

The Conditional Expressed by Russian and English Imperatives

This paper investigates imperatives and the ways in which they express modality by examining Russian and English constructions in which the imperative, rather than exhibiting its typical illocutionary forces (such as command, instruction, request, warning, etc.), conveys a broader range of meanings.

One of the modal meanings that the Russian imperative is able to denote is the conditional, as in (1). Examples such as (1) morphosyntactically differ from the regular uses of imperatives in the following three ways. (i) The imperative verb form contains no distinctions of grammatical person or number, i.e., it is always the second person singular. (ii) This unchangeable imperative verb form may be applied to a subject in any of the three persons in both numbers. Consequently, there is no agreement between the imperative verb and the subject of the clause. (iii) The subject of the imperative must be overt.

First of all, it will be argued that the imperative's ability to express the conditional is connected to the make-up of its logical form. Following Han (1999), I assume that the logical form of the imperative (see (2)) consists of two components: one expresses directive illocutionary force and the other expresses irrealis modality, which conveys that the situation described by the imperative is unrealized. The main goal of this paper is to demonstrate that Russian imperatives, such as (1), behave like counterfactual conditionals both semantically and syntactically. Comparing Russian imperatives with English imperative constructions, illustrated in (3), which also exhibit the properties of a conditional to some extent, I show that the English sentences are to be considered imperatives despite their partial conditional interpretation, whereas the Russian ones are true conditionals.

The semantic and syntactic properties of English conjoined imperatives (the fact that they can express only the *if*-clause of a conditional, for example), such as (3), unmistakably identify them as imperatives (cf. Clark (1993)). I show that this type of "defective" conditional can be expressed by Russian imperatives as well (cf. (4) below), and I point out how they resemble and differ from imperatives like (1) that express true conditionals. I shall argue that their different status, i.e., that the conjoined constructions like (3) are imperatives and that the sentences like (1) are conditionals, accounts for the contrast in their structure and meaning. My proposal is that in the latter sentences, the imperative verb functions like the conditional complementizer *esli* 'if', and, thus, it raises to C, which has the feature specification [cond]. It will be argued that the structure of (1) differs from the structure of (3) in an important way, which is the consequence of the absence or presence of an AgrSP projection. In other words, the sentences in (1) exhibit a lack of agreement between the imperative and the subject, which can be any person in both singular and plural. On the other hand, in (3), the imperative agrees with its covert subject, which can be only second person, either singular or plural. As was mentioned above, the type of English imperative that has a partial conditional interpretation, such as (3), exists in Russian as well. Consider the minimal pair in (4). I shall provide additional support for the claim that the a-sentence of (4) is imperative and that the b-sentence is conditional by presenting evidence from the restrictions on the embedding abilities of imperatives. The cross-linguistic ban on embedding holds for Russian imperatives as well. However, when the imperative is used in a conditional sense, we can find a contrast in the imperative's abilities to be embedded. Illustrated in (5a) below, the a-example of (4) behaves like a regular imperative clause, given that it cannot be embedded. On the other hand, it is possible to embed the b-sentence. Notice, however, that although the b-sentence (shown in (5b)) can be embedded, it cannot be embedded with a complementizer (*čto* 'that'). This further supports the claim that the imperative verb in (4b) behaves like a complementizer (it moves to C), and, as such, it does not tolerate the presence of another complementizer in the same position in the clause.

The conditional is commonly regarded in the literature as being modal. Kratzer (1986), for example, considers simple indicative conditionals, such as (6), to be "implicitly modalized". She posits a modal operator which quantifies over a set of possible worlds, which, in turn, equals the domain that an *if*-clause can restrict. On the basis of this reasoning, she formulates the logical form of (6) as (7). In more general terms, a conditional *if p, must q* is true iff the set of *p*-worlds is a subset of *q*-worlds. This formulation entails two arguments: (i) the *if p* clause expresses the domain of quantification, and (ii) the *must q* clause expresses a set of *q*-worlds, which is evaluated with respect to this domain (see also Farkas (1992)).

If we look at the Russian imperative sentences like (1) in the light of this formulation, it becomes clear that they can be analyzed as conditionals. The first clause, i.e., the imperative *imp* (*p*), corresponds to the first argument of the conditional, and the second clause entails a set of worlds that corresponds to the second argument of the conditional. The only difference is that in the imperative sentences, the imperative verb itself acts like the conditional complementizer *if*. Taking the formulation of the semantic make-up of the imperative given in (7) as a basis, we can see that in (1), the directive force of the imperative is weakened by the fact that the circumstance stated by the speaker is beyond his or the addressee's control. This accentuates the second component of the imperatives, *irrealis* modality (i.e., the information that the situation described by the imperative is unrealized). The assignment of a conditional interpretation to (1) is due to the fact that it refers to potential or possible worlds, a feature it shares with real conditional sentences. Moreover, sentences such as (1) behave like full conditionals since they are able to express both parts of a conditional sentence: the *if*-clause and the superordinate clause, which contains a conditional modal (*by*). Such imperative sentences render contrary-to-fact conditions. Since in English imperatives like (3) the conditional interpretation is possible even when no conditional modal is present in the sentence, the conditional meaning must be the property of the imperative. It will be argued that the imperative acts like the conditional complementizer *esli* 'if', and, consequently, has the ability to trigger the occurrence of the modal verb in the Russian examples such as (1).

Data:

- (1) Bud' to sam president, ja ne postupil by inače. (R)
be-imp2sg it self president-nom I NEG acted COND differently
'Even if it were the president himself, I would not have acted differently.' (Townsend 1970: 257)
- (2) *directive(irrealis(p))*
- (3) Come to the party and Mary will (*would) be happy.
'If you come to the party, Mary will be happy.'
- (4) a. Skaži komu-nibud' xot' slovo ob ètom i ja nikogda tebja ne prošču. (R)
say-imp3sg somebody even word about this and I never you NEG will forgive
'Say one word to anyone about this, and I'll never forgive you.'
b. Skaži ty komu-nibud' xot' slovo ob ètom, ja nikogda
say-imp2sg you-nom somebody even word about this I never
by tebja ne prostil. (R)
COND you NEG forgave
'If you said one word to anyone about this, I would never forgive you.'
- (5) a. *Ja dumaju, skaži komu-nibud' xot' slovo ob ètom i ja nikogda tebja ne prošču. (R)
I think say-imp2sg somebody even word about this and I never you NEG will forgive
b. Ja dumaju, (*čto) skaži ty komu-nibud' xot' slovo ob ètom,
I think that say-imp2sg you-nom somebody even word about this
ja nikogda by tebja ne prostil. (R)
I never COND you NEG forgave
'I think (*that) if you said one word to anyone about this, I would never forgive you.'
- (6) If my hen has laid eggs today, then the Cologne cathedral will collapse tomorrow morning.
- (7) [must: my hen has laid eggs] the Cologne Cathedral will collapse tomorrow

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