

REVIEWS

Ljudmila Geist. *Die Kopula und ihre Komplemente: Zur Kompositionalität in Kopulasätzen*. Tübingen: Niemeyer, 2006. pp. vii, 195. [*Linguistische Arbeiten*, 502.]

Reviewed by Hagen Pitsch

This monograph (*The Copula and its complements: On compositionality in copular sentences*), based on the author's dissertation (Geist 2004), is concerned with the semantics of Russian copular sentences (CopSs) with nominal predicate expressions (nouns and adjectives). The author assumes compositionality, that the meaning of a complex expression is determined by the meanings of the constituent expressions and the rules for combining them. The focus is on Spanish and Russian, since CopSs in these two languages exhibit morphosyntactic variation which sheds light on the interaction between syntax, semantics, and pragmatics and types of variation observed relate to the same underlying distinction, they promise to shed light on the parameterized realization that language-specific grammars provide with respect to CopSs. Proceeding from a basic claim made by Maienborn (2003), who investigates copula variation (*ser* vs. *estar*) in modern Spanish, the author assumes that the underlying distinction is lexically based. It is, however, influenced by pragmatic factors, as the speaker's perspective on the situation asserted by the CopS is reflected in the specific linguistic means employed. The author claims that Russian makes use of the predicative Instrumental (INS), as opposed to the agreeing Nominative (NOM), to express the same distinction as in modern Spanish, where it is expressed by using distinct copulas—*ser* vs. *estar*. The distinction is assumed to be reference vs. non-reference to a specific topic situation.

Chapter Summary

The book is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 outlines the essential issues of the investigation, namely, the copula and its possible ambiguity, predicate expressions with which the copula cooccurs, and the division of labor between copula and predicate expressions. Chapter 2

is concerned with the question of which types of CopSs should be distinguished. The author suggests four such types, of which predicational CopSs figure most prominently.

Chapter 3 is the most informative and novel part of the monograph. It presents the semantic differences that are discussed in the relevant linguistic literature with respect to the variation between NOM and INS, comparing them with the ones that Maienborn (2003) observes with respect to Spanish CopSs with its two distinct copulas (*ser* vs. *estar*). Following Maienborn, the author aims to show that the various interpretational effects associated with the case variation in Russian (permanent vs. temporary, *pars* vs. *totum*, inherent vs. acquired, etc.) can be reduced to one: namely, that the situation asserted by the CopS can either be marked as a specific topic situation (which may contrast with other situations) or that no such specificity is indicated. Reference to a specific topic situation is claimed to be lexically based but influenced by pragmatic factors, since it reflects the speaker's perspective on the situation in the given context. With respect to Spanish, Maienborn sees the copula *estar* as the linguistic signal for specificity of the topic situation. For Russian, Geist proposes that this specificity is signalled by the INS on the predicate nominal. NOM, on the other hand, is said to be neutral with respect to specificity. The author concludes that Spanish and Russian express the same semantico-pragmatic distinction but that they do so by different linguistic (lexical or morphological) means. But the author also shows that there is an important difference between these languages. While the Spanish copulas *ser* and *estar* can alternate in nearly all possible contexts, the case variation in Russian is subject to structural restrictions which allow NOM or INS on the predicate nominal. In combination with certain pragmatic factors, these restrictions are responsible for the fact that the case variation is truly systematic only with past tense forms of the copula. In all other contexts, structural and/or pragmatic factors either exclude or strongly favor one of the cases.¹

¹ INS is strongly preferred with an imperative, subjunctive, or future tense form. This preference cannot be explained by structural restrictions. Rather, pragmatic factors associated with imperative, subjunctive, or future tense usually make one imply reference to a specific topic situation (contrasting with other conceivable situations), such that the INS will be chosen. Truly structural restrictions seem to be relevant in the case of non-finite forms of the copula (infinitive, gerund, etc.), as the relevant structures exhibit, if any, a PRO subject which is devoid of (NOM) case and is, therefore, unable to

Notably, the specificity reading introduced by the INS affix is neutralized (“switched off”) if there is no possible competition between INS and NOM. Put differently, if INS is the only option, it does not entail the presence of this reading.²

