working'
- b. zdes' rabotajut ljudi
here work people-nom
'People work/are working here'

¹ In Pinto's analysis LOC is a clitic.

- locative PPs that are not selected by the verb cannot function as LOC:

(27) #na èkzamen opozdal student
 to exam was-late student-nom
 'A student was late for the exam'

- the presence of covert LOC can also account for subjectless sentences with weather verbs:

(28) temneet
 darkens
 'It is darkening'

Conclusion: In presentational VS sentences the EPP is satisfied by the empty locative/temporal argument LOC. VS sentences are only felicitous in presentational contexts when such an argument is present.

4. Some derivations

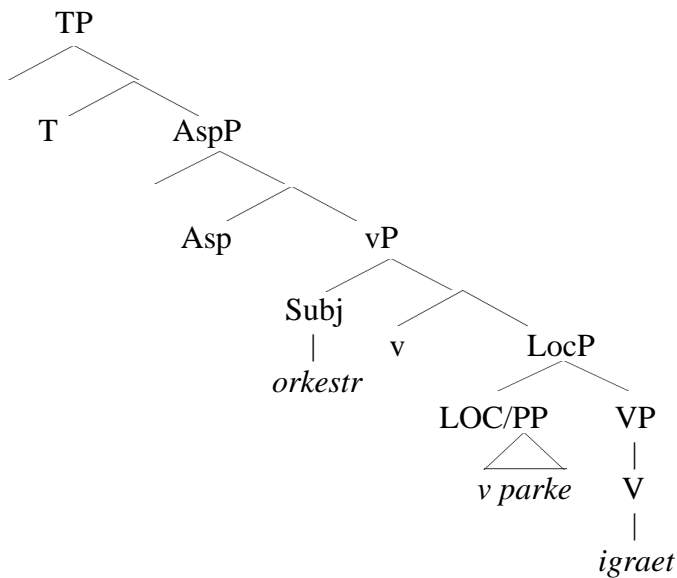
Assumptions:

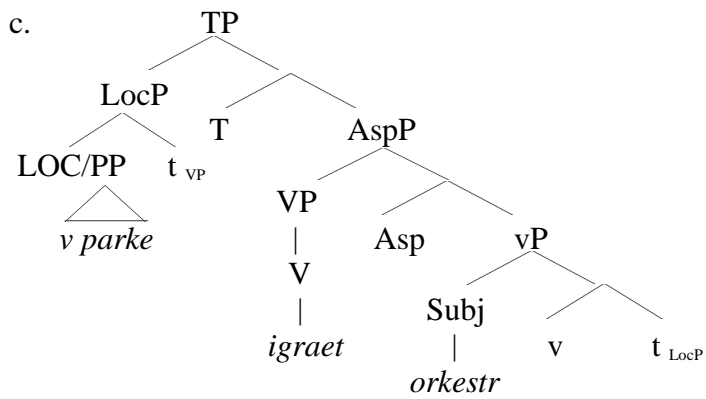
- Russian has no overt V-to-T movement. However, I assume that VP in Russian moves at least as high as to AspP.
- Temporals, Locatives and Benefactives (both overt and covert) are base generated above VP (cf. Cinque 2002).

(29) + LOC unergative verbs

a. (v parke) igraet orkestr
 in park plays orchestra-nom
 'An orchestra is playing (in the park)'

