The Syntax of Russian

The study of Russian is of great importance to syntactic theory, due in particular to its unusual case system and its complex word order patterns. This book provides an essential guide to Russian syntax and examines the major syntactic structures of the language. It begins with an overview of verbal and nominal constituents, followed by major clause types, including null-copula and impersonal sentences, Wh-questions and their distribution, and relative and subordinate clauses. The syntax behind the rich Russian morphological case system is then described in detail, with focus on both the fairly standard instances of Nominative, Accusative and Dative case and the important language-specific uses of the Genitive and Instrumental cases. The book goes on to analyze the syntax of “free” word order for which Russian is famous. It will be of interest to researchers and students of syntactic theory, of Slavic linguistics, and of language typology.

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CAMBRIDGE SYNTAX GUIDES

General editors:

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Responding to the increasing interest in comparative syntax, the goal of the Cambridge Syntax Guides is to make available to all linguists major findings, both descriptive and theoretical, which have emerged from the study of particular languages. The series is not committed to working in any particular framework, but rather seeks to make language-specific research available to theoreticians and practitioners of all persuasions.

Written by leading figures in the field, these guides will each include an overview of the grammatical structures of the language concerned. For the descriptivist, the books will provide an accessible introduction to the methods and results of the theoretical literature; for the theoretician, they will show how constructions that have achieved theoretical notoriety fit into the structure of the language as a whole; for everyone, they will promote cross-theoretical and cross-linguistic comparison with respect to a well-defined body of data.

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To the memory of Aleksandra Arzhakovskaya
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Preface

Russian is an East Slavic language spoken in the Russian Federation, in countries of the former Soviet Union and in many other countries. It is the most widely spoken Slavic language and one of the five or six most widely spoken languages in the world (after Mandarin, Spanish, English, and Hindi/Urdu, and on a par with Arabic), with over 275 million speakers worldwide, including second language speakers. It ranks in the top ten in terms of numbers of native speakers as well, with estimates varying from 140,000,000 to 170,000,000.

Russian is the official government language of the Russian Federation and one of two official languages of Belarus, Kazakhstan, and the Kyrgyz Republic, as well as one of the six official languages of the United Nations. Significant minorities (and in various regions the majority) of the population speak it at home in Ukraine, Belarus, the Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Estonia, and Latvia, and it is spoken commonly in various parts of the rest of the former Soviet Union. Emigré communities have brought Russian to cities around the world, especially in Western Europe, North America, and Israel. In Israel, there are over 700,000 Russian speakers and Russian is one of six official court languages in New York. It has also served as the basis for various language mixes and creoles.

Russian has a fascinating set of core syntactic properties. It is a configurational Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) language, but one with considerably free word order both within and among constituents. It has a highly inflected case system that uses a relatively small set of case categories to encode a wide range of meanings and relations. Cases alternate under subtle circumstances, and some of these alternations have significant consequences for syntactic theories, such as the option of both Accusative and Genitive of Negation on direct objects in negative sentences. The freedom of word order allows Information Structure notions such as old and new information to be encoded in the sentence’s linear order, although this freedom is more constrained than is generally thought.
A major goal of this book is to describe in detail these essentials of the syntax of the modern Russian language in a way that could illuminate its structural properties both for those who know and use the language regularly, and for those who do not have any practical knowledge of the language. These descriptions should be of value for anyone with interest in the language, be it practical, cultural, or scientific. A parallel, and perhaps narrower, goal is to present the most important recent theoretical discussions about Russian syntax, especially the controversial ones, so that interested linguists can orient themselves quickly with regard to the key research issues in Russian syntax and where future investigations should take us.

The descriptions and analyses offered are presented using the generative framework, though no extensive knowledge of syntactic theory is assumed. In fact, the only background I assume is familiarity with basic grammatical notions (case, agreement, parts of speech, and so on). The book is structured in such a way that it can be used in place of a traditional descriptive grammar, albeit with more emphasis on grammaticality contrasts than traditional grammars usually contain. All technical linguistic machinery that is required for the discussion is introduced as it becomes relevant. And although it will be clear from the outset that I am a believer in configurationality and derivationality in explaining syntactic possibilities, I try to justify all basic assumptions about syntactic processes through their empirical coverage, rather than by simply assuming prevailing theoretical models. I do not adhere to one particular theoretical stance exclusively and have drawn on various linguistic traditions, including the Prague School, Russian/Soviet Functionalism, American Functionalism, and various generative approaches.

In describing and analyzing the syntax of any language, one encounters the issue of variation across speakers. In terms of dialects, Russian is a fairly homogeneous language. The standard written and spoken language is nearly the same in Kaliningrad in the West as it is in Vladivostok in the East, despite the tremendous geographic distance in between. There are, of course, some regional dialects, such as the Northern dialects, whose distinct syntactic properties I do not attempt to address here (some are treated in Timberlake 1974 and Lavine 2000). There is also the issue of register. Russian linguists speak of standard literary Russian (referred to in English as Contemporary Standard Russian [CSR]) vs. Colloquial Russian, referred to in Russian as Russkaja Razgovornaja Reč’ (‘Russian Conversational Speech’ as in the title of Zemskaya’s well-known 1973 book and later works). Zemskaya’s definition of Russkaja Razgovornaja Reč’ is that of the “unprescribed oral speech of native speakers of the literary language” (neprinuzhdennaja reč’ nositelej literaturnogo jazyka) (Zemskaya 1973: 5), a definition that I assume here as
well. Zemskaya and others have shown that the colloquial language differs in various syntactic properties from the literary norm, especially in the range of word order possibilities. Because my discussion of Russian word order in Chapters 6 and 7 crucially involves intonational patterns, I do discuss a fairly wide range of syntactic possibilities there, some of which might be considered available only in the colloquial language. However, I do not discuss in detail any colloquialisms that are entirely unavailable in CSR; for those the reader is referred to Zemskaya’s detailed and fascinating descriptions.

The book is divided into three major parts: (I) Basic configurations (Chapters 1–3), (II) Case (Chapters 4 and 5), and (III) Word order (Chapters 6 and 7). As the book progresses, and as a set of assumptions about basic phrase structure and syntactic relations is motivated, more theoretical issues of syntactic analysis are presented and discussed. This gradual development from the more descriptive to the more theoretical mirrors the historical development of the field of Russian grammatical studies in a useful way, and also allows students and other readers without thorough grounding in theoretical grammar to become acquainted with the descriptive situation before delving into topics that are more controversial and pertain more to theoretical issues than purely descriptive ones.