Chapter 4 is concerned with predicate adjectives in Russian. The author focuses on short form adjectives (SFs) as opposed to long form adjectives (LFs) in the NOM.³ After a thorough review leading to the conclusion that SFs display verbal rather than adjectival properties (pp. 144–45), the author argues that SFs are in fact syntactically derived verbs built from adjectival roots or stems (pp. 146–53). LFs, on the other hand, are assumed to be adjectives both lexically and syntactically (their category does not change in the course of syntactic structure building). In order to model this assumption in an elegant way, the author shifts to the framework of Distributed Morphology (DM; see, among others, Halle and Marantz 1993 and Harley and Noyer 1999), which allows her to assume functional heads (x^0) that determine the category of roots or stems which are merged as lexical heads (X^0). Hence, what is proposed is that both SFs and LFs are stored in the lexicon as adjectival roots or stems that enter syntax as A-heads. LFs are said to remain true adjectives because they are selected by a functional adjectival head a^0 in syntax. On the other hand, SFs are assumed to be turned into verbs because they are selected by a functional verbal head v^0 . These considerations amount to the claim that word formation (or at least the determination of lexical category) takes place in syntax. However, the author notes that this does not hold universally (p. 146). In fact, she takes up her initial claim that “irregular” forms are stored in the lexicon, while regular forms are derived from roots (or stems) and the appropriate affixes in syntax. Since she assumes that the for-

function as a local antecedent for the predicate expression. As a consequence, the latter cannot establish agreement (NOM). The only option left is INS, since it is assigned by the copula (or some functional head). That INS is the default case for non-verbal predicates in modern Russian is also claimed by Henschel (1991) and supported by the corpus-based analysis of Krasovitsky et al. (2008), among others.

² See below for further comments concerning cases in which NOM is the only option.

³ There is also the option of LFs-INS, but their choice as opposed to LFs-NOM is assumed to be determined largely by the same factors as in the case of predicate nouns (pp. 124–25). The author qualifies this later by stating that LFs-INS are semantically even more similar to SFs than to LFs-NOM (p. 180). The issue is partially taken up in section 6.2.3.

mation of Russian adjectival forms is a regular process, it is consistent with her locating it in syntax. Without a doubt, this is a promising analysis. One must, however, note that this analysis is in sharp contrast with what she assumes elsewhere in the monograph (see below).

Chapter 5 is concerned in more detail with the Russian zero copula. The author gives evidence for a form in Russian that is phonetically zero, but semantically and syntactically necessary. She discusses why this null element is permitted and to what extent it is deficient compared with its overt counterparts.⁴ Besides the zero copula, the author considers its overt substitute *est'*, which is just as deficient as the zero form but more restricted in its distribution. Chapter 6 mentions aspects that have not been considered and questions left for future research (CopSs in diachrony, related phenomena in other Slavic languages, the verbal lexeme *byt'* as copula vs. auxiliary vs. existential verb, open questions concerning predicate adjectives, etc.). Chapter 7 summarizes and concludes the monograph.

General Evaluation

This monograph is a valuable contribution to the compositional semantics and syntax of Russian CopSs, in particular the NOM~INS variation.⁵ Basing her analysis on a comparison between Spanish and Russian (partially also German), the author proposes that the same underlying distinction, which is assumed to be lexically based but pragmatically determined, is differently realized in these languages. Whereas Spanish encodes reference to a specific topic situation by the choice of the copula *estar* (as opposed to *ser*, which is neutral in this respect), Russian signals this by marking the predicate noun with INS (as opposed to neutral NOM). The relevant semantics, associated with Spanish *estar* and the Russian INS, is referred to as the specificity presupposition (see Maienborn 2003: 157–68).

⁴ Among other facts, the zero copula does not cooccur with predicative INS and is unable to function as an identity copula on its own (to do so, it needs support by the identity marker *èto*).

⁵ Meanwhile, the topic has been taken up in the literature. For example, Markman's (2008) analysis is syntax-based and does not refer to pragmatics. Although it offers a conclusive technical explanation based on the syntactic structures underlying predicative INS as opposed to NOM, it fails, as does Geist in her analysis, to state reasons for the assumed deficiency of the zero copula.

