

# NEW PERSPECTIVES ON OLD PROBLEMS: A HALLIDAYAN APPROACH TO COPULATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN RUSSIAN

Mark SHUTTLEWORTH

## Abstract

The article deals with certain aspects of Russian copula clauses from a Hallidayan perspective. The aims are twofold: firstly, to investigate whether his analysis provides a description of the Russian data which is clearer than those which have been previously available, and secondly to consider in what ways the original model may need to be modified in order to account for the different situation which we find in Russian. The greater part of the study is taken up by a discussion of the Attributive and Identifying categories of the Intensive Relational clause, and more specifically the usefulness of the functions of Token and Value in a description of Russian clauses. The analysis, which is based on a corpus of authentic data, produces three general conclusions. Firstly, the apparently consistent conflation of Complement with Value proves to be of use in the disambiguation of syntactically unmarked Subject and Complement. Secondly, since the Russian syntax cuts across the English semantic categories reflected in the model, the possibility of extending the concepts of Token and Value to take in Attributive clauses is discussed. Finally, the point is made that the Attributive/Identifying opposition finds little syntactic reflection in Russian; however, the hope is expressed that it might be possible to identify other semantic distinctions which are more germane to Russian.

## 1. Introduction

A grammar is an attempt to crack the code.  
Halliday (1994: xxx)

Hallidayan grammar is concerned with meaning.<sup>1</sup> As the above quotation implies, one of the aims of writing a grammar of a given language is to investigate the ways in which meanings are characteristically encoded in the linguistic forms of that particular language, and then to use the insights thus gained to increase one's understanding of the unique and complex relationship between the language, its speakers' culture and the way they encode real-world phenomena. However, going beyond the original context of Halliday's comment, it is possible to maintain that all grammatical research, whatever its purpose, is in a sense aiming to 'crack the code', or in other words is attempting to present the facts of a particular grammatical system in a way that is as simple, clear and 'convincing' as possible.

In this article I aim to use the insights and methods of M.A.K. Halliday's functional grammar to reanalyse certain aspects of a notoriously tricky portion of the 'code' of modern Russian. The area in question is the type of copulative clause (or, to use Halliday's terminology, Relational clause) which in English would involve the use of the copula *be*, and which in Russian is fraught with semantically and stylistically determined morphological and

---

<sup>1</sup> My sincere thanks go to Charles Owen, who acted as my supervisor at the University of Birmingham when I was working on an earlier version of this article as part of my MA. I should also like to record my thanks to Richard Payne, from whose regular bulletins of machine-readable Russian newspaper articles I have greatly benefited over the years, and to Bethan Davies for helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

syntactic choices. Much has of course already been written on the subject, both by 'traditional' grammarians and from the diverse perspectives of Praguean and Chomskyan linguistics. However, as far as I am aware, no analysis has yet been attempted using the framework of Hallidayan functional grammar. More specifically, I intend to investigate the extent to which a number of categories introduced by Halliday in his description of English Relational clauses cast light on the Russian constructions in question.

### 1.1 Theoretical considerations

In a theoretical discussion of this nature, three major methodological considerations need to be examined at the very outset. The first of these concerns the rationale: if good explanations for the grammatical phenomena in question already exist, is there any justification for introducing a further set of terms and concepts in order to produce a new analysis of something which has already been quite satisfactorily described? Halliday himself (1994: xxxiv) expresses this possible objection in terms of the following warning:

Twentieth-century linguistics has produced an abundance of new theories, but it has tended to wrap old descriptions up inside them; what are needed now are new descriptions. Tasks have changed, ideas have changed, and languages have changed.... The old interpretations were good, but not good enough to last for all time, even when dressed up in new theoretical clothes.

This is of course a statement not only of the problem, but also of the solution: what is needed is something more than a mere relabelling of old concepts and ideas if what we are doing is to be meaningful.

The second consideration is in some ways related to the first. To quote from Halliday once again, 'Modern linguistics, with its universalist ideology, has been distressingly ethnocentric, making all other languages look like imperfect copies of English' (1994: xxxi). In the light of this, it is necessary to satisfy ourselves of the validity of using an analytical framework designed for English to produce a description of Russian. Can such a description be an accurate reflection of the linguistic facts of Russian? Indeed, this objection is particularly potent in the case of functional grammar, a form of grammatical analysis which is so closely associated with the description of English.

However, in spite of the traditional association which has existed between functional grammar and the English language, scholars have not been slow to use functional methodologies to investigate the 'codes' of other languages. For example, there are at least five scholars who have looked at Russian from a Hallidayan perspective. Bivon (1971) provides an analysis of word order from this perspective. Useful work has been done by Rugaleva (1983), Simmons (1986) and Hallikainen (1987) on cohesion. Gotteri (e.g. 1995) has investigated a number of areas in Russian and other Slavonic languages. In other words, just as the work of functional grammarians has already significantly increased our understanding of English there is of course no theoretical reason why our knowledge of other languages should not be likewise deepened – assuming that the descriptive apparatus that has been developed with English in mind is not simply unthinkingly applied to another language. Butler (1985: 191-2) details the ways in which by modifying the original system researchers working with other languages have brought about advances in its adaptability. It

is precisely as functional grammar gradually proves itself to be adaptable in this way that its relevance and power will acquire more general recognition.