In Part I I motivate a configurational approach to basic Russian phrasal structure, based on simple principles of syntactic combination. I first look at verbal structures in Chapter 1 followed by nominal structures in Chapter 2. I show that Russian verbal and nominal structures are hierarchical, built up by combining lexical items whose grammatical features dictate their combinatorics, in ways similar to many other languages (possibly all). Grammatical/functional structures above VP and NP are introduced, as well as modification. Standard constituency tests are introduced, basic structures are diagrammed, and theoretical complications are identified. Chapter 3 expands the coverage to the clausal and sentential level, including subordinate and relative clauses, showing how larger structures are created from smaller ones by processes similar to those presented in Chapters 1 and 2. Chapter 3 contains configurational descriptions of most of the construction types identified in traditional Russian and Soviet grammars. Chapter 3 also introduces various derivational issues and theoretical debates, such as the nature of question formation (wh-movement), and sets the stage for the more theoretical discussions to come in the next chapters.

Part II of the book concerns the syntax of case in Russian. Chapter 4 introduces the syntactic nature of Russian structural case assignment (Nominative and Accusative) and then turns to a discussion of Dative case and the internal structure of VP. I show that each case reflects the feature make-up of
a particular grammatical (functional) category, such as T for Nominative and v for Accusative. Basic derivations are sketched out, building on earlier chapters. Many non-canonical Russian-specific constructions involving nom, acc and dat are analyzed here as well. The chapter includes a discussion of the controversial issue of the structure of ditransitive constructions. Chapter 5 turns to the famous Predicate Instrumental and Genitive of Negation in Russian, providing a configurational account for these cases (and various related case phenomena), building on Chapter 4. Here, too, we see that the source of most instances of these cases, though not all, involves a particular grammatical category, Predication for Instrumental and Quantification for Genitive. I also discuss case doubling effects and case-marked adverbial expressions. The resulting case system is both highly configurational, and capable of accounting for important major semantic case correlates.

Part III deals with Russian word order. Chapter 6 describes the various surface word order possibilities in Russian in terms of basic (neutral) orders and orders with specific discourse/functional effects. I show that Russian is well behaved typologically and patterns in basic orders with other SVO languages. The neutral order for transitives is SVO and for intransitives is VS. Deviation from these orders is typically associated with a distinct arrangement of old and new elements and/or with a particular intonational pattern. Various controversial claims in the current literature about the syntactic position of Topic and Focus phrases are discussed at the end of the chapter. I argue against accounts that posit a single fixed position for these elements and in favor of a system using relative ordering, in combination with intonation, to determine discourse relations within a sentence. I do not discuss issues of textual organization beyond the level of the individual sentence and its immediately preceding context. Chapter 7 turns to the technical issues of how non-neutral orders are related to neutral ones. I show that a derivational account is the most accurate – movement rules (of kinds familiar from other constructions and other languages) serve to scramble the basic word orders and achieve a particular functional result. After discussing the mechanics of such derivations (and some of the controversial debates surrounding them), I turn to their motivation. I argue for functionally motivated movement and provide annotated derivations for all the basic word order patterns. There is also an extensive discussion of the theoretical debates involved in word order derivation.

Many linguists have contributed to the ideas in this book, far too many to mention individually, other than John Whitman, who introduced me to the beauty of syntax, Leonard Babby, who introduced me to the beauty of Russian syntax, and John Bowers, whose example taught me that a love
of syntax can, in fact, be integrated into an otherwise healthy life. I am especially thankful to those who read through and gave written comments on an earlier version of the entire manuscript (Svitlana Antonyuk-Yudina, Nerea Madariaga, and Yakov Testelets), and to the various other Russian linguists (in both senses) who commented on parts of it at various conferences and other forums. I am grateful to my students and colleagues at Stony Brook and in St. Petersburg and Moscow and in many other places, especially my friend and colleague Anna Maslennikova, who always encouraged me to focus on this book even at the height of our frenzied work on many other projects. Thanks to Wayles Browne for discussion of transliteration issues, and to Poppy Slocum for invaluable help with the index.

Portions of Chapter 3 appeared in articles in the Journal of Slavic Linguistics (1995) and The Linguistic Review (1995). Parts of Chapters 4, 5, and 7 have appeared in articles in the Formal Approaches to Linguistic Theory series (volumes 4, 12, 14, 15 and 18), and parts of Chapter 7 appeared in articles in Linguistic Inquiry (2001) and Natural Language and Linguistic Theory (2004). I am grateful to Sarah Green and Jodie Barnes at Cambridge University Press and especially to Series Editor Helen Barton for her patience and support, particularly at the outset, and to Jacqueline French for superb and tireless copy-editing.

On the personal side, I should start by thanking Jim McFarland for pointing out Dostoevsky to me when we were 16. It’s a fairly straight line from there to the situation I am in now – when I find that there is simply no way to adequately thank the Russian-speaking friends who have been so central in my life for over 28 years. Treating me as one of your own has defined who I am.

The musicians and composers who continue to motivate me deserve special mention – they really made it all possible: David, Elvis, Melissa, Borya, Bob, Melanie, Wolfgang, Craig & Charlie, Hedwig, Franz, Joe, Vitja, Sasha, Dave, and everyone else – you know who you are!

I am so lucky to have had such intellectual inspiration and personal love and support from my immediate family: Mitzi; Bud and Lotte (aka Mom and Dad); Charles, Becky, and Janey; Vuky and Matiska; Milka, Dušan, and Dragana; and most of all, Dijana, and now Sava Marie (who arrived just in time to be mentioned here).

This book is dedicated to the memory of Aleksandra Arzhakovskaya, who loved this language as much as she loved life itself. Her subversive wisdom and incredible thirst for life will inspire me always.
Note on transliteration

In transliterating Russian phrases and sentences, I follow the Scientific Transliteration system for Cyrillic, used widely in Slavic linguistic traditions, whereby each Russian letter is represented by a unique letter or combination of letters (some with diacritics). The only place where I deviate from this system is in transliterating the Russian letter ê, where I do not use the two dots, rendering it as e (in keeping with most modern Russian printing traditions), except in cases where that would cause ambiguity, such as vsê (‘all’-neut.sg), where the two dots are used, as opposed to vsé (‘all’-plural), where they are not.