The monograph is thus a valuable resource for researchers interested in parametric variation across languages. For Slavists, it offers a new perspective on the NOM~INS variation in Russian CopSs. Geist's perspective differs from traditional descriptions in highlighting the pragmatic dimension, as well as in taking into account structural restrictions affecting the choice of NOM or INS. Nonetheless, the issue is not completely shifted to pragmatics, since its core is assumed to be in the lexical entry of the INS affix. Consequently, this analysis is not merely a contribution to the syntax-semantics interface, but also to the interaction between semantics and pragmatics. Whereas most traditional analyses reduce the case variation to pure (and mostly purely descriptive) semantics, and while the majority of more recent analyses tend to concentrate on syntax, Geist's attempt is novel in that it does not reduce the phenomenon under discussion to only one module, but claims several linguistic subsystems are involved. The notion of interfaces thus clearly helps us understand many of the peculiarities of case variation in Russian CopSs.

Apart from these points, an analysis that allows us to reduce multiple observable effects to one underlying factor is quite attractive on its own. In the present case, the underlying factor is the presence of the specificity presupposition in the lexical entry of the INS affix (and its absence in that of NOM). Pragmatic factors determine how this underspecified presupposition is ultimately interpreted. This yields the diverse interpretational effects (contrasts) accompanying the case distinction. Although one can find these effects in many descriptions of Russian, one rarely finds them unified. Geist offers exactly such an indication (even if mostly adopted from Maienborn)⁶ and manages to come up with a well-structured and consistent analysis.

Moreover, Geist not only aims at suitable semantics for the Russian predicative INS, but for the INS in general. She proceeds from proposals about the semantics of the Russian INS by Zimmermann (2003), and exploits them to establish a lexical entry for the INS affix which is

⁶Dölling (2005) argues against Maienborn's (2000, 2003) claim that stative verbs including the copula need to be described by means of so-called Kimean states which differ from Davidsonian states/events, as they are not spatio-temporal but merely temporal entities (Maienborn 2003: 116–17). Dölling argues that "there is no reason for excluding a subclass of statives from a Davidsonian account and, after that, for establishing a dichotomy between D[avidsonian]-states and K[imean]-states" (Dölling 2005: 320). Geist adopts Maienborn's analysis without mentioning this objection.

meant to cover the majority of possible occurrences of this (semantic) case (p. 110). While one may argue against specific details of this entry (and against the equation of morphological case markers with case semantics), this is still a remarkable result. Finally, a novel analysis of Russian SF adjectives is offered, and the author reconsiders the necessity of assuming a zero copula in Russian.

These aspects make the monograph worth reading, but there are several points which deserve more detailed discussion.

Specific Comments

1. Complements of the Copula

Concerning the possible types of predicate expressions, the author excludes prepositional phrases (PPs) without full justification. She refers to Eisenberg's (1998) claim (for German) that PPs cooccur with existential but not with copular BE and hence limits her investigation to predicate NPs and APs (p. 11). This may be due to the fact that only NPs and APs exhibit the case variation under discussion.

2. Classification of Copular Sentences

The author distinguishes the following four types of CopSs (p. 61): (i) predicational CopSs, (ii) equative CopSs, (iii) specificational CopSs, and (iv) predicational-identificational CopSs. This classification is based on Higgins (1979) but differs from it with respect to type (iv), which Higgins calls "identificational" CopSs. According to the author, predicational-identificational CopSs are a mixed type, falling into the larger group of predicational CopSs. Assuming a single lexical entry for BE, the author posits an identificational operator (OP) IDENT which modifies the predicational copula and turns it into an equative one. But this holds only with respect to equative CopSs (type ii). Thus it becomes clear in what way predicational-identificational CopSs are a mixed type: while they involve the usual predicational copula, the IDENT OP turns a DP (initially of type <e>) into an IdentDP (type <e,t>). Such an IdentDP can be the complement of the usual predicational BE. It differs from simple predicate NPs in its internal structure (it is referential). Additionally, specificational CopSs (type iii) are said to be a case of predicate inversion of type (iv), as the IdentDP

moves into a sentence initial position. In order to explain this movement, the author appeals to information structure. As the first nominal constituent in specificational sentences must be the topic, the DP is licensed to move.