The third consideration concerns the nature of the present work *per se*. If we study Halliday's work on Relational processes, we find that it forms part of the wider context of his analysis of the whole English grammatical system. For this article, however, we don't have the luxury of a pre-existing, exhaustive analytical framework. While this situation is clearly not ideal, it is unfortunately inevitable; the fact is that one must start somewhere, even if this means focusing on a single isolated area.

## **1.2 Scope and methods**

Halliday's most up-to-date discussion of Relational processes (1994: 119-138) is a fairly thorough reworking of the previous version of his model (1985: 112-128), and it is the concepts, categories and terminology of this version of the theory that provides the basis for the present work. Of course, these pages form just one section in a general discussion of process types, while this study by necessity stands in isolation. Furthermore, Halliday discusses three categories of Relational clause: intensive, circumstantial and possessive. I, however, confine my attention to a subset of the first category, and look only at the various grammatical manifestations in Russian of the most basic copulative construction, Subject – (Verb) – Complement (the Complement being either a nominal or an adjectival group); I also consider the most 'ideal' intensive clauses, in which the copula contains only a minimal amount of lexical meaning. I furthermore restrict the discussion to the use of declarative sentences in Contemporary Standard Russian.

The remainder of the article is divided into four sections. Section 2 contains a brief summary of the area in question from a 'traditional' point of view, intended principally for those who are unfamiliar with Russian; in section 3 I introduce and clarify a number of Hallidayan concepts which I make use of; section 4 contains a new analysis of aspects of the problem from the point of view of functional grammar; then finally, in section 5 I consider what conclusions may be drawn from what has gone before.

## **1.3 A note on examples**

The study is based on an analysis of a wide range of texts. Where possible the concordancing programme from WordSmith Tools has been used to analyse the data. Each example is cited along with an indication of grammatical rôles, a word-for-word gloss (which also supplies any other essential grammatical information) and an idiomatic translation. Abbreviations used are as follows:

Nom. = Nominative	Gen. = Genitive
Instr. = Instrumental	Attr. = Attribute
Carr. = Carrier	Id. = Identified
Ir. = Identifier	T = Token
V = Value	S = Subject
C = Complement	Masc. = Masculine
Fem. = Feminine	

// is used to mark functions off from each other.

## 2. The problem in outline

How often...does a genuine choice of case exist, and what kind of meaning choice does it then represent? Russian furnishes tempting examples...but even here we know that the choice is complex, subtle, and probably not entirely semantic, and the decision is made with reference to a larger structure representing a configuration of meanings.  
Gotteri (1995: 126)

That the area in question is ‘problematic’ may be seen from the amount of space devoted to it in works on Russian grammar. Descriptions written for foreign learners in particular go into the subject in great detail: Borrás and Christian, for example, a standard pedagogical text on Russian syntax, have a five-page section entitled ‘The Translation of the verb ‘to be’’ (1971: 210-14), while in a more recent work, Offord lists twenty different Russian constructions (1996: 107-111). Nakhimovsky & Leed similarly devote a large amount of space to ‘*be*-sentences’ (1980/1987: 112-22). Although some Russian scholars content themselves with a number of scattered references to the problem, many on the other hand treat the subject at length: for example, Peshkovsky (1956), in a standard analysis of Russian syntax, devotes two entire chapters to copula-type sentences. Furthermore, at least one book completely devoted to the subject (Chvany 1975) has appeared to date; this is a treatment of both existential and copula sentences, and is written from a generativist standpoint.

As already briefly mentioned in the Introduction, I intend to concentrate on copula constructions typified by the Hallidayan category of intensive Relational processes. Thus sentences of the type *Professor byl prav* ‘The professor was right’ or *On moy lyubimy avtor* ‘He is my favourite author’ will be examined, but not others such as *Pochta byla ryadom s gostinitsey* ‘The post office was next to the hotel’ or *U menya yest’ kniga* ‘I have a book’, which are respectively Circumstantial and Possessive.<sup>2</sup> Within the intensive category I shall be looking at both Attributive and Identifying clauses, which – as shall be explained below – are respectively exemplified by the first and second sentences cited above. Even within this clearly circumscribed area there are three semantically-relevant variables which come into play in Russian, each of which I shall now consider briefly.

### 2.1 The form of the copula

The expression of copulative processes is one of the trickier areas of the Russian grammatical system as in the absence of a regularly functioning verb ‘to be’ Russian resorts to at least three different types of wording.<sup>3</sup>

- i) In the present tense, probably the most frequently used construction is the zero-copula; here the logical presence of the copula is simply implied by the surrounding syntax.<sup>4</sup>
- ii) In the past and future tenses it is standard to use a part of *byt’* ‘to be’.

---

<sup>2</sup> All translations from Russian, whether of quotations from academic sources or of data samples, are my own. Material cited in Russian has been transliterated into the Roman alphabet.

<sup>3</sup> In the interests of space the explanation that follows has been somewhat simplified.

