Pronoun expansion in the history of Russian: The starting point

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Typological overview

- 2 main patterns of reduced subject marking: personal pronouns VS verbal affixes
- Verbal affixes: the most widespread pattern (61% of modern languages [WALS] + all ancient IE languages)
- (1) Czech:

*Vrátí-**m***	*se*	*brzy*
come.back.PRS-1SG	REFL	скоро

  'I will come back soon'

- (2) Latin:
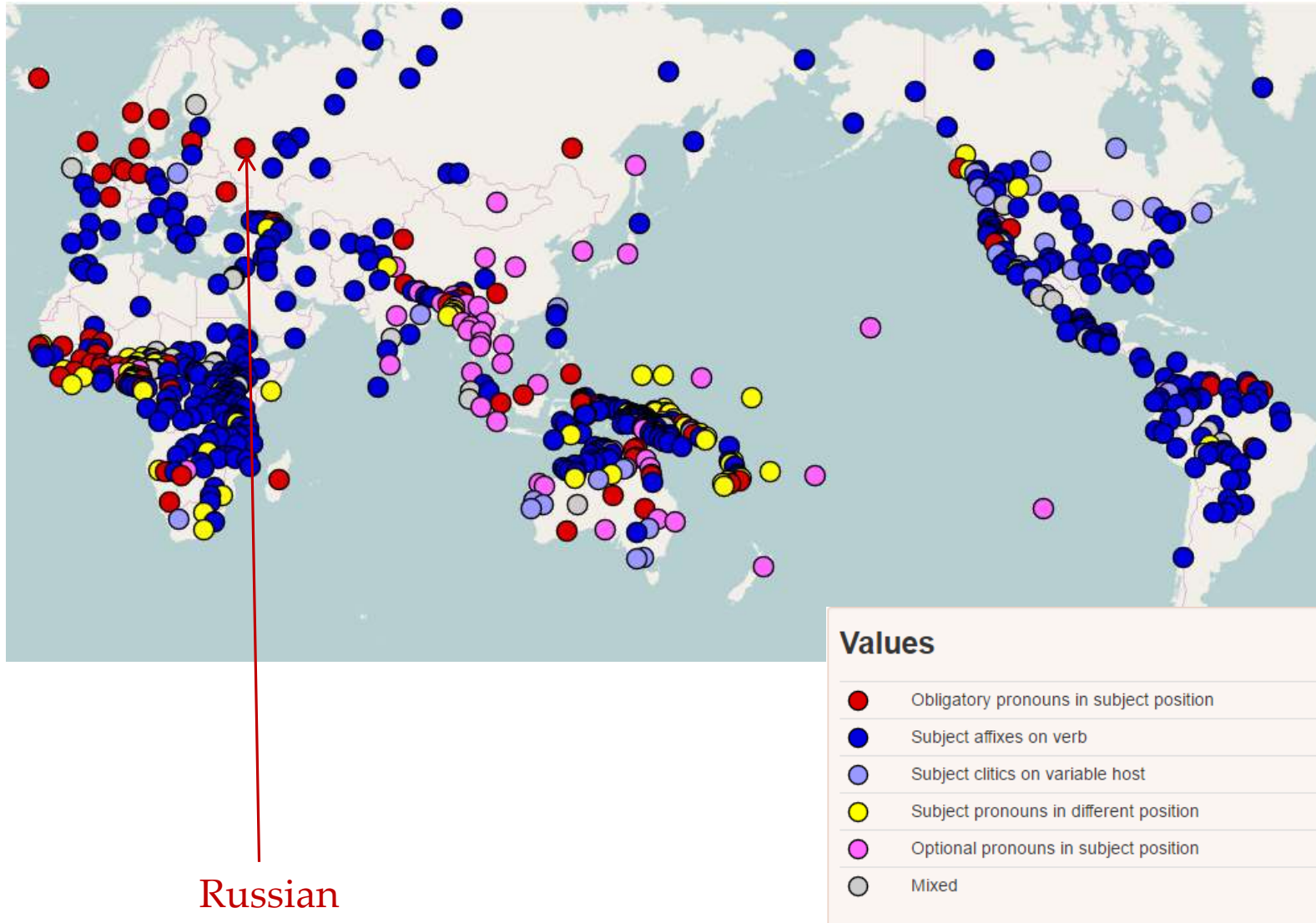
Dum	*spir-**o***	*sper-o*
while	breathe.PRS-1SG	hope.PRS-1SG