Geist's classification is empirically and theoretically well founded. The introduction of the IDENT OP makes it especially attractive, as this allows us to get by with a single lexical entry for the copula irrespective of the type of CopS. It should be noted that this model also works if one does not assume DPs in Russian (as argued, e.g., in Bošković 2005, 2010). Certain types of shifting operations would turn predicate (non-referential) NPs of type $\langle e, t \rangle$ into argument (referential) NPs of type $\langle e \rangle$. Subsequently, the latter may be turned into predicate (but referential!) IdentNPs by the IDENT OP and appear as complements of predicate BE. Without further changes, this yields what the author calls predicational-identificational CopSs (type (iv)). Movement of the IdentNP into a sentence-initial position yields then specificational CopSs (type (iii)).

3. Theoretical Frameworks

It is strange that the author refers to two differing theoretical frameworks, Government and Binding (GB) (with some extensions, namely Larson 1988, Pollock 1989, and Baker 1988) and Distributed Morphology (DM). GB is used for the analysis of predicate NPs, DM for predicate APs. Clearly, this kind of theory mix is not what one wants, especially as GB differs from DM in several respects. While GB is mostly representational, DM is explicitly derivational. And while GB usually relates word formation to a morphological module (or to the lexicon), DM shifts morphology into syntax. Nonetheless, one must admit that Geist's mix of theories has some justification since she assumes from the start that stems and affixes are generally combined in syntax in the case of regular (productive) derivations. Only irregular (idiosyncratic) derivations are located in the lexicon. This division of labor between lexicon and syntax is applicable both to (older stages of) GB and to DM. This allows the author to shift from GB to DM in order to analyze

Russian SFs. However, one wonders why the author did not opt for DM from the beginning.⁷

4. Lexical and Syntactic Representation of Verbs

The author assumes that full verbs generally represent a complex of grammatical (morphosyntactic, argument-structural) and descriptive (semantic, thematic) features in their lexical entries. In keeping with this clearly lexicalist view, she claims that such verbs are complex [*v*-V]-heads in syntax. However, one may wonder why it would not have been enough to claim that full verbs are merged in syntax simply as V-heads that contain the whole range of both their grammatical and descriptive content. Perhaps the author analyzes the copula as being a *v*-head that combines with a (lexical) NP or AP. But then again one wonders why the copula, being a lexical verb, cannot simply be the head of a VP, where V^0 is the copula that selects a predicate NP or AP as its complement. This would be quite analogous to a direct object merged in the complement position of a transitive verb (in V^0).

The author resorts to a light v^0 without clear motivation. Her assumption of v^0 is partially dictated by the fact that she needs it in chapter 4, where she argues that Russian SFs behave essentially like verbs and must therefore somehow be supplied with verbal properties. As already pointed out, DM is used to explain these properties of SFs, as the author claims that a “verbalizing” v^0 selects a lexical AP which results in a quasi-verbal SF.

In sum, the way the author represents verbs in syntax follows from her theoretical assumptions, which oscillate between lexicalism, GB, and DM. A postulated v^0 is the common denominator necessary to bring these different frameworks together.

5. Syntax of the Predicative Instrumental

The author assumes that the attachment of the INS affix to some nominal root or stem takes place in syntax, at least in the case of the predicative INS. A noun in the predicative INS is analyzed as a predicate phrase (PrP; see Bowers 1993), the head of which is in fact the INS af-

⁷ Geist (2010) has published a revised version of her analysis of Russian SFs in which DM is the only framework.

fix. The noun root (or stem) in N^0 , which is the head of the complement NP of Pr^0 , is assumed to adjoin to this affix in Pr^0 (head adjunction with subsequent incorporation; see Baker 1988). Although the author claims this is in line with basic GB assumptions, it is far removed from lexicalist theories and already quite close to DM (see above).