<sup>4</sup> Sometimes – for reasons of emphasis, for example – the word *eto* ‘this’ is used as a kind of surrogate copula.

iii) It also very frequently happens that the copulative function is taken on by another less semantically empty verb: for example *yavlyat'sya* 'to appear', *predstavlyat' soboy* 'to represent with oneself', *okazyvat'sya* 'to turn out (to be)', *kazat'sya* 'to seem', *ostat'sya* 'to remain' and *schitat'sya* 'to be considered'.<sup>5</sup> These are listed in order of increasing semantic information, so that the first two are closest to being true copulas, to the extent that in certain contexts they are both considered by native speakers to be more or less synonymous with *byt'* (although they are limited to fairly formal registers).

## **2.2 The form of the complement**

Two parameters make a particularly significant contribution to the highly complex system of morphological choices.

i) Firstly, a Complement may appear in either the nominative or instrumental case. This is of course a choice which is to some extent semantically determined, but is principally influenced by the syntactic context. Broadly speaking, in the present tense when there is a zero-copula the nominative is almost always used. On the other hand, in the infinitive, future, imperative, conditional and gerund it is usual but not obligatory for the Complement to appear in the instrumental, while in the past the choice between the two forms is made on the basis of a number of factors, not least the extent to which the Complement refers to something which is permanent (with the use of the nominative broadly corresponding to the idea of permanence). In addition to this, usage is also determined syntactically, with for example most non-*byt'* copulas requiring the use of the instrumental.

ii) Secondly, adjectival complements can appear in three distinct forms: short form, long form (nominative) and long form (instrumental). Each of these, needless to say, is distinguished syntactically, stylistically and semantically, important factors being, for example, the formality of the register and the permanence or otherwise of what is being referred to.

## **2.3 The order of subject and complement**

The significance of word order will be discussed in some detail in Section Three. At this stage, the most important thing that needs to be said is that like all the other Slavonic languages Russian does not depend on word order to express grammatical relations. For this reason the order Complement – (Verb) – Subject is just as possible as its opposite, Subject – (Verb) – Complement, the two nominal elements frequently but not invariably being disambiguated by the form of the Verb or the case of the Complement. Which order is selected in a given clause will partly reflect its thematic and information structure. However, as we will soon discover these are not the only (or even the main) issues at stake in this type of clause.

---

<sup>5</sup> A rather more exhaustive list – though one which also includes expressions which are restricted to circumstantial uses – can be found in Offord (1996: 107-111).

### 3. Concepts and perspectives

There is no satisfactory generally accepted grammatical analysis of Russian.  
Bivon (1971: 5)

The time has now come to introduce the Hallidayan concepts that are going to be playing an important rôle in what follows. I will group these according to similar criteria as in the previous section: the nature of the copula, the function of the complement, and the rôle which is played by word order.

#### 3.1 The nature of the copula

There is a general consensus among grammarians as to the fact that the basic copula has no lexical meaning in its own right, but serves simply as a kind of ‘service word or tense carrier’ (Chvany 1975: 2; see also Peshkovsky 1956: 220, Lyons 1968: 322-3 and Matthews 1981: 96-117). Halliday, whose works will of course provide the main source of theoretical concepts for this study, basically concurs with this general consensus, although he distinguishes three separate meanings, or ‘classes’ of the English verb *to be*:-

Class 0: can be characterised as, has the attribute of being;

Class 1: exists, happens, is found or located;

Class 2: identifies or is identifiable as, can be equated with. (1967a: 66)

Such a classification is of course closely bound up with his work on English transitivity systems (see for example Halliday 1967a, 1967b and 1968). For our present purposes we will be concerned with Classes 0 and 2, those associated with the type of clause which Halliday later on terms intensive.<sup>6</sup>

In the 1985 and 1994 versions of the theory Class 0 type clauses are termed *Attributive* and Class 2 *Identifying*. Halliday has on a number of occasions (see for example 1967a, 1967b, 1968, 1970, 1985 and 1994) discussed the exact nature of the opposition, and has come up with a wide range of features which serve in English to distinguish the two clause types. These are summarised below in Table 1 in terms of pairs of contrasting features.

As can be seen, most of the items on this list reflect semantic rather than syntactic concepts. The categories that emerge are of course not completely cut-and-dried; in fact, Halliday has recently emphasised their non-discrete nature (1994: 128-9). Many of the items listed above will of course speak for themselves; some of the less obvious ones will be discussed below.

---

<sup>6</sup> The model as originally proposed in 1967-68 has subsequently undergone a good deal of modification. This has inevitably included the area of terminology, with the result that the 1985/1994 terms differ greatly from those originally proposed. For the sake of clarity and consistency I shall use the 1985/1994 terminology; in accordance with this policy, when quoting from earlier articles I shall where necessary modify the original phrasing, placing words thus altered in square brackets to indicate that a change has been made.