For a complete description of the system, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientific_transliteration. For more information on Scientific Transliteration (and other) transliteration systems for Cyrillic, see Wellisch (1977).
List of abbreviations and symbols

**Abbreviations**

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<th>Meaning</th>
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List of abbreviations and symbols

\( u \)  uninterpretable
\( V \)  verb, main verb, vowel
\( v \)  little verb, auxiliary verb
\( VP \)  Verb Phrase
\( vP \)  little Verb Phrase, auxiliary Verb Phrase
\( WCO \)  Weak Crossover
\( Wh \)  question phrase

Symbols

\*  ungrammatical
\#  infelicitous
\?  marginal
\( \theta \)  thematic role
\( \Delta \)  elided material
\( \Theta \)  null element
\( \Phi \)  phi-features (person, number, gender)
\( \forall \)  universal (quantifier)
\( \exists \)  existential (quantifier)
PART I

Basic configurations
Verbal phrases

1.1 Verbs and their arguments

The verb is the center of the syntactic universe. The distribution of arguments and modifiers within a Russian sentence is primarily determined by the verbal predicate; it is the verbal predicate that tells us which nominal elements (NPs) are available, or required, or not.\(^1\) Thus in (1), we see a range of possibilities for the appearance of arguments, depending on the kind of verbal predicate used:

(1)   a. Stemnelo.  “zero-place predicate”  
      got dark  
      ’It got dark.’

      b. Deti begajut. “one-place predicate” (agentive)  
         children-NOM run  
         ’The children are running.’

      c. Pojavilsja mal’čik. “one-place predicate” (non-agentive)  
         appeared boy-NOM  
         ’There appeared a boy.’

      d. Aleksandra kupila plat’e. “two-place predicate”  
         Alexandra-NOM bought dress-ACC  
         ’Alexandra bought a dress.’

      e. Aleksandra pokazala plat’e svoim rodstvennikam. “three-place predicate”  
         Alexandra-NOM showed dress-ACC her relatives-DAT  
         ’Alexandra showed the dress to her relatives.’

      f. Prodavščica prodala Aleksandre plat’e za 13 dollarov “four-place predicate”  
         salesgirl-NOM sold Alexandra -DAT dress-ACC [for 13 dollars]  
         ’The salesgirl sold Alexandra the dress for 13 dollars.’

In (1) we see standard cases of the varying valence (Russian valentnost’) of Russian verbs. (1a) is a “zero-place predicate,” so-called because it requires no (nominal) arguments. (1b) and (1c) are standard intransitives, or “one-place

---

\(^1\) In some languages, a verbal phrase always acts as the primary predicate, although it is well known that in Russian this is not always the case. I return in Chapters 3 and 5 to apparently verbless and to bezličnye (‘impersonal’) sentences.
predicates,” differing in the kind of single argument involved (an Agent in (1b) and a Theme in (1c)). (1d) is a standard transitive or “two-place predicate,” while (1e) is a typical ditransitive or “three-place predicate.” Finally, (1f) shows that, at least optionally, some verbs allow for a fourth argument, in the form of a prepositional phrase for 13 dollars, although its status as a true argument can be debated.3

Traditionally, the relationship between verbal predicates and the NPs, PPs, or other phrases they require are given by a kind of lexical rule listed in the grammar along with the verbs, or kind of verbs, in question. Such notations are meant to reflect the internalized knowledge that speakers of the language have about such relations and are said to represent the “argument structure,” “valence,” or “diathesis” of the verb in question, as in (2).

(2)  
Basic representation of argument structure4  
a. <temn-ej- > [NP1 ___ ]  
b. <beg-aj- > [NP1 ___ NP2 ]  
c. <kup-i- > [NP1 ___ NP2 ]  
d. <pokaz-a- > [NP1 ___ NP2 , NP3 ]  
e. <prodaj- > [NP1 ___ NP2 , NP3 , (PP4 ) ]  

---

2 See Babby (2009) for an extensive discussion of pre-syntactic operations affecting argument structure in Russian. Arguments are standardly contrasted with adjuncts, comprising various modificational phrases, such as time and place expressions, attributive adjectives, adverbs and other elements, which can be fairly freely added to any of the constructions above. I return to a discussion of the syntax of adjuncts below.

3 It is often assumed that verbs do not have more than three arguments in their initial argument structure (Babby 2009), all other elements being adjuncts. However, the distinction between arguments and adjuncts is not nearly as clear-cut as much of generative linguistics assumes it to be. See in this regard Rizzi (1990). In some traditional frameworks, indeed, it is possible to encounter analyses that argue for four-, five-place predicates (or more) (see Apresjan 1974). Note that the shells presented below for VP structure allowing three arguments can easily be extended further to allow for additional arguments (Larson, in press) and that therefore nothing crucial about VP structure depends on exactly how the argument/adjunct distinction is defined.

4 The morphological forms given in (2) are based on a one-stem verbal morphology system (Levin 1978). I assume that morphological derivations are handled in a component of the grammar separate from syntactic combinations (Halle & Matushansky 2006, Babby 2009), though this assumption is not entirely trivial. For present purposes, however, it is sufficient to represent the verbal forms this way and assume that in combination with the various features of the expression (tense, agreement, aspect and so on), the proper morphological form emerges. This notation should not be taken to imply any kind of stance on the technical details of exactly how the morphological component functions with regards to verbal or any other kind of morphology.
The parentheses in (2e) represent optionality of the element in question. The notion of optional arguments is generally accepted (e.g., Švedova et al. 1980, although the details of exactly which arguments are optional with which predicates is a delicate issue of lexical semantics that cannot directly concern us here). What matters for our purposes is that the verbal lexemes determine the distribution of NPs, so that the deviance of the examples in (3) can be directly related to the lexical verbal requirements given in (2):

(3)  a. *Ulica stemnela.
     street-nom got dark
     ‘The street got dark.’

     b. *Deti begajut marafon.
           children-nom run marathon-acc
     ‘The children are running a marathon.’

     c. *Aleksandra kupila.
           Alexandra-nom bought
     ‘Alexandra bought.’

1.2 Building syntactic structure

Lexical requirements such as (2) can be simplified in terms of their syntactic requirements, in that reference to the phrasal nature of the arguments (NP, PP, etc.) can be dispensed with, on a view of syntactic combinations whereby categorical selection is simply the relationship between one lexical item and the head of the relevant argument. The underlying assumptions that allow this simplification are given in (4):

(4) Basic principles of syntactic construction
   a. Lexical items are bundles of features (phonological, semantic, syntactic,…).
   b. Phrases are projections of lexical items, built from combinations of lexical items.

Given (4), all lexical items consist of bundles of features, one of which is their categorical status (such as N or V, generally assumed to be a grammatical primitive).\(^5\) Thus, the lexical entry for kupit’ (‘buy’) might look something like (5):\(^6\)

\(^5\) Certain recent work, especially Borer (2005), maintains that it is possible to dispense with the features [N] and [V] as grammatical primitives, in a system whereby the lexicon consists of roots, whose categorical status is determined by the nature of the functional elements a root is combined with. I will continue to assume the standard approach, namely that [N], [V], and possibly other categorical features are grammatical primitives that cannot be derived. See Adger (2003) for a similar approach.

