ГРАММАТИЧЕСКИЙ СТАТУС ЧЕРЕДОВАНИЕ НАЧАЛЬНОГО [H]/[J] В ЛИЧНЫХ МЕСТОИМЕНИЯХ ТРЕТЬЕГО ЛИЦА

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STEM INITIAL ALTERNATION IN RUSSIAN THIRD PERSON PRONOUNS: VARIATION IN GRAMMAR

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The paper discusses the present stage of the evolution of the initial [n]/[j] stem alternation in Russian third person pronouns. After providing a short overview of the origins of the forms, I focus on their category status, discuss Zaliznjak's 'adpositionality' in some detail, and then proceed to considering the cases where the 'n'-forms are induced by a distant 'controller'. I will show that the fact that the 'n'-forms are essentially variants is better accounted for by the notion of 'trigger' of a morphological variant. To my eyes, this opens

ways to a better understanding of the observed evidence than that using the conventional notion of morphosyntactic controller, on the one hand—and certainly than explaining them in (morpho)phonological terms. In the end, I will briefly argue that, in a sense, the evolution of the alternation is similar to degrammaticalization, showing a movement from a morphophonologically conditioned external sandhi to a morphosyntactic category similar to government.

1. Introduction

In modern standard Russian, there is a contextually conditioned alternation of the initial [j] (in some contexts, including pronouns, realized as Ø when followed by an [i]) with [n] in the oblique cases of third person personal pronouns of all genders and numbers. Cf. the dative forms: *ему ~ нему, ей ~ ней, им ~ ним*. The 'n'-forms are obligatory with what is traditionally considered to be primary prepositions (cf. 1; sometimes the alternation is used as a diagnostic for primary prepositions) but may be optional to impossible with other prepositions[2]. It also appears, optionally rather than obligatorily (2, 3), after comparative forms of adjectives and adverbs. On the other hand, the form is fully ungrammatical when the pronoun depends on the verb, as in (4).

(1) *Не ладил **с ним** (*им) один Григории Иванович Муромский, ближайший его сосед.*
    [А. С. Пушкин. Барышня-крестьянка (1830)]

(2) *Она решительно опустилась на бревно сзади солдата и **выше его**
    и негромко, мягко, но строго заговорила…*
    [Максим Горький. Солдаты (1906–1908)]

(3) *Над дверью сеновала, для отвода болезней от лошадей, был прибит гвоздями
    скелет птицы, на коньке крыши торчал чисто вымытый дождями рогатый
    череп козла, **выше него** неустанно качались голые вершины деревьев.*
    [Максим Горький. Городок Окуров (1909)]

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[2] Cf. (an almost) obligatory use of [n]-forms with *без* or *от* or *перед* but only peripherally with *вослед* (no occurrences in Russian National Corpus, few occurrences resulting from a Google query—it is truly hard to find examples that are completely un-googleable, for any of the secondary prepositions). The list of prepositions requiring 'n'-forms is discussed e.g. in (Itkin 267ff); but some judgments of the author are not uncontroversial. Thus, it seems that with *подле* they are not absolutely obligatory (less obligatory than e.g. with *без*). A corpus based study of 'n'-forms with different (groups of) prepositions is required, which however lies outside the qualitative aims of this paper.

(4)   *В ярости тот схватил профессора за горло, **повалил его** (*него) на пол*
      и задушил бы, если бы Елена Карловна не выстрелила…
      [Леонид Юзефович. Князь ветра (2001)]

This paper primarily considers the category status of the stem initial alternation. I will first briefly introduce the origins of this alternation, then will discuss the approach to the phenomenon adopted in (Zalizniak 1967), and will turn to the cases of 'distant control' of the alternation and their relevance for the interpretation of the phenomenon.

2.   Origins and the present status of the form

Due to the frequent use of primary prepositions, frequency of some of the 'n'-forms in the corpus is comparable to that of the 'j'-forms. Historically, however, they are clearly secondary and originate from a morphological (or even morphophonological) reanalysis.

