

# Imperatives as counterfactual antecedents in Russian

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# Introduction

Russian imperatives may be used in counterfactual antecedents.

- (1) a. Regular imperative

*Pridi domoj!*

come.IMP home

'Come home!'

- b. Imperatives in antecedents

*Pridi on vovremja, ego by ne naruga-li*

come.IMP he in.time him CF NEG scold-PL

'If he came in time, he would not be scolded.'

# Imperative antecedents and IaDs

Importantly, imperative antecedents are not IaDs (imperative and declarative; Kaufmann 2011). Evidence comes from linear order: IaDs allow only for one linear order.

- (2) Only one linear order for IaDs
  - a. Come forth and I will shoot!
  - b. #I will shoot and come forth!

# Imperative antecedents and IaDs

(3) Both linear orders are possible for imperative antecedents

a. *Pridi*      *on vovremja, ego by ne naruga-li*  
*come.IMP* he in.time      him CF NEG scold-PL  
'If he came in time, he would not be scolded.'

b. *Ego by ne naruga-li, pridi*      *on vovremja*  
him CF NEG scold-PL *come.IMP* he in.time  
'If he came in time, he would not be scolded.'

# Other counterfactual imperatives

Mastop (2011): Dutch pluperfect

- (4) *Was toch lekker thuisgebleven*  
was PRT PRT at.home.stay.PPF  
'You should have stayed at home.'

# Other counterfactual imperatives

Bosque (1980), Vicente (2013): Spanish (see Biezma 2010 however)

- (5) *Haber cogido el metro*  
have.INF taken the subway  
'You should have taken the subway.'

# Other counterfactual imperatives

Van der Wurff (2007): Syrian Arabic

(6) *kənt*      *ko'*  
be.PF.2SG eat.IMP

'You should have eaten.'

# Other counterfactual imperatives

Other 'counterfactual' imperatives reported in the literature behave more like true imperatives: a litmus test is the subject restriction

As we have already seen, subject restriction is lifted in antecedent conditionals, which indicates that we are dealing with another kind of beast



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- Morphosyntactic evidence shows that the ‘imperative’ form of counterfactual antecedents is not a proper imperative
- I suggest that this is due to a certain functional layer being absent from antecedent imperatives
- What’s left (semantically) allows using these ‘imperatives’ in counterfactual antecedents

# Properties of antecedent imperatives

No 2nd person subject restriction

(7) a. Regular imperative

\**Pridi*    *on domoj!*

*come.IMP* he home

'Come home!'

b. Imperatives in antecedents

<sup>ok</sup>*Pridi*    *on vovremja, ego by ne naruga-li*

*come.IMP* he in.time    him CF NEG scold-PL

'If he came in time, he would not be scolded.'

# Properties of antecedent imperatives

No 2nd person subject restriction

(8) a. Regular imperative

\**Pridi* ya domoj!

come.IMP I home

'Come home!'

b. Imperatives in antecedents

<sup>ok</sup>*Pridi* ya vovremja, menya by ne naruga-li

come.IMP I in.time me CF NEG scold-PL

'If I came in time, I would not be scolded.'

# Properties of antecedent imperatives

Cannot combine with special imperative particle *-ka*

(9) a. Regular imperative

<sup>ok</sup>*Pridi-ka* domoj!

come.IMP-ka he

'Come home!'

b. Imperatives in antecedents

\**Pridi-ka* on vovremja, ego by ne naruga-li

come.IMP-ka he in.time him CF NEG scold-PL

'If he came in time, he would not be scolded.'

# Properties of antecedent imperatives

No interaction between aspect and negation

(10) a. Regular imperative

Ne *uxodi* domoj!

NEG *go.IMP* home

'Don't go home!'

b. Imperatives in antecedents

Ne *uxodi* on vovremja, ego by ruga-li

NEG *go.IMP-PL* you(pl) in.time him CF scold-PL

'If he didn't go home in time, he would be scolded.'