\(^6\) I will not attempt to reduce the meaning of lexical items further than to simply say that buy means ‘BUY.’ The aspectual information indicated by “(pf),” and
Basic configurations

(5) PHON: <kup-i->
SYN: [V], [uN], [uN]
SEM: [BUY] (pf)

*PHON*, *SYN*, *SEM* represent the *kinds* of features associated with lexical items. *PHON* represents the lexical item’s idiosyncratic phonological make-up and *SEM* encodes the core meaning of the lexical item. I will focus here on the syntactic features. The feature [V] indicates that the lexical item at hand is itself a verb. The two [uN] features indicate that this verb carries two *uninterpretable* [N] features, which must be eliminated as it is combined with other elements in the creation of a verbal phrase. This featural specification represents its *valence* or *selectional requirements*, namely that it requires two NP arguments. The phrasal nature of those complements is a purely syntactic fact, which results from the system of combinations presented directly below. Elimination (satisfaction) of such features is achieved when the two elements are combined, following the basic operation *Merge*, given in (6):

(6) MERGE:  
   a. Combine Y and Z to form X: [X Y Z].  
   b. X is (always) a projection of either Y or Z.

(7) Samples of Merge

As a verb is combined (or “merged”) with nominal phrases (elements carrying interpretable [N] features), the uninterpretable N features on the verb are eliminated and syntactic (phrasal) structure is built up. Thus, a verb like *buy*

Footnote 6 (cont.)

verbal aspect generally, is something I return to at the end of this chapter. For now, I simply list it as a lexical property, although there exist various proposals that aspertsual status is determined syntactically (Ramchand 2008). Here, the purpose of the “(pf)” notation is simply to acknowledge the relationship between this particular piece of morphology (as opposed to its imperfective counterpart <pokup-aj->). I take no stand on the question of whether this information is truly lexical.

7 Uninterpretable features must be eliminated during the course of a syntactic derivation of a Logical Form that is readable by the non-linguistic systems it interfaces with. See Adger (2003) for details of a phrase-building system based on feature elimination.

8 I assume a version of Bare Phrase Structure (e.g., Adger 2003, based on Chomsky 1995), whereby no kind of phrasal templates, such as “X-bar Theory” (Jackendoff
first combines with a noun like *dress*, eliminating one of the verb’s uninterpretable N features, and forming a syntactic object that carries the remaining features of *kupi*, that is forming a part of a verb phrase. This is shown in (8):

\[(8) \ \ a. \ \ kupi-[V], [uN]_1, [uN]_2 + plat’j-[N] \rightarrow \ [v, kupi-, plat’j-][V], [uN]_1, [uN]_2 \]

b. Verb plus object structure:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{NP}_2 [N] & \quad \rightarrow \quad [uN] \\
\text{V} & \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{kupi-} \\
[uN] & \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{plat’j-} \\
\text{buy} & \quad \rightarrow \quad \text{dress}
\end{align*}
\]

Notice that in (8b), it is the verb whose features are projected to the newly formed unit after their combination and not those of the noun. This is exactly what it means for the verb to select the noun, and not the other way around. The fact of projection of the verbal features is a side effect of the fact that the verb has selectional requirements to be fulfilled, whereas the noun does not (although we will see in Chapter 2 that nouns may also have argument structure). To borrow from Adger (2003): “the head that selects is the head that projects.” Thus, the notion of *projection* along with a simple system of concatenation derives the structure in (8).

An additional instance of Merge, needed to satisfy the final [uN] feature (representing this verb’s Agent argument) creates a phrase in which all of the selectional requirements of the verb are satisfied. Such a phrase is then a completed Verb Phrase or VP as shown in (9):

1977, Webelhuth 1995) are required. However, the nature of the system of concatenation assumed is not directly relevant to the general issue of argument structure, which is assumed in some form or another, by all theories of grammar.

9 The subscripted numbers on the arguments are given for expository purposes only and crucially are not required in actual lexical representations such as (5), given the Thematic Hierarchy provided below.

10 I omit the verb’s own categorical [V] feature from now on for ease of exposition.

11 Note that the *directionality* of initial Merge, that is the linear ordering between the selecting element and what it selects, depends on the language in question. Russian, like English, is a “head-initial” language, in which selecting heads are to the left of the first element they select, thus it is prepositional (and not postpositional), SVO (and not SOV), and so on. One advantage of the Merge system is that directionality of first Merge becomes a feature of a language as a whole and need not be stated for specific lexical items or categories. Japanese and other languages show the opposite ordering. This “choice” is known as the “Head Direction Parameter,” easily learnable on the basis of simple evidence, while the system of Merge itself is presumably universal. The Japanese version of (7) is shown here:
Basic configurations

(9) Structure of a VP with a verb taking two arguments (first version)\(^{12}\)

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{V (VP)} \\
\text{NP}_1 \rightarrow \text{V} \quad [\text{\textit{aN}}]_1 \\
\text{Aleksandr-} \\
\text{kupi-} \quad \text{\textit{pla’tj}-} \\
\text{\textit{dres}} \\
\text{buy} \\
\text{NP}_2 \\
\end{array}
\]

Notice that in (9), as opposed to (8), all the verbal requirements for combinations have been satisfied, and therefore need not project any further. This will result in a well-formed VP, whose category is determined by its no longer projecting, which is in turn determined by the verbal element’s uninterpretable features being satisfied.

The issue naturally arises as to whether or not the specific thematic relations required by the verbs in question must be stated within each lexical entry. I assume, following Larson (1988), Grimshaw (1990), Baker (1996), Adger (2003), and many others, that the particular thematic roles follow from some kind of universal hierarchy, and that they do not therefore need to be stated individually. The hierarchy assumed can be stated as follows:

(10) a. Thematic Hierarchy

\[ \Theta \text{AGENT} > \Theta \text{THEME} > \Theta \text{GOAL} > \Theta \text{OBLIQUE} \] (manner, location, time, …)

Footnote 11 (cont.)

(i) Head-final Merge order

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Y} \\
\text{(Japanese)} \\
\text{Z} \rightarrow \text{Y} \quad [\text{\textit{F}}] \\
\text{\textit{John}} \\
\text{\textit{stories}} \quad \text{for} \\
\text{\textit{physics}} \quad \text{tell} \\
\text{\textit{of}} \quad \text{student} \\
\end{array}
\]

Second instances of Merge appear to the left, probably universally (Kayne 1994).

Indeed, Kayne (1994) and others have argued for a universal directionality, arguing that natural language does not in fact contain a Head Direction Parameter, and that its apparent effects (SOV order, postpositions, and so on) are derived from a universally head-initial base. Because this issue is not of relevance to the syntax of Russian, a clearly head-initial language, I will not take a stand on the degree to which head-finality in Japanese-type languages is derived rather than basic.

\(^{12}\) Notice, however, that many standard syntactic theories assume a unique position for Agent arguments outside the core VP, usually within what is known as the vP shell (Larson 1988), regardless of the number of other arguments. If there is such a unique position for Agents, the structure as presented here will of course have to be modified by introduction of a higher “shell” of the VP (see below). Such additional structure is required in ditransitives in any event, as we will see shortly.
b. If a verb determines θ-roles θ₁, θ₂,…, θₙ, then a role on the Thematic Hierarchy is assigned to the lowest argument in constituent structure, the next lowest to the next lowest argument, and so on (Larson 1988: 382).