In Old Church Slavonic, several prepositions took a prothetic final [n] before a vocalic anlaut of the next wordform (Shakhmatov 1957: 162; Lunt 2001: 63). In pronouns, [jV] anlaut counted as vocalic (Polivanova 2014) and required the prothetic [n] of the preposition. This consonant, still present in some lexicalizations (e.g. *в(н)-утрь*, cf. *утроба*), has been consistently preserved only in combinations of prepositions with third person pronouns. As a result, it was reinterpreted as the component of the pronoun if preceded by a preposition, substituting the initial [j], thus turning into a contextually conditioned alternation. There then was an expansion of 'n'-forms to other contexts, including other, more recently grammaticalized prepositions (e.g. *напротив него*) and, ultimately, to comparative constructions lacking prepositions at all, as in (3).

This paper focuses on the category status of the alternation. One approach to paradigmatic analysis is suggested in (Zalizniak 1967). The forms in [n] are referred to as non-standard adpositional series (*нестандартная припредложная форма*; not to be confused with the prepositional case—*предложный падеж*) that result from the standard forms by adding "н" (orthographically speaking). He argues that the alternation may be considered a separate pronominal inflectional category cross-cutting the category of case and number (in pronouns). While most contexts require 'j'-forms, contexts with prepositions as a head require adpositional forms (which amounts to a kind of government, but category rather than lexically based). Zalizniak also explains apparent gaps in the inflectional paradigms of 'adpositionality' (*припредлож-ности*). Out of all cases, the nominative does not have the adpositional form, and the prepositional case does not have the non-adpositional one. This is readily explained by the fact that the nominative is not used adpositionally, while the prepositional case is never use otherwise; the blank cases in the paradigm are excluded by structural reasons rather than arbitrarily. Under this view, prepositions are syntactic controllers of the inflectional category of adpositionality.

After having introduced the new inflectional category, Zalizniak however suggests that these forms are more conveniently treated as *variants* of the non-adpositional, or standard, forms. This line of argument is not unlike his treatment of the

second genitive (alias partitive) and the second prepositional (alias locative) cases. For these forms, too, he first considers a strictly structural, paradigmatic solution, but then explicitly re-considers this solution because it leads to over-sophisticated models of inflection. Such shift from a purely structural to what may be called variance approach to the forms both greatly simplifies the architecture of the whole system and makes the resulting model more intuitive and closer to the traditional description of the categories in question. Importantly, it is based on considering the adpositional form as a contextually determined variants of the realization of a category (e.g. **adpositional variant** of the dative value of the case category) rather than a separate value of a different category (**adpositional** singular dative as opposed to **non-adpositional** singular dative).

In this approach the issue of the prepositional case becomes somewhat more problematic. The adpositional form of the prepositional case (as in *в нём*) is then a variant of a form that does not exist at all—a strange status for a variant. Zaliz-niak circumvents this problem by suggesting an abstract non-adpositional form (**ём*) of which the adpositional form is a variant. This, however, seems to contradict the intuitive understanding of variation.

While treating all paradigmatic questions in fine detail, considering the conditions of use of the 'n'-form lies without the scope of Zalizniak's research. He quotes contexts where the forms tend to be obligatory rather than optional. He indicates passim that suggesting that the forms are used after prepositions is a simplification, but does not elaborate on that. Indeed, examples above show that the form may also be used with comparative forms of adjectives and adverbs. Although I consider the term adpositional form as a very convenient label, I prefer to use a different one that would be neutral to the apparently false assumption that the 'n'-forms are only used after prepositions.

3.   Contact position

One important fact about the use of the form seems so obvious that it sometimes fails to be mentioned. In all of the examples above, the adpositional form of the pronoun immediately follows the wordform that requires it, be it a preposition or a comparative form. Although very natural from the historical perspective (after all, the adpositional forms have developed out of reanalysis of the preposition-and-pronoun complex and thus require adjacency) this fact requires some theoretical consideration.