# Properties of antecedent imperatives

No interaction between aspect and negation

(11) a. Regular imperative

\*Ne *pridi* domoj!

NEG *come.IMP* home

'Come home!'

b. Imperatives in antecedents

Ne *pridi* on vovremja, ego by naruga-li

NEG *come.IMP-PL* you(pl) in.time him CF scold-PL

'If he didn't come in time, he would be scolded.'



# Properties of antecedent imperatives

No plural agreement

(12) a. Regular imperative

<sup>ok</sup>*Pridi-te* domoj!

come.IMP-PL home

'Come home!'

b. Imperatives in antecedents

*Pridi*-(*\*te*) vy vovremja, vas by ne

come.IMP-PL you(pl) in.time you(pl) CF NEG

*naruga-li*

scold-PL

'If you came in time, you would not be scolded.'

# Russian *-te*

2PL agreement marker *-te* may be used as allocutive agreement in exhortatives

(13) a. *Pojd-ë-m domoj*

go-PRES-1PL home

'Let's go home!'

#When uttered to a John and Mary/Pete/etc.

<sup>ok</sup>When uttered to John only.

b. *Pojd-ë-m-te domoj*

go-PRES-1PL-2PL home

'Let's go home!'

<sup>ok</sup>When uttered to a John and Mary/Pete/etc.

#When uttered to John only.

# Not a proper imperative

Morphosyntactic evidence shows that this is not a true imperative (no addressee-oriented properties)  $\Rightarrow$  combined with semantic properties this may indicate the lack of a certain functional layer, which is exclusive to imperatives.

Possible culprits: imperative operator itself ( $Op_{imp}$ ; Kaufmann 2011, Oikonomou 2016 a.m.o), speech act-like projection (Portner 2004, Isac 2015 a.m.o.)

# What are we left with

What are we left with, once we lose imperative pragmatics (introduced by said functional layer)?

Two possible alternatives:

- (1) Covert imperative modal (Kaufmann 2011 a.m.o.)
- (2) Some 'minimal semantics' (Portner 2004 a.m.o.)

Note that if we assume a modal analysis and that modality is introduced simultaneously with subject restrictions etc., we are left with (2). It is whatever is left of imperative, once we strip away its imperativeness

# Covert modal won't do

If we have a covert modal in the antecedent, we will have semantics like this, which is no good

(14)  $\text{MUST}(p) \rightarrow_{CF} q$

(15) Modal operator in antecedent

*Pridi* on vovremja, ego by ne naruga-li  
come.IMP he in.time him CF NEG scold-PL

'If he came in time, he would not be scolded.'

≠ 'If he had to come in time, he would not be scolded'

# Minimal semantics

Portner 2004:  $\llbracket \text{open the window!} \rrbracket = \lambda w. \lambda x : x = \text{Addressee}. x$   
opens the window in  $w$

Stripped:  $\llbracket \text{pridi on vovremja} \rrbracket = \lambda w. \text{he comes in time in } w$

This may be easily composed with a conditional as its antecedent. However: why is it restricted to counterfactuals?

# Subjunctiveness

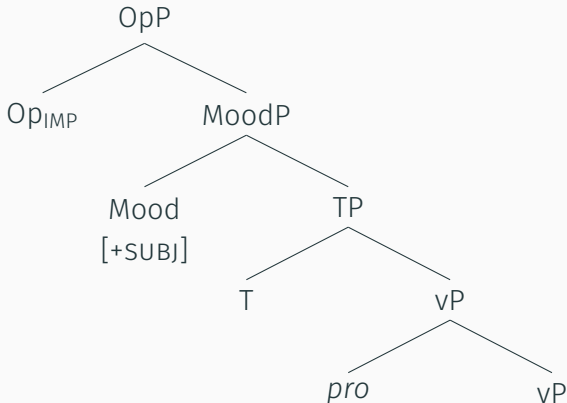
Many researchers posit a subjunctive/irrealis feature on imperative forms themselves (Han 2000, Oikonomou 2016).