(10) guarantees that the first argument merged with *buy* is the object that is bought (Theme) and the second the Agent of buying, and not the reverse. Given this, now consider the structure of a ditransitive VP, such as the one shown in (1e), repeated here as (11):

(11) Aleksandra pokazala plat’e rodstvennikam.

Alexandra-nom showed dress-acc relatives-dat

‘Alexandra showed the dress to her relatives.’

In (11) we see that the verb *pokaza-* (‘show’) requires three arguments. Following (10) the Dative Goal argument is the first to combine with the verb, and the Accusative Theme argument is the second.¹³ The first instances of combination in (11) will be the same as in (8). Each instance of concatenation extends the verbal structure. This is shown in (12):

(12) a. pokaza- [uN]₁, [uN]₂, [uN]₃ + rodstvennik-[N] → [V, pokaza-, rodstvennik-]
   [uN]₁, [uN]₂, [uN]₃

b. V [uN]₁, [uN]₂
   pokaza- [uN]₃
   rodstvennik- relatives
   NP₃

Next, this partial structure will combine with *plat’e* (‘dress’) as shown in (13):

¹³ The reader may wonder why it is assumed that the internal structure of VP is not a flat, triple-branching structure, whereby the verb and both its internal arguments are branches of a single common VP node. There are strong reasons to suspect that there are asymmetries among internal arguments that require a description such as the one given here, rather than a flat structure within VP (Kayne 1984; Barss & Lasnik 1986; among others). For Russian as well, it appears that the binary branching (and hence asymmetrical) structure best captures the relations among the internal arguments. In particular, it appears that the Larsonian approach (ACC > DAT) is the right one, as we will see in Chapter 4. Evidence for this position in Bailyn (1995a,b, 2010) is taken from asymmetries in binding possibilities, interaction with secondary predicates, and other syntactic effects. (For the opposite view, see Junghanns & Zybatow 1997 and Dyakonova 2005, 2007, 2009). However, for the purposes of a system of syntactic concatenation, it is not crucial what the order of combination is. The eventual resolution of this question would not affect the nature of syntactic phrase construction, and therefore I will illustrate only the ACC > DAT order. I return to this issue in more detail in Chapter 4.
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(13) a. \([v \text{ pokaza}, \text{ rodstvennik}-][uN]_1, [uN]_2 \rightarrow [v \{ \text{ pokaza}, \text{ rodstvennik}-\} \text{ plat}-][uN]_1, [uN]_2\]

b. \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{plat’j-}\\ \text{dress}
\end{array}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{show}\\ \text{pokaza-}\\ \text{rodstvennik-}
\end{array}
\rightarrow
\begin{array}{c}
\text{plat’j-}\\ \text{dress}
\end{array}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{show}\\ \text{pokaza-}\\ \text{rodstvennik-}
\end{array}
\]

Here we do not (yet) have a fully satisfied verbal predicate. Clearly, an additional instance of Merge is needed to satisfy the final \([uN]\) feature (here the verb’s Agent argument). Once this has been provided, all of the selectional requirements of the verb will be satisfied.\(^{14}\) Such a phrase is then an extended Verb Phrase or \(vP\) as shown in (14):\(^{15}\)

(14) VP structure with three arguments

\[\begin{array}{c}
\text{Aleksandr-}\\ \text{pokaza-}\\ \text{show}
\end{array}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{plat’j-}\\ \text{dress}
\end{array}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{rodstvennik-}\\ \text{relatives}
\end{array}
\rightarrow
\begin{array}{c}
\text{plat’j-}\\ \text{dress}
\end{array}
\begin{array}{c}
\text{show}\\ \text{pokaza-}\\ \text{rodstvennik-}
\end{array}
\]

\(^{14}\) The introduction of a higher \(v\) head, to which lexical \(V\) raises, rather than the simple further extension of \(VP\) through the merger of a third argument, is a standard assumption in syntactic analyses of verbal phrases across languages (Larson 1988; forthcoming; Chomsky 1995). What varies considerably across analyses, however, is motivation for the introduction of \(v\) and for the obligatory \(V \rightarrow v\) movement that ensues. I do not take a stand on that issue here. See Larson (1988), Pollock (1989), Bowers (1993), and Larson (forthcoming) for discussion.

\(^{15}\) I have not yet said anything about the relationship between verbal phrases and tense. This is deliberate, in that the phrase [\(Alexandra\ buy\ dress\)] is not inherently tensed or untensed. The fact that overt agentive arguments usually do not appear in untensed sentences (*\(Alexandra\ to\ buy\ a\ dress\)) is a side effect of the grammar’s case requirements and not related to verbal argument structure per se (hence the availability of \(I\ want\ [Alexandra\ to\ buy\ a\ dress]\)). The syntax of Russian case is taken up in Part II.
We now have a complete ditransitive vP, although its functional shell (including Tense information) remains to be added to form a complete sentence. But from the point of view of the verbal predicate, all lexical requirements have been satisfied.

### 1.2.1 Can selection be semantically determined?

One other fact of verbal selection is central to an understanding of the nature of Russian verbal structures. Various attempts have been made in traditional linguistics to associate argument structure and selection directly with the semantics of the verb (such an approach might allow us to reduce the $uN$ features in kupi- (‘buy’) to its semantics, that is to the nature of [buy]). However, it appears that such attempts cannot be completely successful and that (lexical) syntactic selection is required (that is, reference to category types in the lexical entry). This can be shown in Russian by looking at the verbs sprosi- and zadaj-, both of which can have the meaning ‘ask,’ given in (15)–(16):

(15) a. Aleksandra **sprosila** počemu my toropimsja.
   Alexandra asked [why we hurry]
   ‘Alexandra asked why we were hurrying.’

b. *Aleksandra **sprosila** vopros.
   Alexandra asked question
   ‘Alexandra asked a question.’

(16) a. *Aleksandra **zadala** počemu my toropimsja.
   Alexandra asked [why we hurry]
   ‘Alexandra asked why we were hurrying.’

b. Aleksandra **zadala** vopros
   Alexandra asked question
   ‘Alexandra asked a question.’

Of the two lexical verbs meaning [ask], one of them (sprosi-) takes a clausal (CP) complement (category [C], see Section 1.3), and the other (zadaj-) selects an NP complement. Simply put, the categorical nature of required and possible combinatorial requirements do not necessarily reflect the lexical semantics of the verb. (The same is true of English ask vs. wonder and occurs commonly with verbs such as tell, say, speak, and so on). It appears difficult to reduce this property directly to the meaning of the verbs in question.\(^{16}\)

---

\(^{16}\) Pesetsky (1982) claims that categorial selection ("c-selection") can be reduced to semantic selection ("s-selection") under an appropriate theory of case, whereby wonder, or Russian sprosit’ (‘ask’), simply is unable to assign Accusative case,
In the next section, we turn to sentential complementation and see that it is also stateable in terms of the selectional properties of verbal lexical items.