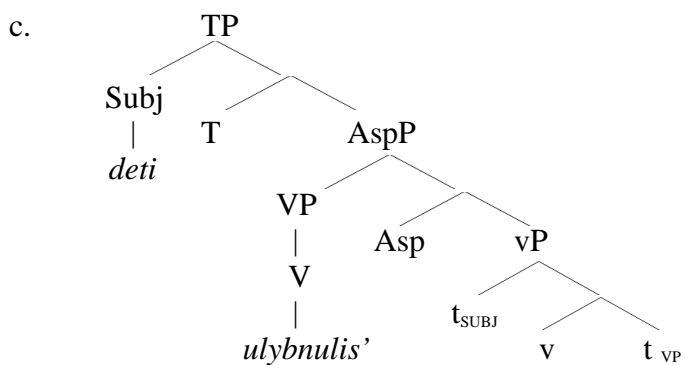
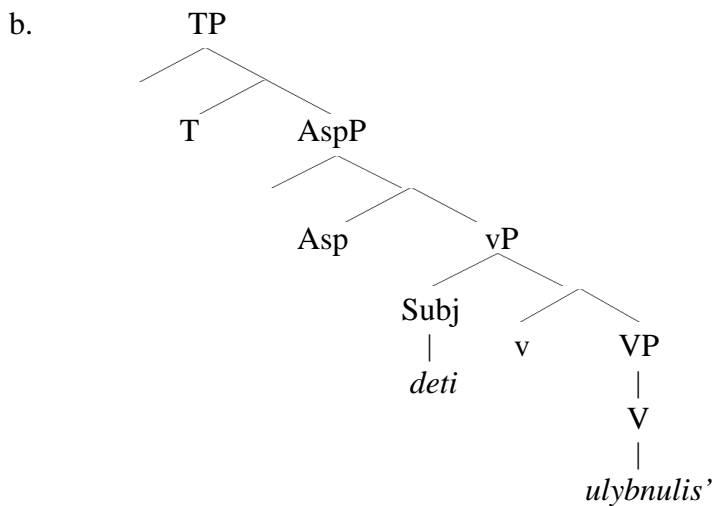
b.





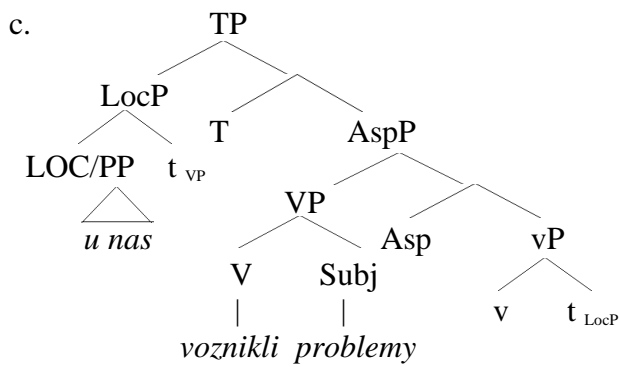
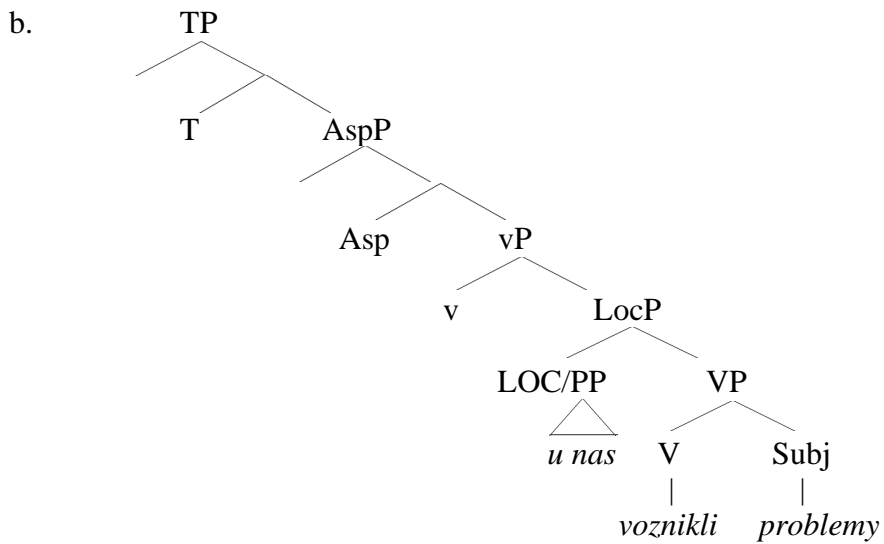
(30) – LOC unergative verbs

a. deti ulybnulis'
children-nom smiled
 'Children smiled'