Indeed, positing a separate pronominal category of adpositionality does not explain why the preposition, the 'controller' of the adpositional category, should be adjacent to the adpositional form, control being a syntactic rather than a linear notion. One answer to this could be that combinations of pronouns with prepositions naturally require adjacency. What is it that could go in between the pronoun and the preposition in a prepositional phrase? To my eyes, however, this requirement of adjacency (to the extent that it indeed holds—see below Section 4) makes the opposition between 'n'- and 'j'-forms look more like a morphophonologically determined external sandhi than a morphosyntactic category.

On different grounds, Bulygina (1977: 198) argues against adpositionality as a nominal inflectional category. Consider the use of 'j'-forms in coordination, as in *передо мной и ею* vs. *перед нею*. Morphosyntactic interpretation of the alternation as an inflectional category would lead to analyzing the two forms as different morphosyntactic values in the same syntactic environment. Bulygina suggests that the choice of the form is governed by phonological rules rather than controlled by prepositions. As we will see below, her points are controversial, but at the same time they provide important insights.

Let us consider this issue in some detail.

The adjacency requirement indirectly supports the morphophonological approach to the alternation. Considering the conditions of the alternation is however ambiguous. On the one hand, the class of contexts where the 'n'-form appears seems to be defined in syntactic rather lexical or morphological terms. Indeed, whenever the form is used, its presence is licensed either by a preposition or by a comparative form. On the other hand, there is a clear variation in the texts in that some prepositions obligatorily require the 'n'-form while some other prepositions may occur with the 'n'- or 'j'-forms (in RNC, one of the factors is when the text was written), and comparative forms mostly combine with 'j'-forms but a few may also take 'n'-forms. All this should of course be subject to quantitative analysis, but it is clear that, while the domain of use are limited by syntactic conditions, within this domain the alternation seems to be partly governed by lexical properties of the controllers.

The following well-known fact seems to be important. Adjacency alone does not suffice for alternation: if a pronoun follows a preposition but its syntactic head is elsewhere, the alternation does not happen:

(5) *Нелли Сергеевна, утвердясь в [**ей** по всем законам и правилам*
      принадлежащей жизни], скараулила момент, когда свекровь была
      во дворе, Марина в дровянике, и громко, ровно бы глухим, заявила <…>
      [Виктор Астафьев. Пролетный гусь (2000)]

In this example, the pronoun immediately follows the preposition but may not alternate with the 'n'-form. The reason is that it depends not on the preposition but on the verb (in this case, participle), so that the preposition and the pronoun are separated by NP boundary; see discussion in (Itkin 2007: 268).

This is however not enough to discard morphophonological interpretation altogether. It is known that external sandhi may be sensitive to the syntactic structure. Thus, liaisons in French are e.g. more frequent within NP than on its boundary, and initial lenition in Nivkh is only possible within certain syntactic constituents. Such alternations may be limited to more closely-knit units; the immediate cause of having or not having liaison may be prosodic unity. Unless these prosodic conditions may be consistently generalized in (morpho)syntactic terms[3], they remain a gray area between phonology and syntax, so that belonging to the same syntactic group may

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3   In fact, Nivkh initial 'lenition' is often considered to be evidence for incorporation; see discussion in (Mattissen 2003).

be considered to be a more distant cause, and the phonetic boundaries of the phrase the more immediate one.

As Section 4 shows, the case of the Russian 'n'-forms is different in that they are syntactically, not phonologically conditioned in the first place; sensitive to what they depend on (prepositions of comparatives) rather than what immediately precedes them. It would be easier to explain the absence of alternation in (5) by saying that the pronoun does not depend on the preposition. Nevertheless, one notes a certain similarity between the stem initial alternation in Russian pronouns and lenition in Celtic or Nivkh in terms of morphophonological technique involved.