1.3 Selection and subordination

Among the kinds of selection that occur with Russian verbs, as with verbs in other languages, is the ability to select a subordinate clause of a certain kind. Standard examples of subordination are given in (17):

(17) a. Aleksandra dumaet, [čto Sonja kupila ḳarat].
   ‘Alexandra thinks that Sonya bought a dress.’ (embedded indicative)

b. Aleksandra xočet, [čtoby Sonja kupila plat’ė].
   ‘Alexandra wants that Sonya buy a dress.’ (embedded subjunctive)

c. Aleksandra sprosila, [počemu Sonja kupila plat’ė].
   ‘Alexandra asked why Sonya bought a dress.’ (embedded interrogative)

There are two points to notice about (17). First, the category of the complement appears to be that of a complex sentence (or S’), that is a phrase containing a complementizer or other similar element and a full (subordinate) sentence. I will follow standard practice in labeling this category CP, and assuming that its selected head is the complementizer C itself. If so, then the relevant lexical entry of the verb in (17a) is something like (18) and the combinatorics of the relevant portion of the VP are as in (19):

(18) Lexical entry for (relevant use) of dum-aj (‘think’)
   PHON: <dum-aj>
   SYN: [V], [uC_INDEX]
   SEM: [THINK] (impr)

Footnote 16 (cont.)

therefore disallowing sentences such as (15b). However, Rothstein (1992) argues that case requirements alone are not enough to guarantee proper distribution of arguments with such verbs without c-selection. I assume here, following Adger (2003), that c-selection is a simple issue of lexical features that must be satisfied by an appropriate instance of Merge. For further discussion, see Pesetsky (1982), Rothstein (1992), Adger (2003), among others.
Schematic structure of V selecting subordinate clause\(^{17}\)
\[
dum-aj-[V], \{uN\}, \{uC\} + čto_{[C]} \rightarrow [dum-aj-, čto] [V], \{uN\}, \{uC\}
\]

The second important point is that the nature of the type of subordinate clause (indicative vs. subjunctive vs. interrogative; exact choice of complementizer) is also a requirement of the verbal predicate in question. This is shown by the unavailability of options such as those shown in (20):

\[(20)\]
\[
\begin{align*}
a. & \ *Aleskandra xočet / sprosila, [čto Sonja kupila plat’e]. \\
& \text{Alexandra wants / asked [that Sonya bought } \text{indic} \text{ dress]} \\
& \text{‘Alexandra wants/asked that Sonya bought a dress.’} \\

b. & \ *Aleskandra sprosila / dumaet, [čtoby Sonja kupila plat’e]. \\
& \text{Alexandra asked / thinks [that Sonya buy } \text{subj} \text{ dress]} \\
& \text{‘Alexandra asked/thinks Sonya to buy a dress.’} \\

c. & \ *Aleskandra xočet, [počemu Sonja kupila plat’e]. \\
& \text{Alexandra wants [why Sonya bought dress]} \\
& \text{‘Alexandra wants why Sonya bought a dress.’}
\end{align*}
\]

The impossibility of the forms in (20) (on standard interpretations) reduces to violations of the relevant verb’s lexical entries, which in full form will specify sub-features of the selected feature, such as [INDIC], [SUBJ], [INTERROG], as is required by any system of argument structure. Under the system of syntactic combination assumed here, these violations amount to syntactic violations brought about by not satisfying the specific featural requirements of the relevant verbal predicates.

Notice that many verbs, such as znaij- (‘know’) have more than one categorical selectional option. This is shown in (21):

\[(21)\]
\[
\begin{align*}
a. & \ Aleksandra znaet Sonju. \\
& \text{Alexandra knows Sonya} \\
& \text{‘Alexandra knows Sonya.’}
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{17}\) For expository purposes, here I assume the internal structure of CP has already been built in the usual fashion, and that the main clause V selects its object, of category C, which has already been created. If the verb in fact selected a “bare” complementizer, it would be the lexical properties of that element, and not V, that would go unsatisfied. The underlying assumption is that syntactic objects are built in “bottom-up” fashion (Chomsky 1995; Adger 2003).
b. Aleksandra znaet, [čto Sonja kupila plat’e].
Alexandra knows [that Sonya bought\_basic dress]
‘Alexandra knows that Sonya bought a dress.’
c. Aleksandra znaet, [počemu Sonja kupila plat’e].
Alexandra knows [why Sonya bought dress]
‘Alexandra knows why Sonya bought a dress.’

(21) shows that there must be an available set of options in the lexicon for znaj- (‘know’), as in similar cases in all languages, whereby the predicate can select either an NP argument, an indicative CP argument, or an interrogative CP argument. Again, this optionality depends entirely on the lexical item in question and is therefore part of its argument structure. A possible version of the lexical entry for know, reflecting these options, is given in (22):

(22)  
Lexical entry znaj- (‘know’)\(^{18}\)  
PHON:  <znaj>  
SYN:  [V], \{[uN], [uC\_INDIC], [uC\_INTERROG]\}  
SEM:  [KNOW] (impf)

1.4 Thematic relations

It is well known that different verbal predicates, in addition to requiring certain kinds of categorial complementation, also require arguments bearing distinct thematic relations (that is, bearing certain kinds of semantic roles), such as Agent, Experiencer, Theme, Location, and so on. We have already seen that these roles do not always correspond to category selection. The examples in (23)–(25), provide more such evidence:

(23)  
Thematic roles in single-argument verbs  
a. Deti begajut.  
children-nom run  
‘The children are running.’
b. Vzroslye volnujutsja.  
adults-nom worry  
‘The adults are worried.’

\(^{18}\) There is, of course, an important semantic issue of determining when choices in argument structure are subentries of a single predicate and when they should in fact be listed separately as a distinct (homophonous) lexical entry. I will not address this issue, since its resolution does not directly bear on syntactic structure.
(24) Thematic roles in two-argument verbs

a. **Aleksandra** kupila **plat’ye**. Agent, Theme
   [Alexandra-nom bought dress-acc]
   ‘Alexandra bought a dress.’

b. **Sonja** ljubit **sobak**. Experiencer, Theme
   [Sonya-nom loves dogs-acc]
   ‘Sonya loves dogs.’

c. **Global’noe poteplenie** volnuet **Gora**. Theme, Experiencer
   [global warming-nom worries Gore-acc]
   ‘Global warming worries Gore.’

d. **Malen’kie sobaki** nravjatsja **Sone**. Theme, Experiencer
   [small dogs-nom like (please) Sonya-dat]
   ‘Sonya likes small dogs.’

(25) Thematic roles in three-argument verbs

a. **Sonja** pokazala **plat’ye** rodstvennikam. Agent, Theme, Goal
   [Sonya-nom showed dress-acc relatives-dat]
   ‘Sonya showed the dress to her relatives.’