Table 1. Distinguishing features of the attributive and identifying clause types

<i>Attributive</i>	<i>Identifying</i>
answers <i>what, who</i> and <i>how</i>	answers <i>who</i> and <i>which</i> (1967a: 67)
Complement can be noun or adjective, but cannot be pronoun or proper name	Complement is pronoun, noun or proper name, but cannot be adjective (1967a: 67)
process involves assigning an attribute	process 'syntactically one of action rather than ascription' (1968: 190)
clause has one participant	clause has two participants (1968: 190)
Class 0 verb (e.g. <i>be, become, seem, look, sound, get, turn</i> , etc.)	Class 2 verb (e.g. <i>be, equal, resemble, realise, represent</i> ) (1968: 190)
relationship between entities of same order of abstraction but differing in generality	relationship between entities alike in generality but differing in abstraction (1970: 154-5)
expresses class inclusion	expresses class identity (1970: 155)
has rôles Carrier and Attribute	has rôles Identifier and Identified (1994: 120, 122), and Token and Value (1994: 124-28)
indefiniteness of Attribute unmarked	definiteness of Identifier unmarked (1968: 190)
non-reversible	reversible (1994: 121, 123)
basically a decoding relation (1968: 192)	either decoding or encoding: either finding Value for Token or Token for Value (1967b: 228)

### 3.2 The function of the complement

In this section we will be examining some of the notions introduced in Table 1. First of all we need to take a brief look at Attributive clauses, before moving on to the more complicated Identifying type. The basic meaning of an Attributive clause is 'x is a member of the class of a' (Halliday 1994: 120). Examples would be *Korol' umyon* 'The king is clever' and *Mariya aktrisa* 'Maria is an actress'; in the first of these the king is portrayed as belonging to the class of clever people, and in the second Maria is depicted as being a member of the acting profession. Although such clauses have only one 'participant' ('the king' and 'Maria' respectively), Halliday distinguishes two functional rôles, Carrier and Attribute, which the two nominal groups fulfil. Thus in the sentences just cited the Carrier would be *korol'* 'king' and *Mariya* 'Maria' respectively, and the Attribute *umyon* 'clever' and *aktrisa* 'actress'.

In contrast to this meaning of 'class inclusion', the Identifying clause implies definition or identity; Halliday describes its basic meaning as 'a serves to define the identity of x' (1994: 122, emphasis original). For example, by modifying our two previous examples slightly we can make them Identifying: *Korol' samy umny* 'The king is the cleverest' and *Mariya moya lyubimaya aktrisa* 'Maria is my favourite actress'. Here we are not talking about membership of a class but are defining one entity in terms of another entity or concept. Between these two entities certain functional relationships obtain, which Halliday defines by means of two new parameter pairs.

The first of these is the Identified/Identifier parameter, which Halliday first introduced in 1967 as a '... 'thing to be identified' and ... that with which it is to be identified' (1967b: 224). In a WH-type question, the Identifier is the WH-item, and in the corresponding answer it is the item which is specifically sought after by the question. Thus in the exchange - *Kto on?* 'Who is he?' - *On nash lider* 'He is our leader' the Identifier would be *kto* 'who' and *lider* 'leader' respectively, while in the complementary - *Kto nash lider?* 'Who is our leader?' - *On nash lider* 'He is our leader' (a possible though intonationally marked variant

in Russian) it would be *kto* ‘who’ and *on* ‘he’. The existence of two distinct possible analyses of the one sentence *On nash lider* shows that the Subject and the Complement can both be conflated with either of these structural elements. (What the Identifier does in fact tend to correspond to is the New information contained in the sentence (1994: 124).)

The second major parameter which Halliday introduces is designed to reflect the question of abstraction within an Identifying clause; it will be a key concept in much of what follows as I hope to demonstrate that it will cast some light on the syntax of such clauses in Russian. Once again, this parameter is reflected in two opposing categories: the Token and the Value. These play a very important rôle in Halliday’s analysis of Identifying clauses.

Halliday has described Identifying clauses as containing two entities which ‘are alike in generality but differ in abstraction’ (1970: 155). Elsewhere (1967b: 228) he refers to this ‘dimension of structure’ as ‘coding’, explaining that an Identifying clause ‘may be either decoding or encoding: either finding a value... for a given [token]..., or finding a [token] with a given value’ (ibid). He concludes that ‘one element is as it were the realization of the other’ (ibid).<sup>7</sup>

Halliday (1985: 115) explains the Token and Value by listing examples of the kind of semantic rôle that they can fulfil:-

<u>Token</u>	<u>Value</u>
sign	meaning
name	referent
form	function
holder	status
occupant	rôle

As can be seen, these items form five pairs which contrast with each other only with regard to their relative level of abstraction. The Token is the less abstract of the two, while of the five sets of opposites, it is probably *form* and *function* which have the broadest scope in terms of the number of sentences which they help explain.

### 3.3 The rôle of word order

We will now return to the question of Token and Value to consider the notion of reversibility. According to Halliday, Relational clauses have a number of features normally associated with transitive processes, to the extent that it is meaningful to talk about such clauses being either active or passive, all clauses in which the Token is conflated with the Subject being considered active (1994: 124). Thus for example *Henry is the villain* is an active, decoding sentence whereas *The villain is Henry* is passive and coding (1994: 125). A change in voice can be said to ‘reverse’ a clause. However, when reversal occurs the following other changes also take place: a) the functions of Subject and Complement are exchanged, b) the Identified and Identifier elements are reordered, and c) the conflation of the Token and Value with the Subject and Complement is realigned (as illustrated in the table in Halliday 1994: 136-7). Halliday’s basic contention made in the light of English Relational clauses is that Identifying clauses are reversible, while Attributive ones are not.