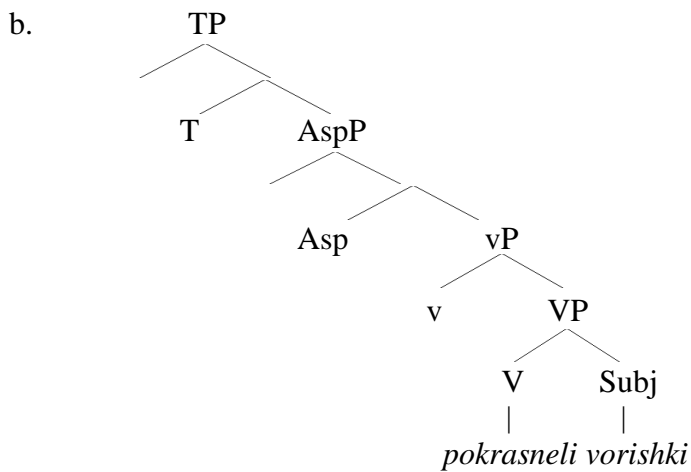
(31) + LOC unaccusative verbs

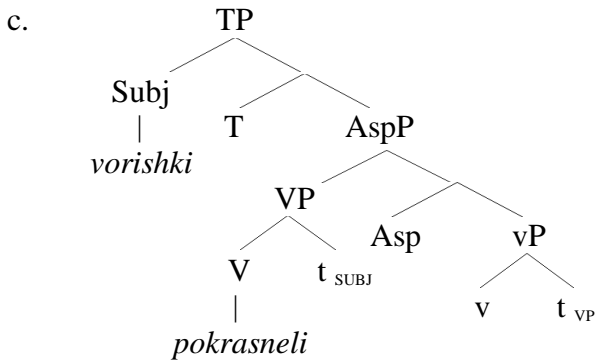
a. (u nas) vznikli problemy
at us-gen appeared problems-nom
 'We had problems'



(32) – LOC unaccusative verbs

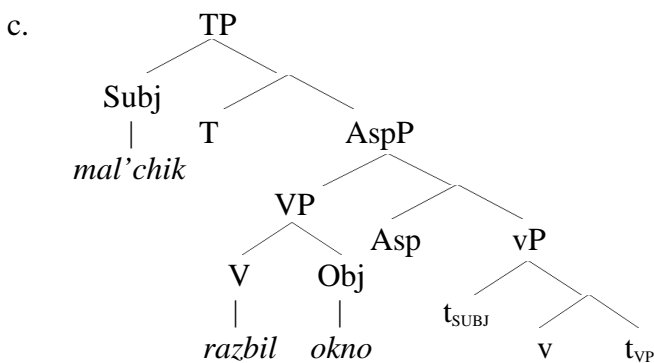
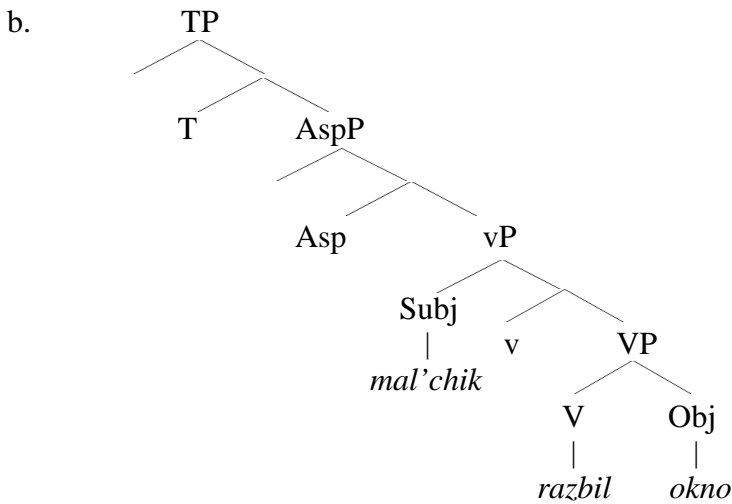
- a. vorishki pokrasneli
little thieves–nom blushed
 'Little thieves blushed'





(33) transitive verbs

- a. mal'chik razbil okno
 boy-nom broke window-acc
 'A boy broke a/the window'



5. Further problems

- arbitrary *pro*

Russian is not a referential *pro* drop language, but it has an arbitrary *pro*. However, the arbitrary *pro* alone, unlike LOC, cannot satisfy the EPP:

- (34) a. mal'chiku podarili knigu
 boy-dat gave-pl book-acc
 'A boy was given a book'
 b. *podarili knigu mal'chiku
 gave-pl book-acc boy-dat

- (35) prinesli zavtrak
 brought-pl breakfast-acc
 'Breakfast has come (here)'

• animacy hierarchy

- (36) a. rebenka ukusila sobaka
 child-acc bit dog-nom
 'A child was bitten by a dog'
 b. #sobaka ukusila rebenka
 dog-nom bit child-acc

- (37) a. mal'chik udaril devochku
 boy-nom hit girl-acc
 'A boy hit a girl'
 b. #devochku udaril mal'chik
 girl-acc hit boy-nom

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