On the assumption that the formation of INS-nouns is a “regular” derivational operation, one might agree with the author that it takes place in syntax. The question immediately arises: What syntactic configurations underlie other case forms (Genitive, Dative, Locative, etc.)? Also: Should the INS affix generally be analyzed as the head of a PrP ? At least in contexts other than predication, it might be merged as some other functional head. One could also treat the INS affix as a mere (formal) morphological marker that cannot be identified with any functional head at all. Be that as it may, it is possible that these syntactic differences are related to the distinction of semantic vs. structural cases, and this is probably what the author has in mind (see p. 113, fn. 16). Nonetheless, the author’s assumptions concerning the affix of the predicative INS still force one to assume that at least the affixes of semantic cases are functional heads that enrich a nominal root or stem with some semantic information. Surely a more desirable solution would be to represent all cases, be they semantic or structural, in a uniform way.

Furthermore, the author’s view that predication in CopSs exhibits two fundamentally different syntactic configurations is somewhat surprising. While a CopS with NOM (which is certainly an instance of predication) is said to lack a PrP altogether, a CopS with INS is directly built on a PrP (p. 112). Recall that Bowers (1993), whom the author refers to, claims that PrP underlies *any* predication. A natural assumption is that it also underlies any CopS. Curiously, the author does not even assume a PrP in Spanish CopSs, regardless of whether they feature *ser* or *estar*. One gets the impression that only Russian CopSs with predicative INS are regarded by the author as instances of predication.

It seems that the author needs Pr^0 primarily as the syntactic location for the INS affix. Other authors (Bailyn and Rubin 2001, Bailyn 2001, Markman 2008, among others) also assume a PrP in structures with predicative INS but do not go so far as to identify its head with the INS affix, nor do they exclude its presence in cases involving NOM. Under the author’s analysis, NOM-nouns are in fact identical to syntactic NPs, while INS-nouns are $PrPs$. It is hard to see what role mor-

phology is assigned under such an approach. Several of the problems mentioned seem to be avoidable if one treats all instances of case marking in a unified way, be it along the lines of a lexicalist Minimalism, where lexical items enter syntax fully inflected, or DM, where morphology is shifted to syntax and each case (affix) can be represented by a specialized functional item.

6. Structural Restrictions

There is another point which is left open. While the author's investigation of Russian CopSs where INS and NOM compete with each other is thorough, less attention is paid to cases of CopSs where there can only be NOM, i.e., in the present tense with the zero copula (and also with *est'* and *sut'*).

As the author points out in the course of her treatment of the zero copula, present-tense CopSs with a predicate noun in the NOM may have the same specificity reading as those (past-tense) CopSs with a predicate noun in the INS (p. 175). Hence, NOM does not entail the absence of the specificity reading. However, under the author's analysis there can be no specificity presupposition because it is lexically anchored in the INS affix. The only way to save these claims is to assume that NOM is indeed neutral with respect to the specificity of the topic situation (as the author repeats several times), from which it follows that it does not in principle exclude a specificity reading. If INS is structurally blocked due to the assumed deficiency of the zero copula, this kind of neutrality is the only way to explain the presence of the interpretational effects, which are otherwise related to the presence of the INS affix. Clearly, they can only be due to contextual factors. In other words, if a CopS featuring NOM denotes a specific topic situation, this can only be due to (pure) pragmatics. The predicative INS serves, then, to *explicitly* indicate reference to a specific topic situation, but if it is blocked for structural reasons, this does not mean that that interpretation is excluded. Apart from a minor hint (p. 86), the author does not make this explicit.

In sum, Geist's analysis is a coherent picture of the overall situation in Russian. If NOM and INS compete, the presence of INS explicitly indicates reference to a specific topic situation. If NOM is blocked structurally, INS is the only option and this indication is neutralized. If on the other hand INS is blocked for structural reasons, NOM is the

only option. It follows that reference to a specific topic situation cannot be made because of the lexically represented specificity presupposition. Nonetheless, it is possible, but only if the speaker's intentions and/or the context provide sufficient evidence for such an interpretation.

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