---

<sup>7</sup> Note that the processes of coding and decoding respectively represent shifts away from and towards a higher level of abstraction.

Thus in English one can say both *Sarah is the wise one* and *The wise one is Sarah* (1994: 136-7), but on the other hand only *Sarah is wise*, and not *\*Wise is Sarah* – except perhaps in certain restricted contexts and registers (1994: 121).

We are now in a position to proceed to the main section in this study where I apply what has been discussed to copula usage in Russian. The aim of the section will be two-fold: I shall principally be attempting a Hallidayan analysis of Russian, but in so doing I also hope to make some comments about the original model itself.

#### **4. New perspectives on old problems**

There is a great deal of rather subtle multivalence...in this portion of the language  
system.  
Halliday (1985:123)

We are now ready to consider various issues connected with Relational clauses in Russian. After a brief look at the other two new pairs of functional rôles the bulk of the section will be taken up by a discussion of the functions of Token and Value and what they can reveal about Russian Relational clauses. First, however, another word needs to be said about the distinction between the two clause types.

##### **4.1 Attributive and identifying clauses**

As pointed out above, the Attributive/Identifying distinction in essence depends primarily on semantic rather than syntactic criteria. However, in English at any rate, it is usually possible to identify which type a clause belongs to on the basis of at least two fairly unambiguous surface features: whether or not the Complement is an adjective (for example) and whether it is definite or indefinite (see Table 1). However, assignment to one or other category is not always automatic on the basis of syntactic features alone, and this is a problem which assumes greater proportions in Russian. There are two main reasons for this. The first is the fact that – as we shall see below – in Russian it is not always possible to distinguish between the Complement and the Subject. The second is that because Russian lacks definite and indefinite articles, the definiteness/indefiniteness criterion is not always made so explicit in the syntax. Russian does of course have at its disposal other syntactic means for expressing definiteness and indefiniteness, principal amongst these being word order: because of the way information tends to be organised in Russian clauses there is a tendency to place indefinite elements at the end. However, in practice this is not as clear cut as the use of articles in English, with the result that one is forced to consider the underlying semantics more often in Russian than in English.

##### **4.2 Functional rôles**

###### **4.2.1 Carrier and attribute**

Once the clause type has been decided on, the functional rôles can be assigned with relative ease. In Attributive clauses, for example, the rôles of Carrier and Attribute can almost always be distinguished without problem. For instance, in (1) it is clear that *Aloiziy* is the Carrier and *chelovekom chrezvychayno predpriimchivym* the Attribute.

- (1) *No Aloiziy byl chelovekom chrezvychayno predpriimchivym*  
 Attr. // // Carr.  
 But Aloiziy was person extremely enterprising.  
 ‘But Aloiziy was an extremely enterprising person.’  
 (Bulgakov 1966-7/1980: 378)

#### 4.2.2 Identified and identifier

The identification of Identified and Identifier within an Identifying clause is generally also straightforward. Typically, the Identified, being comparable in function to the Given, will occur sentence-initially.<sup>8</sup> Therefore we have for example (2):

- (2) *Obrisovannoe zatrudnenie ne yedinstvennoe.*  
 Id. // // Ir.  
 Outlined problem not only (long form Nom.).  
 ‘The problem outlined is not the only one.’ (Akulinin 1990: 8)

In ‘unmarked’ contexts of this kind the information focus will occur sentence-finally, being conflated as usual with the Identifier. On the other hand, a sentence containing an Identifier in initial position will tend to have a concomitantly marked intonation pattern, as we see in the second sentence from example (3):

- (3) *Vot ona, Magnitka! Ona tvoya derevnya....*  
 Ir. // Id.  
 Here she, Magnitka! She your village (Nom.).  
 ‘Here is Magnitka! This is your village.’ (Paducheva 1979: 36)

#### 4.2.3 Token and value

We will now turn our attention to the categories of Token and Value, the analysis of which will occupy most of the remainder of this section. Here we find that conflation with Identified and Identifier can go either way, as in examples (4) and (5):

- (4) *Vash gipnoz – eto nash strakh*  
 Id./T // // Ir./V  
 Your hypnosis this our fear  
 ‘Your hypnosis is what we fear.’ (Iskander 1982: 17)
- (5) *Drugaya osobennost' vagonov – siden'ya....*  
 Id./V // // Ir./T  
 Other peculiarity carriages (Gen.) seats (Nom.).  
 ‘The other peculiarity of the carriages is the seats.’ (*Nauka i zhizn'* 1993: 3: 52)

As far as it goes, this matches the pattern which Halliday identifies in English Identifying clauses. However, at this point a number of serious problems arise. We will

---

<sup>8</sup> However, though comparable, the two are not identical. As Halliday points out, at a high level of delicacy they become ‘distinct concepts’ (see Halliday 1985: 117).



(1980/1987: 122) that should be put in the instrumental, citing the sentence in (9) as an example:

(9) *Yeyo pervoy reaktsiyey bylo razocharovanie.*

C/V            //    //        S/T

Her first reaction (Instr.) was disappointment.