  'While I breathe, I hope'

- Personal pronouns: only 14% of languages [WALS]
- (3) English:
  - *Now **I** need a place to hide away*

WALS 2013: cross-linguistic context

Russian

Values

- 🔴 Obligatory pronouns in subject position
- 🔵 Subject affixes on verb
- 🟣 Subject clitics on variable host
- 🟡 Subject pronouns in different position
- 🩷 Optional pronouns in subject position
- ⚪ Mixed

Russian: from affixes to personal pronouns

- Old Russian (before XIII): personal pronouns are hardly ever employed in non-emphatic contexts
- (4) Novgorod birch-bark letter 644, early XIIs:

čemoy	*ne*	*vosol-**eši***		
why	not	send.back-PRS.**2SG**		
četo	*t-i*	*jes-**emo***	*voda-l-a*	*kova-ti*
what	you-DAT	be.PRS-**1SG**	give-PTCP-FSG	forge-INF

'Why do not you send me back what I gave you for forging?"

- Modern Russian: personal pronouns are used in over 70% of occurrences [Kibrik 1996; Seo 2001]

- (5) Novgorod birch-bark letter 644, modern translation [Zalizniak 2004: 267]:
  *pochemu **ty** ne prisyla**eš** to, chto **ja** dal**a** tebe vykovat'?*
  'Why do not you send me back what I gave you to forge?"

- What caused such a striking pronoun expansion?

"Perfect-copula-drop" hypothesis

- A common explanation: pronoun expansion as a result of perfect copular loss in verbal clauses [Jakobson 1971/1935: 21; Borkovskij 1968: 50; Lindseth 1998: 65; Kibrik 2004; Meyer 2011: 131]

		Proto East Slavic (before 11th century)	Early Old Russian (11th -13th centuries)	Modern Russian
Verbal Perfect/Past	1Sg.M 3Sg.M	*Perfect* *dal-ъ* **jesmь** 'I gave' *dal-ъ* **jestъ** 'he gave'	*Perfect>New past* *dal-ъ* **jesmь** 'I gave' *dal-ъ* **Ø**$_{cop}$'he gave'	*New Past* **ja** *dal* 'I gave' **on** *dal* 'he gave'

- Based on the fact that even in the earliest texts the 3rd person auxiliary was mostly dropped
- A particular case of verb impoverishment which is a typologically widespread phenomenon [Kibrik 2011: 271]

Objections

- Over 3-centuries time gap between 3rd person copular loss in verbal clauses and the significant rise or unmarked personal pronouns

- Personal pronouns in past verbal clauses expanded significantly in the 16th – 17th centuries – while the 3rd person copula was lost as far back as in 12th century [Khaburgajev 1978: 46; Zalizniak 2008: 247; Meyer 2011: 130]

- 3rd person zero copula is cross-linguistically common indeed but the tendency towards 1st and 2nd copula drop is much less known

- E.g. 3rd person zero in Czech and Polish from the 15th century onwards [Andersen 1987: 28; Skorvid 2005: 236] but no cues found for any further verbal reconstruction

Clauses with a nominal predicate: do they behave the same way?

