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Arto Mustajoki and Hannes Heino: *Case Selection for the Direct Object in Russian Negative Clauses*, part II: *Report on a Statistical Analysis*. Slavica Helsingiensia 9. Helsinki: Department of Slavonic Languages, University of Helsinki, 1991. viii + 249 pp.

Consider the Russian sentence given as (1):

- (1) On čital žurnal.  
he read magazine  
'He read a magazine.'

It appears straightforward: *čital* 'read' is a normal transitive verb, which takes a direct object in the accusative case. If we now negate the sentence, there are two possibilities (p. 1):

- (2) On ne čital žurnal/žurnala.  
he NEG read magazine.ACC/GEN  
'He did not read a magazine.'

A negated transitive verb may take its direct object in the accusative or the genitive case. The choice is influenced by a bewildering array of factors, morphological, syntactic, and semantic.

A great deal has been written on this subject and previous work has frequently been ignored. This suggested the need for a bibliography, which in itself gives an idea of the amount of work already done (Corbett 1986). In this considerable literature, there are two main strands. The first is informant work, and the outstanding paper here is that of Timberlake (1975), who undertook detailed informant work, controlling for the conflicting factors involved. The other approach is based on a corpus. Here a particularly influential paper is that of Restan (1960), who examined a corpus of written texts and analyzed the relative importance of the major factors. Another fine paper of this type is Safarewiczowa (1959–1960).

Mustajoki and his associates at Helsinki have been working for some years to take research on the problem a substantial step forward. The first volume to come from their project (Mustajoki 1985) consisted of a careful and systematic review of the literature, together with a pilot questionnaire and the answers of 92 subjects. That volume therefore developed the Timberlake line of research. The book under review, the second to emerge from the project, develops the Restan line of research.

In the first chapter, Mustajoki and Heino describe their corpus: it contains 4037 clauses, taken from four types of text, all from the postwar period. These are plays, fictional prose, scholarly texts, and journalistic texts. Perhaps surprisingly, the scholarly texts are taken from linguistics sources; linguists are hardly naive writers (compare p. 206). The examples were coded in respect of no less than 51 variables — a substantial undertaking. In many instances the presence of a particular factor is sufficient to guarantee the use of one of the competing cases. Examples of this type are explained and then eliminated from further consideration. As a result, the main part of the study is based on 2722 clauses. The material is on a computer, and further analysis is intended (pp. 3–4).

The main part of the book is the second chapter, in which the variables are discussed in turn. Mustajoki and Heino give a careful discussion of the effect of different factors, weighing the evidence from their corpus, analyzing the interaction of conflicting factors, and discussing the claims of previous researchers. They are particularly good at pointing out spurious effects (as on p. 137, where gender might be thought to affect the choice but the factor in play is the concrete/abstract distinction, and abstract nouns are distributed unequally over the genders). Even given this sizeable corpus, it is often the case that particular combinations of factors occur in only a few relevant examples and Mustajoki and Heino are suitably cautious in such instances.

There follows a very useful summary: for some readers this will provide all the information they need, and for others it would provide a useful orientation before tackling the detail of chapter 2.

The work at Helsinki offers great promise for progress on what is a particularly difficult problem. This volume presents “the results of a basic analysis of the material in the corpus” (preface). While it is strong on presenting the results clearly, and avoiding premature conclusions, it is less so in terms of statistical analysis. Thus we read that, in a particular instance, “the statistical figures are not particularly convincing” (p. 135). At this point we need a statistical test to show how likely the results are to arise by chance, as Hentschel gives in his recent contribution to the topic (1992). And more generally, the intention of the authors to attempt in future to weight the different factors (p. 3) suggests the need to

collaborate with a statistician. There are sophisticated statistical techniques available that, when applied to data collected with this degree of care, may prove highly illuminating.

Unlike the first volume, this volume is written in English. However, the examples are naturally in Russian, but without glosses. This will hamper some potential readers.

The first two volumes to come out of the Helsinki project have certainly improved our understanding of a complex problem, by using informant work and a corpus-based study, starting from the perspective of a thorough survey of the literature. Let us hope that the third volume is on its way.

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Bernd Kortmann: *Free Adjuncts and Absolutes in English. Problems of Control and Interpretation*. Germanic Linguistics Series. London and New York: Routledge, 1991. xii + 253 pp.

The book presents a corpus-based research on the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic properties of free adjuncts and absolute constructions in present-day English, which grew out of a Ph.D. dissertation at the Free University of Berlin (Ekkehard König as advisor). Free adjunct constructions are exemplified in (1) below, absolutes in (2).