‘Disappointment was her first reaction.’ (1980/1987: 122)

I have no doubt that this explanation has a good deal of practical validity. It is after all intended as a guideline for students, being based as it is on the following of contextual clues; thus the authors encourage the reader to look to the presence of modifiers or proper names for help in making the decision about the possible use of an instrumental. As such it does not attempt to provide a basis for understanding such sentences on a theoretical level. Interestingly, however, it appears to clash with the central tenet of the Token/Value opposition as the authors go on to argue that of the two participants *disappointment* is the ‘more *abstract* and *general* notion’ (emphasis added). In other words, what they are saying appears to be the precise opposite of what the new explanation is proposing. However, we need here to distinguish between two different types of abstraction. As we have seen, Halliday’s understanding of abstraction is basically semantic, as he looks at how the two referents relate to each other as sign and meaning, form and function and so on. Nakhimovsky and Leed, on the other hand, are interested in which of the two participants is tied to a specific context through the presence of adjectives, deictics, and so on, and is therefore to be considered less abstract and vague than the other.

If we follow the new explanation, then from the close identification of instrumental Complement with Value it inevitably follows that in sentences which contain such a Complement the Value can never be the grammatical Subject. In sentences where the Complement/Value is nominative, on the other hand, the identification of the Subject can be problematic because of the syntactic ambiguity caused by the flexibility of Russian word order. This is in fact a problem which has concerned Russian grammarians for some time. Peshkovsky, for example, although he suggests the use of grammatical analogy such as the substitution of one form for another as a possible means of clarification, is forced to concede that ‘we must categorically accept such sentences as *syntactically ambiguous*’ (1956: 242, emphasis original). More recently Nakhimovsky and Leed describe the problem of identifying the subject – and hence of ensuring correct verbal agreement – as ‘one of the nastiest in Russian syntax’ (1980/1987: 122), an area where grammarians disagree and native speakers hesitate. We therefore need to consider whether Halliday’s analysis will enable us to arrive at a definitive interpretation of such clauses.

Example (10) demonstrates this type of genuine structural ambiguity:

(10) *Samy chestny poet – drug.*

Most honest poet (Nom.) friend (Nom.).

‘The most honest poet is your friend.’ (Ratushinskaya 1986: 18)

If this sentence had been in the past and had had an instrumental Complement then the grammatical structure – and the meaning – would have been quite clear as a result of the obligatory confluences described above. However, in the absence of such helpful syntactic

clues the precise meaning will – at least potentially – depend on how we ascribe Token and Value. If the Token is *poet*, then the sentence means ‘The most honest poet appears in the guise of your friend’; if on the other hand it is *drug* it would give the meaning ‘Your friend is the one who has the status of the most honest poet’. As for the question of Subject and Complement, any substitution along the lines proposed by Peshkovsky would be begging the question, while the fact that Halliday’s analysis constantly assumes a strict Subject – Verb – Complement word order does not help us much in trying to assign this grammatical function in a language which has a more flexible word order. However, given the sheer number of categories – Token/Value, Identified/Identifier, Theme/Rheme and Given/New – which do have a meaningful rôle to play one is forced to consider just what the usefulness of the notions of Subject and Complement is in analysing such clauses.

If we do so we are left with a choice. The first possibility would be to argue that structurally ambiguous clauses have no grammatical Subject, claiming that the concept of the Subject is only meaningful when it finds some grammatical reflection. Subjectless clauses are by no means alien to Russian, as one frequently encounters constructions in which the logical subject (usually the ‘Senser’: see Halliday 1994: 117) is expressed in the dative or where a verb is governed by a numeral phrase in the genitive. One is of course uncomfortable with such a radical solution, not least because it is always possible to find parallels with other, less equivocal sentences from which it is not difficult to deduce what the subject ‘ought’ to be. After all, if we accept Halliday’s concept of grammatical Subject as ‘a grammatical function whose only function is to be a grammatical function’ (1994: 72) – which does not therefore require explicit marking – then it would be anomalous to accept the validity of the notion of Subject in some Relational clauses but not in others which might for example differ only in tense.

A possible alternative to this is to investigate whether the conflation of Subject and Token is obligatory for all Identifying clauses where the identity of the Subject is clear and unambiguous, and if it is, to conclude that this alignment of rôles is in fact universal. We have already concluded that Subject and Token always coincide when the Complement is in the instrumental, so what we now need to examine are clauses with a nominative Complement which are syntactically unambiguous.

What emerges, however, is the interesting fact that the conflation can go either way; indeed, if anything, Subject coincides more frequently with Value. At first this would appear to contradict our hypothesis. However, on closer inspection *all* of these clauses have a grammatical structure which would rule out any other element taking on the rôle of the Subject. Example (11) is typical of such sentences:

- (11) *Eto*            *byl*                    *komanduyushchy legionom legat.*  
       C/T //                    //                                    S/V  
       This    was (Masc.)    commanding legion legate (Masc. Nom.).  
       ‘This was the legate who commanded the legion.’ (Bulgakov 1966-7/1980: 37)

Here for contextual reasons the Token is the word *eto* ‘this (is)’, one of a group of items (including also *to* ‘that (is)’) which – like the existential *there* in English – can never command verbal agreement as its function is simply that of filling a slot. In such sentences verbal agreement goes with the other structural element by default, which in this case happens to be the Value. The purely formal, syntactic reasons for this Subject-Value