4. Distant position

Most importantly, the assumption above that 'n'-forms are limited to the cases where they are immediately preceded by a preposition or a comparative is falsified by empirical evidence from texts. Some of such cases, which blatantly contradict Bulygina's (1977) claim about phonological nature of the conditions of the alternation, were reviewed in (Itkin 2007: 268) and discussed in (Yemtseva 2011). There are two such syntactic construction attested so far. In the first construction, the pronoun and the controller are separated by the agreeing form of the pronoun *весь* or *сам*. In the second, the pronoun is the second constituent in a co-ordinative construction introduced by the controller of the alternation:

(6) *Не в последнюю очередь потому, что хорошо знал людей из самого близкого окружения Брежнева и относился почти **ко всем ним** с глубокой антипатией.* [Георгий Арбатов. Человек Системы (2002)]

(7) *Такие случаи собственного бессилия **на самого него** нагоняли какую-то подавлявшую тоску, и он понимал состояние Нюрочки.* [Д. Н. Мамин-Сибиряк. Три конца (1890)]

(8) *Стас, стараясь держаться за «Москвичом» не впритык, а оставляя **между собой и ним** одну или две машины, ехал и размышлял о Нонне.* [Н. Леонов, А. Макеев. Эхо дефолта (2000–2004)]

A corpus query gives a very limited range of examples for both construction: 35 and 4 for the first (with *весь* and *сам* respectively) and 31 for the second. A more extensive study based on internet usage is required to make conclusions about the diachrony of the alternation with a distant controller. Below I will only venture a preliminary qualitative discussion of the impact of this evidence on our view on the nature of the alternation. Several quantitative observations, however, are obvious even on such small a scale. First of all, in the corpus (but not in the internet usage) the coordinative construction, as in (8), occurs exclusively with the preposition *между* (or its rare variant *меж*), while the contexts as in (6) and (7) do not seem to show obvious prepositional preferences. Second, the contexts have very different corpus

histories. The construction with *весь* first occurs in the end of the 20th century; all other occurrences fall between 2000 and the present. The construction with *сам* and *между*, however, are evenly distributed along the whole timeline of the corpus, first occurring in a text dated 1821 and last in 2010 for *между* and 1768 and 2005 for *сам* (in principle, this may be an indication that they are fading away, because of the increase in the size of the corpus with time and especially in the 2000s to the present).

What is this that makes the preposition *между*, of all prepositions, a likely distant controller of the alternation in coordination, and an early distant controller in the corpus? In a co-ordinative construction controlled by *между*, the two co-ordinands seem to be in a closer syntactic relation with the preposition than is the case with other prepositions. *Между* is, semantically, a non-unitary predicate whose arguments may be filled either by multiple referents of a plural NP (*между деревьями*) or co-ordinands (*между морем и небом*); see (Valova 2012 for results of a corpus study of *между* and its plural arguments). Most other prepositions are one-place predicates that take the coordinated NP as a whole. *Среди*, another semantically non-unitary preposition is however not attested as a distant controller (probably because, unlike *между*, it clearly prefers single plural dependent; note also that it is more than two times less frequent in the corpus).

Let us now briefly review the constructions with *весь*[4]. In the absence of robust quantitative data, I will limit myself to a qualitative interpretation. They may fall into three different groups, exemplified below with contexts involving the preposition *к(о)*:

(9) *А панегирических суждений не привожу за их избыточную восклицательность и единообразие и потому, что **ко всем им** присоединяюсь, конечно.*
     [Наталья Шмелькова. Последние дни Венедикта Ерофеева (2002)]

(10) *Не в последнюю очередь потому, что хорошо знал людей из самого близкого окружения Брежнева и относился почти **ко всем ним** с глубокой антипатией.*
     [Георгий Арбатов. Человек Системы (2002)]

(11) *Поэтому **к ним ко всем** отношусь с почтением и уважением.*
     [Владимир Губарев, Иосиф Фридляндер. Академик Иосиф Фридляндер: «трижды могли посадить...» // «Наука и жизнь», 2006]

All these constructions occur in the corpus; in the case of the preposition *к*, each occurs only once. Following some of the previous studies, Itkin (2007) reviews the alternatives and says that 'n'-forms are required after preposition followed by *весь* just in the same way as they are required immediately following the preposition, thus implicitly ruling cases like (9) out. This, however, is not at all supported even by the meager corpus evidence I presently have; in fact, with different prepositions 'j'-forms seem to dominate.