In traditional grammars, it is standard to describe argument structure as being primarily concerned with thematic roles rather than with c-selection. However, we have seen that the two cannot be collapsed, and that categorial selection is idiosyncratic. On the common assumption that the lexicon is the repository for idiosyncratic information, the notations given above stating categorical selection as a syntactic side effect of lexical entries (represented as features) is entirely natural. Thematic roles, on the other hand, follow the (presumably universal) hierarchy (Agent > Theme > Goal, etc.) given in (10), and so I do not represent them here within each verb’s syntactic argument structure. Thus, in Russian there do not appear to be cases where the Agent is merged with a verb before the Theme is, and so on. I therefore do not include

19 The two-argument verbs exemplified here include standard transitives with an Agent and a Theme (24a) (note that the Theme can be an NP or a CP, among other options), as well as three kinds of “psychological” verbs, that is those with Experiencers, which can surface as Nominative ((24b)), Accusative ((24c)), or Dative arguments ((24d)). This mismatch between case and thematic role has played a significant part in syntactic theory since at least Belletti and Rizzi (1988) and is central to the question of the structural configurations in Russian that license case and thematic roles (see Babby 1994, 2009 for extensive discussion in a diathetic system). For present purposes it is enough to note the various mappings possible, and to emphasize that regardless of the mechanisms of mapping argument structure onto syntax, categorial requirements must be lexically specified, as argued above, whereas canonical mappings of thematic roles will fall out from the interaction of the system of structural and lexical case (see Part II) and some kind of Thematic Hierarchy given in (10) above, and argued for in Larson (1988), Grimshaw (1990), Baker (1996), Adger (2003) and many other places.
thematic roles as part of the relevant syntactic requirements of particular verbs.\footnote{20}

1.5 Verbal configurations and VP/vP constituency

Thus far, I have assumed that the verb and its internal arguments form a \textit{constituent}, that is a syntactic object whose distribution and behavior justify its analysis as a distinct phrase, the thing we call VP/vP, and that VP/vP corresponds to a significant unit in Russian syntax.\footnote{21} In this section, I provide three arguments for the existence of VP/vP in Russian: (i) coordination, (ii) fronting, and (iii) ellipsis.\footnote{22}

\footnote{20} Cases of mismatch between the Thematic Hierarchy in (10) and apparent order of Merge (or at least the eventual surface order) all appear to involve so-called psychological predicates and Experiencers, and have attracted much attention in the generative literature since Belletti and Rizzi (1988) but have been little discussed with regard to Russian, except in King (1992). Further work is needed in this area.

\footnote{21} Readers may wonder about the use of “internal argument” here. Although I assume here that Agents (and Experiencers) are mapped onto selected NP arguments as a requirement of the predicate, it is also well known that “external” arguments like these usually surface outside the VP/vP constituent (in grammatical subject position, for example) and that therefore VP/vP constituency tests, such as those to be used here, should not involve the grammatical subject. On a related note, constituency tests do not always distinguish between a VP and its vP shell. Assuming the VP-shell analysis of Larson (1988, forthcoming), and given that verbal adverbs on the left edge of verbal phrases are involved in such constituency tests, the arguments given here all implicate vP rather than (bare) VP. However, because the issue at hand is one of constituency, I will continue, for ease of exposition, to refer to these processes as involving VP in this section. This applies to the fronting and ellipsis arguments as well. Note that some theories crucially distinguish VP ellipsis from vP ellipsis, for example Schoorlemmer and Temmerman 2010, a conclusion for Russian that appears to be inappropriate given standard assumptions about VP shells and the position of VP adverbs to the left of raised verbs in agentive constructions.

\footnote{22} Traditional Russian linguistics does not have an exact term corresponding to “Verb Phrase”; translations of generative works often use the term \textit{glagol’naja gruppa} (‘verb group’). The closest terms in traditional Russian linguistics to “constituent” are either \textit{sostavljajuščee} (Testelets 2001) or \textit{slavosočetanie} (lit: ‘word combination’) (Śvedova \textit{et al.} 1980; Valgina 2000), each implying both a semantic and syntactic unity of a combination of words, one acting as the primary word (\textit{glavnoe} or \textit{steržnevoe slovo} (Valgina 2000) or \textit{veršina} (Testelets 2001), and the others as dependent word(s) (\textit{zavisimoe slovo}). \textit{Glagol’noe slovosočetanie} or \textit{glagol’naja gruppa} (Testelets 2001) are thus the closest Russian terms to ‘Verb Phrase’. Note that dependent elements are often assumed to be individual words and not full constituents (see Cubberley 2002 for a recent example), despite obvious evidence that arguments are NP, or PP, or CP, and not (simply) N or P or C. Traditional descriptions disregard the \textit{constituency} of arguments, although many assume them tacitly (e.g., Śvedova \textit{et al.} 1980).
1.5.1 VP coordination

It is well known that coordination is possible between constituents of the same type. Examples are given in (26):

(26) Examples of coordination:

a. [Novye gazety] i [starye žurnaly] ležat na stole.
   ‘New newspapers and old magazines are lying on the table.’
   NP coordination

b. [Vanya čitaet] i [Maša zanimaetsja jogoj].
   ‘Vanya is reading and Masha is doing yoga.’
   Sentence coordination

c. Knigi ležat na polu i na stole.
   ‘There are books lying on the floor and on the table.’
   PP coordination

(27) Principle of Coordination

Freely coordinate syntactic objects of like category
([NP] + [NP], [VP] + [VP], [PP] + [PP], [CP] + [CP], S(entence) + S(entence), etc.)

The following examples therefore show that despite differences in valence, VP/vP coordination is perfectly acceptable in Russian, in exactly the same way as it is in languages like English, where VP/vP constituency is not in question. Without the existence in internalized grammar of a VP/vP constituent, these examples would be difficult, if not impossible, to compose syntactically without allowing multiple ill-formed instances of constituency into the grammar:

(28) a. Aleksandra [begaet] i [zanimaetsja jogoj].
   Alexandra runs and does yoga.
   ‘Alexandra runs and does yoga.’

b. Aleksandra [smeetsja] i [pokazyvaet plat’ja vsem rodstvennikam].
   Alexandra laughs and shows the dresses to all her relatives.

In some cases, there will be a simultaneous interpretation of the two coordinated VP/vPs, and in some cases they will be understood as sequential. This is not relevant to the syntactic nature of the coordination process. What matters is that like categories are coordinated, implicating VP/vP constituency for the intransitive, transitive, and ditransitive constructions.