### 4.3 Reversibility

Let us now consider the question of reversibility. As stated above, if the voice of a clause is ‘reversed’ then a) the word order will be inverted, b) the rôles of Identified and Identifier will be exchanged and c) the conflation of Token and Value with Subject and Complement will be reversed. However, any attempt to apply this to Russian will immediately encounter at least two major difficulties. Firstly, such a model presupposes an obligatory Subject – Complement word order, but as already stated this is optional in Russian. Furthermore, elements in a Russian sentence may change position without necessitating any realignment of rôles. Secondly, it has been shown that, subject to certain constraints, the Token is invariably the Subject in Russian and that consequently it cannot reconfiate with the Complement. Consequently we may conclude that the concept of reversibility does not play a part in the description of Russian Identifying clauses.

### 4.4 Token & value and the attributive clause

Finally in this section, we need to address a fact which has been gradually emerging throughout our analysis. This is that the syntax of Russian cuts across the Identifying/Attributive distinction which is so central to Halliday’s original model. For example, Russian lacks a clear-cut, grammatically encoded distinction between definiteness and indefiniteness, while instrumental Complements can occur with equal ease in both Identifying and Attributive clauses. Any powerful model will therefore also need to take account of this other type, particularly since it appears to be by far the more frequent. We therefore need to investigate whether the analysis which we have arrived at for Identifying clauses may be extended so as to encompass at least part of the Attributive category.

As discussed above, an Attributive clause may have as its Complement either an adjectival or a full nominal group. However, as far as Russian is concerned it would seem that the grammatical structure of the latter type is very similar, if not identical, to that of the Identifying clause: the question of definiteness is immaterial, and Complements can be either nominative or instrumental just as in the Identifying type. This lack of distinction does in fact find some reflection in the original model: although he is clear that the basic distinction between the Carrier and the Attribute is one of generality rather than abstraction, Halliday concedes that there is some merging of the two categories and states that ‘Nominal Attributes are closer to Values than adjectival ones’ (1994: 129). Bearing this in mind, we now need to investigate whether the concepts of Token and Value can be usefully applied to this other major clause-type.

Let us look at an example of an Attributive clause with a nominal Complement:

- (13) *On*            *poet*.  
Carr.          Attr.  
He          poet (Nom.).  
‘He is          a poet.’ (Iskander 1982: 42)

(This is in fact virtually identical to one of Halliday’s own examples.) Besides being attributed to a particular class (i.e. poets) it is quite clear that *on* is being described in terms of his function or rôle as a poet; this means in effect that the sentence is expressing a Token-Value relationship, the Value being *poet*. The clause can thus be seen to involve a contrast between *on* and *poet* on the basis of *both* generality *and* abstraction. Furthermore, it is a

similarly simple matter to assign the functions of Token and Value in other sentences of this type; this means that, using the method described above, it should be possible to disambiguate the Subject in problematic Attributive clauses as well. On the other hand, when an Attributive clause contains an adjectival Complement, the Token/Value distinction is not generally very easy to apply.

There is unfortunately no space to undertake a close analysis of each of the eleven features listed in Table 1. However, even on the basis of what has gone before we can say with reasonable confidence that the Attributive/Identifying opposition finds less syntactic reflection in Russian than in English, while there are also clear semantic grounds for extending the Token/Value distinction to certain subcategories of the Attributive clause.

## 5. Conclusions

What are needed now are new descriptions.  
Halliday (1994: xxxiv)

In the preceding section I have attempted to re-examine the syntax and semantics of Russian declarative intensive Relational clauses using a number of sets of parameters which Halliday distinguishes in his analysis of the corresponding portion of the English grammatical system. The aim, as already stated, has been twofold: firstly, to investigate whether a clearer description of the Russian data can be arrived at, and secondly to consider in what ways the original Hallidayan model may need to be modified in order to account for the different situation that we find in Russian. We are now in a position to evaluate the extent to which these aims have been achieved.

As regards the first aim, I have attempted to undertake a fairly detailed examination of certain aspects of the instrumental Complement and of how the Subject of an Identifying clause can be recognised. My method throughout has been to examine cut-and-dried instances of a particular structure and then to extrapolate from these in order to account for more ambiguous examples. Perhaps the most significant finding that the study has made has been the fact that Halliday's concepts of Token and Value have fitted the Russian Identifying clause like a glove, insofar as they have enabled us to pinpoint the semantic grounds on which the Subject is distinguished from the Complement. This in turn has proved to be of some use in disambiguating sentences in which these grammatical categories receive no explicit marking.

One area which it has not been possible to cover in this present study, however, is the semantic distribution of nominative and instrumental Complements. This means that the sections of the article dealing directly with the matter of the instrumental Complement answer the question 'Given that one of the two nominal groups in a sentence is required to be put into the instrumental, which should it be?' rather than the broader 'Should one of the two nominal groups be put into the instrumental?'. This means that the conclusions which we have arrived at will for example help explain why sentence (8) rather than (8a) is likely to be the preferred variant, producing as it does the meaning 'Literacy was the key to success'.

(8) *Klyuchom k uspekhu byla gramotnost'.*  
           C/V           //           //           S/T

Key (Instr.) to success was (Fem.) literacy (Fem. Nom.).  
 (Example from Wade 1992: 109.)

