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THE CASE OF THE INVARIANT CASE RECONSIDERED

1.1 Practically all modern attempts to describe morphological case systems have been influenced by Jakobson (1936) and its revised version, Jakobson (1958). The impact of Hjelmslev (1935/1937) has not been as profound but his theory of morphological (i.e. surface) case has become a source of inspiration for various localistically orientated models of semantic deep cases, such as Anderson (1971; 1976). Since Hjelmslev's theory constitutes a kind of pendant to Jakobson's, it deserves to be treated together with the more influential Jakobsonian model.

1.2 Jakobson's ideas have become a kind of Slavistic folklore, taken for granted and even repeated, occasionally, without informing the reader who is the real author of the description (e.g. Barnetová et al. 1979:295–304) or with merely making a vague allusion as to the original source (e.g. Sørensen 1973:181–193). At times the folklore has turned into something I lack a polite name for. For example, Chvany (1986) is a strange mixture of valuable observations with exercises in a sort of "cubology", i.e. lengthy discussions based on the accidental fact that the number of Russian cases recognized by Jakobson is eight and that the second version of Jakobson's case model is representable as a cube.

1.3 On the other hand, the very idea of an invariant case meaning has been condemned as fallacious by several modern linguists, e.g. Fillmore (1968:10–12) or by Wierzbicka (1980:XIV–XVI, 157f., etc.). However, various case grammars have not succeeded in presenting an alternative superior to models of morphological cases. And Wierzbicka is repeatedly contradicting her own basic claim according to which there is a number of interrelated, but distinct invariant case meanings for every morphological

case: "She claims that the /Russian/ instrumental does not have a constant meaning of its own, yet insists that where there is a choice of case expressions, the choice of the instrumental rather than some other case is determined by semantic factors." (Kilby 1986:329) In other words, Wierzbicka resorts to the rejected idea of one invariant meaning per case for explanation!

Thus it may be in place to take a new, unbiased look at Jakobson's and Hjelmslev's case theories with neither uncritical reverence nor summary condemnation. However, it seems necessary to start with commentaries on two notions: the morphological case itself and the concept of privative oppositions in the original structuralist sense of the word.

2. Morphological case

2.1 In Bílý & Pettersson (1986) the authors tried to present an explicit definition of the morphological case. The definition hinged on the flexion of the head noun in a noun phrase. Thus it encountered difficulties with such languages where there are some few residuals of noun flexion only. In languages as German or Rumanian it is not primarily the head noun that is inflected. Instead the flexion rests on other parts of speech (word classes) — adjectives and, above all, articles. I have devised a new definition that separates genuine case morphemes from other means of "NP-inflexion", such as prepositions, postpositions, and "impositions":

A case marker is an overt and bound morpheme (or an exponent of such a morpheme), obligatorily attached to and determining a stem belonging to a lexically distinct part of speech (word class), prototypically a noun (substantive) stem, via inflexion.

2.2 The new definition does not have to search for any emergency solutions to be able to cope with languages as Rumanian. At the same time the dichotomy between case languages and caseless (filter) languages is upheld. With this definition the difference between case markers and

positionally defined morphemes of "NP-inflexion" is made more explicit. A preposition is placed initially in a noun phrase, a postposition (as the quasi-case morphemes in Turkish or in Mongolian) is placed last in the NP, etc. (Cf. Lewis 1967; Poppe 1951, 1954.) This offers different possibilities as regards the definition of the relevant NP to which a non-case marker is to be attached. Cf. *Chomsky's and Halle's theories* vs. *Chomsky and Halle's theories*. Either every noun is taken as constituting a minimal NP to which the postposition (the so-called s-genitive) is attached, or the whole coordination is taken as one NP consisting of a noun plus a noun. Then the postposition is attached last in this larger NP. Similarly: *He lived in London and in Paris* or *He lived in London and Paris*.

2.3 The positional, not word-class defined, nature of inflexional markers other than case morphemes also explains the phenomena of multiple postpositions in, say, Mongolian, as well as multiple prepositions in Russian (*из-под, из-за*) or Swedish (*underifrån, inifrån*). A rule of the form "Put a preposition/postposition first/last in the noun phrase" is apparently recursive. The first or the last position is a relative concept. A rule of the form "Attach a case morpheme to all uninflected stems of the word class X, Y, and Z" is guaranteedly non-recursive.

2.4 On the other hand, neither the old, nor the new definition can separate case markers from certain other markers such as grammatical number, gender, and species (definiteness vs. indefiniteness). The task of identifying case morphemes is far from trivial (cf. also Mel'čuk 1986) and I intend to return to this problem elsewhere.