- As well as past verbal clauses, the clauses with a nominal predicate (=nominal clauses) were also affected by pronoun expansion

		Early Old Russian (before 12th century)	Modern Russian
Nominal present	1Sg.M 3Sg.M	*vinovat-ъ **jesmь** 'I am guilty'* *vinovat-ъ **jestъ** 'he is guilty'*	*ja Ø$_{cop}$ vinovat* *on Ø$_{cop}$ vinovat*

- But they still remain unstudied on a large scale

- Most researchers either do not evoke nominal clauses at all or just mention them together with verbal clauses [Jakobson 1971/1935: 71]

- But no separate study of nominal clauses was ever conducted => we cannot be exactly sure that they follow exactly the same path as verbal clauses from a diachronic perspective

The analysis: main principles

- Texts from 11th till 2nd half of 17th century
  - 2nd half of 17th century: "referential marking is nearly the same as in modern Russian" [Zaliznjak 2008: 256.; Chernykh 1952: 227; Borkovsky, Kuznetsov 2006: 323; Kibrik 2013: 236]
- Non-literary register (birchbark letters, official documents, domestic and foreign policy contracts)
- Sources: Russian National Corpus (historic part) http://ruscorpora.ru/old; e-library "Vostochnaja literatura" ('Eastern literature' – documents and acts from 11th till 17th century, online at http://www.vostlit.info)
- 1st-2nd VS 3rd person pronouns
- Types of patterns analyzed: zero pronoun clauses (both with and without a copula); zero copula clauses (both with and without a subject pronoun); double-marking patterns with both a subject pronoun and a verb copula
- Overall volume: nearly 1000 relevant clauses extracted from texts
- Methodology: manual data extraction with later statistical processing in SPSS (binominal and χ-square tests, Student's t-test)

Results-1

- Significant chronological difference on the very first evolutional stage between nominal and pars verbal clauses

- The massive loss of 3rd person auxiliary in nominal clauses **succeeded** the same process in verbal clauses

		Proto-Old Russian (before the 11th century)	Early Old Russian (11th -12th centuries)	Middle Russian (13th -14th centuries)
Verbal perfect	1Sg.M 3Sg.M	*dal-ъ jesmь* *dal-ъ* **jestъ**	*dal-ъ jesmь* *dal-ъ $\emptyset_{cop}$*	*dal-ъ jesmь* *dal-ъ $\emptyset_{cop}$*
Nominal	1Sg.M 3Sg.M	*vinovat-ъ jesmь* *vinovat-ъ* **jestъ**	*vinovat-ъ jesmь* *vinovat-ъ* **jestъ**	*vinovat-ъ jesmь* *vinovat-ъ $\emptyset_{cop}$*

Results-2

- And only after a copular loss in **nominal** clauses pronoun expansion took place (firstly 3rd person pronouns replaced zero markers; approximately a century and a half later 1st and 2nd person pronouns followed them):

		11th -12th	13th -1st half of 14th	2nd half of 14th – 15th	16th-1st half of 17th
Verbal perfect/ past	1Sg.M 3Sg.M	*dal-ъ jesmь* *dal-ъ Ø_{cop}*	*dal-ъ jesmь* *dal-ъ Ø_{cop}*	*dal-ъ jesmь* **on** *dal-ъ*	**ja** *dal-ъ* *on dal-ъ*
Nominal	1Sg.M 3Sg.M	*vinovat-ъ jesmь* *vinovat-ъ* **jestъ**	*vinovat-ъ jesmь* *vinovat-ъ Ø_{cop}*	*vinovat-ъ jesmь* **on** *vinovat-ъ*	**ja** *vinovat-ъ* *on vinovat-ъ*

Conclusion

- It appears that only a double loss of 3rd person auxiliary (both in verbal and in nominal clauses) could trigger some further referential alignment

- Single 3rd person zero in verbal clauses cannot provoke such an evolution

- Czech and Polish: 3rd person zero in verbal clauses but an overt copula in nominal clauses => no Russian-like pronoun rise

- (8) Polish vs Russian:

  *Nie $\emptyset_{pro}$ **jest szaleńcem** ani samobójcą. Dlaczego $\emptyset_{pro}$ tak **ryzykował**?* (PO)

  ***On** ne $\emptyset_{cop}$ **sumasšedshij** i ne samoubijca. Začem **on** tak **riskoval**?* (RU)

  'He is neither insane nor suicidal. Why did he risk so much?'

  http://ruscorpora.ru/search-para-pl.html

- So the fall of copulas in nominal clauses could be acknowledged as the starting point for further referential reconstruction

- Missing link probably found?..

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Thanks for watching! ☺