(8a) \**Klyuch k uspekhu byl gramotnost'yu.*  
                           S/T           //           //           C/V

Key (Masc. Nom.) to success was (Masc.) literacy (Instr.).

Furthermore, on the same topic I have briefly considered the feasibility of extending the concepts of Token and Value to take in all intensive Relational clauses which express a relationship between two full nominal groups. This has proved to be justified because of the way in which the use of the instrumental Complement cuts across these two clause-types and also because of the irrelevance of reversibility, definiteness or direction of coding as factors.

With reference to the second aim, that of investigating the flexibility of Halliday's model, the foregoing analysis has not managed to find significant syntactic reflection of the two main clause types as originally posited. This is hardly surprising, as the Attributive and Identifying clause-types are, in essence, semantic categories which have been developed on the basis of an analysis of English. It may later be possible to posit different clause-types which sit more easily with the Russian data; however, at the moment it is still too early to say what the basis for these might be, although a distinction between clauses with nominative and instrumental Complements would seem to be a likely candidate at this stage.

Halliday characterises the process of describing a language as initially being a matter of adapting an established analysis of another language (typically English), and then gradually coming to the point where one can interpret the new language as if that other language had never existed (1994:xxxiii). As regards the analysis of Russian from a Hallidayan perspective we are still very much in the first phase, although it will hopefully be possible to move on to the second at some point in the future, perhaps after more work has been done on the entire language system of Russian from this viewpoint. It is only when such work reaches an advanced stage that it will be possible to speak with greater authority about this intriguing yet highly complex area.

## References

- Akulinin, V.N. (1990). *Filosofiya vseedinstva (The Philosophy of All-Unity)*. Novosibirsk: Nauka.
- Bivon, R. (1971). *Element Order* (Studies in the Modern Russian Language 7). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Borras, F.M. & Christian, R.F. (1971). *Russian Syntax: Aspects of Modern Russian Syntax and Vocabulary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bulgakov, M. (1966-7/1980). Master i Margarita ('The Master and Margarita'). In *Izbrannoe (Selected Works)*. Moscow: Khudozhestvennaya literatura.
- Butler, C.S. (1985). *Systemic Linguistics: Theory and Applications*. London: Batsford.

- Chvany, C.V. (1975). *On the Syntax of BE-sentences in Russian*. Cambridge, Mass.: Slavica.
- Gotteri, N.J.C. (1995). Some Slavonic Questions for Systemic Linguistics. In J.I. Press & F. E. Knowles (eds.) *Papers from the Fourth World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies, Harrogate – July 1990: Language and Linguistics*. London: Queen Mary and Westfield College.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1967a). Notes on Transitivity and Theme in English, Part 1. *Journal of Linguistics* 3. 37-81.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1967b). Notes on Transitivity and Theme in English, Part 2. *Journal of Linguistics* 3. 199-244.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1968). Notes on Transitivity and Theme in English, Part 3. *Journal of Linguistics* 4. 179-215.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1970). Language Structure and Language Function. In J. Lyons (ed.) *New Horizons in Linguistics*. Harmondsworth: Penguin. pp.140-65.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1985). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. 1st ed. London: Edward Arnold.
- Halliday, M.A.K. (1994). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). London: Edward Arnold.
- Hallikainen, P.R. (1987). *O nekotorykh sredstvakh svyazi i stsepleniya v tekste (A Number of Linking and Cohesive Textual Devices)*. Unpublished Pro gradu thesis, University of Joensuu, Finland.
- Iskander, F. (1982). *Kroliki i udavy (The Rabbits and the Boas)*. Ann Arbor: Ardis.
- Lyons, J. (1968). *Introduction to Theoretical Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Matthews, P.H. (1981). *Syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Nakhimovsky, A.D. & Leed, R.L. (1980/1987). *Advanced Russian* (revised 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Columbus, Ohio: Slavica Publishers, Inc..
- Nauka i zhizn' (Science and Life)* (1993: 3).
- Offord, D. (1996). *Using Russian: A Guide to Contemporary Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Paducheva, J.V. (1979). Topic and Focus in Russian Bi-nominative Sentences. *SMIL: Journal of Linguistic Calculus* 3/4. 29-48.
- Peshkovsky, A.M. (1956). *Russky sintaksis v nauchnom osveshchenii (Russian Syntax in the Light of Science)*. Moscow: Uchpedgiz.
- Ratushinskaya, I. (1986). *Vne limita (Off Limits)*. Frankfurt am Main: Possev.
- Rugaleva, A. (1983). On typology of lexical cohesion in discourse. In J. Morreall (ed.) *The Ninth LACUS Forum 1982*. Columbia, SC: Hornbeam Press.
- Simmons, C.F. (1986). *Cohesion in Russian: The Major Resource of Textual Unity*. Ann Arbor.
- Wade, T.L.B. (1992). *A Comprehensive Russian Grammar*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Mark Shuttleworth  
 Department of Russian and Slavonic Studies  
 University of Leeds  
 Leeds

*A Hallidayan approach to copulative constructions in Russian*

*LS2 9JT*

*b.m.shuttleworth@leeds.ac.uk*