3. Structuralist privative oppositions

3.1 A privative opposition in classical structuralist terminology is an opposition in which one member is positively characterized by the presence of a feature, while the other member is characterized by the absence

of the feature in question, i.e. nothing is said about the feature. For example, whereas the word *bitch* may be analyzed as having the same semantic content as the word *dog* plus the extra positive feature /female/, the word *dog* is unspecified as to the feature /female/. The member of the opposition that is characterized by the presence of the feature, is called marked, whereas the member characterized by the absence of the feature in question is called unmarked. In other words, "unmarked" means that nothing is said about the feature in question. It does not mean: it is not true what is expressed by the feature. Consequently, /+A/ (= marked) means: it is true that A, while /-A/ (= unmarked) means: nothing is said whether A or non-A.

3.2 In specific contexts, when opposed to the marked members, the unmarked members of such oppositions become interpreted as if they really were negatively specified. Thus it is possible to ask *Is it a dog or a bitch?*

It follows, as I pointed out in Bílý (1986:35), that the marked member of pure privative semantic oppositions tends to belong to an endangered species, being genuinely optional (except for the contrastive contexts).

3.3 In Bílý (1984, 1986, and esp. 1987) I have presented two criteria for the recognition of privative oppositions. (The last two papers of mine employ and develop the methodological approach of Kučera 1984.) Since the content of an unmarked expression is merely less specific (i.e. the meaning is vaguer) than the content of the corresponding marked one, there must exist a necessary logical relationship between the two members of a privative semantic opposition.

"The first precondition for the existence of a semantic privative opposition is the implicational relationship between the marked and the unmarked member of the postulated opposition, which makes possible the substitution of the marked expression by the unmarked

one. If an expression is claimed to be semantically marked, the truth of the logical proposition corresponding to any sentence where the marked member is used must imply the truth of the logical proposition corresponding to the sentence where the unmarked member of the opposition is used. This is not merely a matter of a linguistic opinion; this precondition concerns the elementary logical demands on any thought activity with scientific ambitions. Either the precondition is fulfilled, or the structuralist notions of semantic markedness vs. unmarkedness are not what they have always been claimed to be and all the numerous instances of supposed semantic privative oppositions are both ill-defined and unverifiable.

There is, of course, one restriction on the necessary implicational relationships. These are excluded in expressions contrasting the unmarked and the marked member of a privative opposition. (Cf. the above-mentioned **Ěto ne osěl, a osěl.*) On the other hand, such contexts are suitable for the other way of testing the genuineness of privative oppositions. As we have already mentioned, the unmarked member of a privative opposition that is contrasted with the marked member is interpreted as if it were marked in the opposite way. (Cf., again, *Ěto ne osěl, a oslica.*)" (Bílý 1987:146) "However, the possibility of contrasts in question is a linguistically motivated condition on the existence of privative oppositions. It is not a condition of the same absolute weight as the necessary implicational relationship. /.../ While the existence of implicational relationships /.../ is an absolute matter of valid logical deductions, the criterion of contrasts is a mere inductive condition inferred from actual observations of linguistic data." (Bílý 1987:154)

3.4 The logical entailment is obviously untrue for many semantic privative oppositions proposed. To resort to the Russian aspectual system, the proposition expressed by (1) below does entail the proposition correspond-

ing to (2), but the logical entailment of truth for a proposition that corresponds to a sentence with an imperfective verb is limited to the class of verbs that Vendler (1967) called "accomplishments" – cf. sentences (1) and (2). On the other hand, neither the proposition underlying (3) does entail (4), nor does (5) entail (6):

- (1) Иван прочитал статью.
- (2) Иван читал статью.
- (3) Иван махнул рукой.
- (4) Иван махал рукой.
- (5) Иван приехал вчера.
- (6) Иван приезжал вчера.

(In fact, there is no logical entailment for negated verbs of accomplishment, either. The truth of the logical proposition underlying *Иван не прочитал эту книгу* does not at all imply the truth of the proposition corresponding to *Иван не читал эту книгу*.)

- 3.5 "Our second criterion also offers a solution to a peculiarity encountered now and then in interpretations of privative pairs. For example, Jakobson (1958, 148) claims that *nedostatok čaja* means only 'shortcoming of the tea', while *nedostatok čajju* means 'shortage of tea'. Of course, this is not quite correct. The meaning of the marked member of the opposition (with the partitive genitive) is rendered correctly, however *nedostatok čaja* on its own means even 'shortage of tea'. Jakobson's mistake is caused by the very operation of comparison. By making a thought operation of contrasting *nedostatok čaja* with *nedostatok čajju*, he must have created a virtual contrast of the sort discussed, where the unmarked member of an opposition is interpreted as if it were negatively marked, i.e. in the example quoted the contrasted *nedostatok čaja* must be interpreted in a way different from the marked *nedostatok čajju*." (Bílý 1987:166)

In other words, the partitive genitive in Russian is a genuine marked

member of a privative opposition, i.e. it is substitutable by the unmarked common genitive. (All this is true under the provision that the correctness of *хочется чайка, кофейка, сахарка* is approved. According to Zaliznjak 1973:80, only the partitive u-genitives are used by Russians for diminutive nouns with suffixes *-ок/-ёк* in the context in question. However, Zaliznjak himself comes to the conclusion that *хочется чайка*, etc., should be considered grammatically correct. And it is meaningful to differentiate between grammatically correct but unused vs. ungrammatical constructions. To resort to another example with Russian cases, the addressee of a letter stands in the dative case, but the nominative is merely rare, marginal, but not ungrammatical according to my informants.)