It appears that for imperative antecedents we need to posit that this feature is relatively independent of the imperative operator.

# Inside of an imperative

We need independently: an imperative operator (modal or not) and a functional layer which introduces subjunctiveness. Cf.

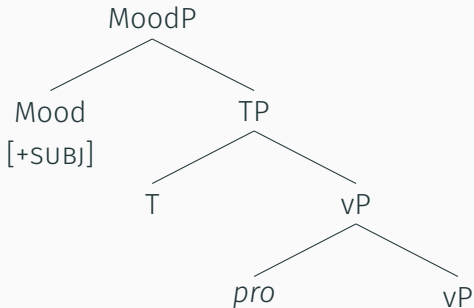
Oikonomou (2016) (simplified):





# Stripped imperative

The 'stripped' imperative itself is the MoodP.



# Composing a counterfactual

If the stripped imperative is MoodP with a subjunctive feature, it may explain why it is allowed in a counterfactual.

- (16) a. *Esli by on prishel vovremya, ego ne naruga-l-i*  
if CF he came in.time him NEG scold-PST-PL

*by*

CF

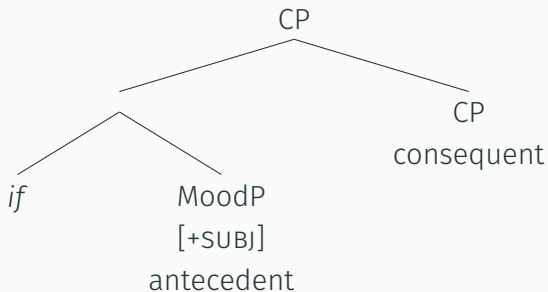
‘If he came in time, he would not be scolded’

- b. Conditional inversion in Russian

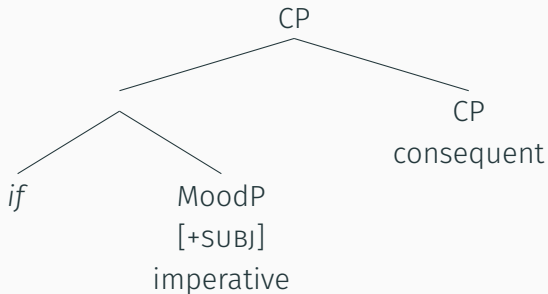
*Prishel by on vovremya, ego ne naruga-l-i by*  
came CF he in.time him NEG scold-PST-PL CF

‘If he came in time, he would not be scolded’

# Regular counterfactual



# Imperative counterfactual



# Structural conclusions

For structural purposes the ‘stripped’ imperative behaves just like the MoodP in the antecedent of a counterfactual, which makes the antecedent imperative construction possible.

Our assumptions about imperatives: there are two necessary ingredients: the imperative operator and a MoodP, the former being absent from ‘stripped’ imperatives.

# What about semantics?

It appears that semantically it is rather straightforward. Whatever your analysis of counterfactuals is, the ‘stripped imperative’ is of type  $\langle s, t \rangle$ , which easily stands for the antecedent proposition.

However, we need to assume that [+SUBJ] is not interpreted on MoodP but rather licensed by a higher operator ( $Op_{IMP}$ , counterfactual modal etc.). Same assumption is made by, for example, [Oikonomou \(2016\)](#).

# Open questions

- Why only Russian? (And languages in contact with it, [Dobrushina \(2008\)](#) reports that Aghul, an East Caucasian language, has a similar construction)
- The resulting answer seems almost trivial. Is this bad?  
Don't know

# Conclusions

- Start: a surprising construction (how does imperative correspond to the antecedent)
- Middle: morphosyntactic reasoning (while a semantically oriented one was possible)
- End: an imperative verbal form  $\neq$  full imperative structure



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