1.5.2 VP-fronting

It is clear that VP/vPs can be moved as a unit in various Russian sentences:
Basic configurations

(29)  
  a. Ja ne budu [govorit’ po-francuzski vsë leto].  
      I NEG will [speak_{INFIN} French all summer] 
      ‘I will not speak French all summer.’  
  b. [Govorit’ po-francuzski vsë leto] ja ne budu [__].  
      [speak_{INFIN} French all summer] I NEG will [__]  
      ‘I will not speak French all summer.’

The verbal phrase in (29b) is at the left edge of the sentence. It is easy to verify that most processes of this kind require an entire phrase (NP, VP, etc.) to relocate, and are otherwise highly marked, requiring special intonation patterns or leading to non-standard interpretations, as in (30b):

(30)  
  a. Ja ne budu [prodavat’ mašinu druz’jam].  
      I NEG will [sell_{INFIN} car-ACC friends-DAT]  
      ‘I will not sell my car to friends.’  
  b. [Prodavat’ mašinu ja ne budu __ druz’jam].  
      [sell_{INFIN} car-ACC I NEG will friends-DAT]  
      ‘I will not sell my car to friends.’

The difference between (29b) and (30b) lies in the fact that the entire verbal phrase is relocated in the first case, whereas only part of it is in the second case. This contrast thus speaks in favor of a VP constituent, which can be targeted by processes such as dislocation.\(^{23}\)

1.5.3 VP/vP ellipsis

Russian does not have a straightforward pro-VP form such as English \textit{do (so)}. However, in various constructions, the predicative negative polarity element \textit{net} serves exactly this role, with the simple caveat that it also changes the polarity at hand.

(31)  
  a. Petja prišel a Vasja net Δ.  
      Petya [arrived but Vasya] not [\_{arrive}]  
      ‘Petya arrived but Vasya didn’t.’  
  b. Sonja [zaniмаetsja jogoj] a Александра net Δ.  
      Sonya [does yoga] but Alexandra not [\_do yoga]  
      ‘Sonya does yoga but Alexandra doesn’t [do yoga].’

\(^{23}\) There is, presumably, a way to derive (30b) while maintaining VP constituency (hence its status as not entirely unacceptable), namely by first removing the Dative argument from the VP by some local movement process (see Part III of the book) and then fronting the VP containing the remaining elements (this is known as “Remnant Movement”). The conditions on Remnant Movement are complex (see Müller 1998, Hiraiwa 2002), and in Russian require a particular discourse context to be acceptable. Here, without contrastive stress on \textit{druz’jam} (‘friends’) and an implied alternative, (30b) is unacceptable. See Section 1.5.6 below for a more general discussion of similar cases of disruption of VP constituents.
The polarity item *net* in (31) heads a category whose complement is VP/vP, licensing its deletion under identity. This is shown in (32):

(32) Structure of Russian VP/vP ellipsis

![Diagram of VP/vP ellipsis]

To complete the ellipsis argument for VP constituency, we need only to examine cases where something smaller than VP/vP is targeted, as in (31b), where the target is simply the lexical verb, which is dropped while its arguments remain overt. The result is ungrammatical:


Petya [arrived but Vasya] not [v, arrive] to me
‘Petya arrived but Vasya didn’t.’


Sonya [does yoga] but Alexandra not [v, do] judo
‘Sonya does yoga but Alexandra doesn’t [do] judo.’

Further evidence that VP ellipsis is involved in these cases is given by the fact that with reflexives we can get a so-called “sloppy reading” (Johnson 2001), whereby the reflexive pronoun in the elided constituent does not have the same reference in the second conjunct as it does in the first (Sonya) (if it has the same reference, it is called a “strict reading”). With VP ellipsis, we get a sloppy reading, whereby the second occurrence of *sebja* is also interpreted anaphorically, that is by referring to the subject of the second (elided) VP, that is to Alexandra. This is shown in (34):

(34) Sonja ponimaet sebja a Aleksandra net Δ.

Sonya [understands self] but Alexandra not [understands self]
‘Sonya understands herself but Alexandra doesn’t [understand herself].’

Kazenin (2001) argues that cases such as (32) result from ellipsis of a constituent higher than VP/vP, namely TP, on an analysis where the *net* element sits in a Polarity Phrase category above TP. This less intuitive approach is required for Kazenin because he assumes that Russian verbs raise overtly to T, as their French counterparts do (Emonds 1978; Pollock 1989). However, as has been shown in Bailyn 1995a,b, Kallestinova 2007, and elsewhere (see also Chapter 3), Russian verbs do not move overtly to T, thus allowing the simpler analysis in (32) to stand. Kazenin 2001 also identifies cases of uncontroversial VP ellipsis in Russian, which add to the ellipsis arguments in favor of VP constituency. It is true, however, that *net* can probably act as a higher-level ellipsis marker as well in some instances. The existence of such a possibility does not weaken the arguments for VP/vP ellipsis given here.
Thus we have three pieces of evidence that there exists in Russian a syntactically distinct VP/vP constituent: VP/vP can be fronted and VP/vP can be the target of coordination and ellipsis. Such processes could not function if VP/vP were not a distinct syntactic object in Russian.

1.5.4 Reflexivization

The behavior of Russian pronouns and reflexives provides further evidence in favor of both hierarchical structures and the existence of a VP/vP excluding grammatical subjects. Descriptively, the Russian reflexive pronoun sebja and the reflexive possessive adjective svoj must both be “bound” by an antecedent in some local domain. (35) shows that sebja must refer to another NP in the sentence, while (36) shows that the antecedent need not necessarily precede. (I indicate with bold the elements that are co-indexed.)

(35) a. Ivan ljubit sebja.
   Ivan loves self
   ‘Ivan loves himself.’

b. Ivan ljubit svoju daču.
   Ivan loves [self’s country house]
   ‘Ivan, loves his country house.’

(36) a. Sebja Ivan ljubit.
   self-ACC Ivan loves
   ‘Himself, Ivan loves.’

b. Svoju daču Ivan ljubit.
   [self’s house]-ACC Ivan-NOM loves
   ‘His country house, Ivan loves.’

It is also well known that the antecedent for such reflexives cannot be outside of the tensed clause in which the reflexive is found. Thus Ivan can not be the antecedent for sebja in (37):

(37) *Ivan dumaet, çto kureenie vredno dlja sebja.
   Ivan thinks that smoking harmful for himself
   *‘Ivan thinks that smoking is harmful for himself.’

25 Obviously, a tree drawing of the surface structure of the examples would not allow us to easily account for the possibility of such sentences. However, the notion of c-command, to be introduced directly below, along with the idea that reflexivization can be established under those relations before the surface word order is rearranged, allows us to see why such sentences are possible. Without the notions of VP configurationality, binding, and movement transformations, these sentences would be difficult, if not impossible, to account for. For discussion see Saito (2003) and Bailyn (2006).

26 By “co-indexed,” I mean two elements that point to the same item. Often, this is also referred to as co-reference, though it is well known that the two are not always the same (Fiengo & May 1994).