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[4] I do not consider contexts with *сам* because of their low frequency in the data; but in principle my conclusions should be equally applicable to this construction, too.

The conclusions that I draw from examples (9) to (11) are as follows.

(a) distant control of alternation with prepositions is possible;
(b) unlike adjacent control with the same preposition, it is not obligatory; and
(c) a third alternative is also used (probably as a conflict-resolving alternative— cf. Itkin 2007).

In terms of optionality of alternation, the non-adjacency is thus added as a new dimension to the other dimensions of variation established above: the distant κ is a weaker *trigger* of alternation than the contact one, in the same way as comparative forms are weaker triggers than prepositions in the contact position, and some prepositions are weaker triggers than others.

Note that a true morphosyntactic controller may not depend on the linear distance but only on its syntactic relation to the target. I suggest that there is more than convenience considerations to the 'variance' solution that Zalizniak (1967) follows in the end, at least from the synchronic point of view. Considering 'n'-forms as variants of case forms rather than realization of a value of a separate category not only corresponds to the intuition but also opens a way to the explanation of non-adjacency effects.

Indeed, we have three types of contexts: those that require 'n'-forms, those that favor them and those that allow them (as well as, trivially, those that disallow them). To account for the morphosyntactic variation, both across types of contexts and across texts, I suggest to substitute the notion of controller that *requires* a certain value of a *morphosyntactic category* with the notion of a trigger that *allows* to *favors* to *requires* a *non-standard realization* of a form. Prepositions are, on the whole, stronger triggers of stem initial alternation than comparatives. There seem to be no comparatives that require alternation even when in adjacent position. Most adjacent preposition, on the other hand, are actually so strong a triggers that they *require* alternation and, in this position, are indistinguishable from true controllers. Distant prepositions, on the other hand, allow but do not require it. Whether they favor it or not is a question that requires further study on a different, fuller array of data.

In this approach, based on the notion of morphosyntactic variant, it seems natural that adjacency is a factor. If a variant is contextually associated with a certain trigger, the closer the trigger is, the more probable is the use of the variant. It seems that the same logic explains distributional facts about other variant forms in Russian, such as the second genitive and the second prepositional case[5].

5. Conclusion

The data above suggests a view on the evolution of the morphosyntactic status of the initial stem alternation in Russian third person pronouns. Starting from a clear

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[5] Forms that, too, are first classified as separate categories by Zalizniak, but then merged with the standard forms 'for the sake of convenience'; similarly to the category of adpositionality, the first approach is criticized in (Bulygina 1977).

case of external sandhi (prothetic [n] before the initial vowel of the next wordform) it then changes its locus through reanalysis (from stem final prothesis in prepositions to stem initial alternation in pronouns) and thus narrows its scope in terms of the lexical involvement (to the pronominal forms) but ultimately expands it in terms of syntactic conditions (to other prepositions). At this stage, it becomes similar to a morphosyntactic category (cf. Zalizniak's category of adpositionality, contra Bulygina 1977) but still carries some traces of its morphophonological origins (partial lexical selectivity, adjacency requirement). Further development leads to definitive de-morphophonologization: the inclusion of comparative forms and availability of distant control. In the long run, this may lead to a situation where the trigger of a variant becomes a true controller of a morphosyntactic value, the initial stem alternation turning into a full-fledge inflectional category[6].

More on the dynamics of this evolution can only be learned through an analysis of additional sources—such as internet blogs—because the statistics of innovative (first of all distant) uses of 'n'-forms in the Russian National Corpus, on which this paper is based, are far too poor for any substantial conclusions.

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[6] This would be not unlikely the evolution of e.g. initial vocative lenition in some Celtic languages (where the category status is however obtained by the loss of controller, whereby the lenition becomes a grammatical category per se).