3.6 In fact, the criterion of logical entailment is still insufficient. It must be completed with my original idea from Bílý (1984:20f.) according to which the unmarked member of a privative opposition can always substitute the marked one (after the necessary modifications concerning the accompanying morphology – cf. *Наша ослица умерла* vs. *Наш осёл умер* – and except for the contrastive contexts). There are instances of claimed privative opposition where the criterion of entailment cannot be applied. For example, Jakobson (1936:280f.) claims the existence of the pair Locative I – Locative II, where Locative II is considered marked. Jakobson (1958:148f.) claims that it is Locative I that is marked, while Locative II is unmarked. Neither claim may be confirmed/refuted by the criterion of entailment, because there are many nouns in contemporary Russian where Locative I and Locative II are thoroughly uninterchangeable (cf. AG 1980:488f; Galkina–Fedoruk 1964:52f.):

- (7) Он стоял на мосту.
- (8) *Он стоял на мосте.
- (9) Он говорил о мосте.
- (10) *Он говорил о мосту.

Similarly, the original criterion of the factual substitutability of the un-

marked expression for the marked one (with accompanying morphological changes) is also necessary for the Russian privative pair the vocative (marked) – the nominative (unmarked). The existence of a distinct vocative form of nouns belonging to the so-called second declension (*Mam!*, *Mum!*, etc.) is largely ignored by Russian grammars, but such Russian vocatives are not less real because of that. However, being an asyntactic case, the vocative has no counterpart in a corresponding logical proposition. The only way how to test whether the vocative and the nominative constitute a genuine privative opposition is to check whether all the marked vocatives may be substituted by the unmarked nominatives. As all occurrences of *Mam!*, *Mum!*, etc. are substitutable by *Mama!*, *Muma!*, etc., the claimed privative opposition does exist.

4. Hjelmslev's case model

4.1 Hjelmslev (1935/1937) established a system of logically based semantic features, sublogical as he preferred to call them himself, necessarily present in all languages. Their presence follows from the fact that the localistic distinctions they are based upon are expressible in any language in some way or other. The features are privative by nature. Hjelmslev distinguishes three sorts of oppositions:

- a. contradictory oppositions, i.e. contrasts of the "tertium non datur" type, which can be exemplified by the contrast between *alive* and *non-alive*,
- b. contrary oppositions, i.e. contrasts that do not cover all alternatives, e.g. *red* and *non-red*, which are meaningful in the limited domain of colours only,
- c. oppositions which are neither specified as contradictory nor as contrary.

4.2 The different privative oppositions may, according to Hjelmslev, exist in three dimensions, in combination with the oppositions constituting his case model. The dimensions are *direction*, *coherence*, and *subjectivity*,

respectively. These dimensions are hierarchically ordered so that direction is necessarily present in all languages, coherence is very often present, and subjectivity relatively seldom – in fact only in two languages found by Hjelmslev, viz. the East Caucasian languages Tabasaran and Lak (Hjelmslev 1937:1).

The dimension of direction is easiest to understand in its pure localistic shape. It indicates a direction of a movement towards something.

Coherence is a dimension, exemplified by Hjelmslev with the concrete localistic meaning of prepositions. It has to do with the spatial relation of one object with regard to another object. For example, the English preposition *in* bears the meaning of positive coherence, *between* carries that of zero, i.e. unorientated coherence, and *away (from)* signals negative coherence.

The last dimension, that of subjectivity, has to do with spatial situations in relation to a thinking observer. The prepositions *before* and *behind* are considered as related in their meaning to the thinking observer, while *above* and *under* are said to be unrelated to the position of the observer. At least these concrete spatial examples of Hjelmslev are hopelessly geocentric. There is no objectively given above and under relationship in space generally. On the other hand, the naive language learner could possibly perceive the world in this geocentric way, and language and its categories *per se* could be moulded on the actual relationships holding in the present world.

4.3 The three dimensions discussed above, each with three kinds of oppositions, create the logical limit for case differentiation, viz. six (= three marked + three unmarked cases) to the power of three dimensions, i.e. 216 possible cases. This number of logically determined overt and covert cases is constant, but it may vary in magnitude with respect to overt markers. The greatest number of overt case markers found by Hjelmslev himself in a natural language is 52, in Tabasaran. (It should be observed

that Tabasaran is typically NP-inflecting and is thus, according to my criteria, a doubtful case language. This holds true also of Lak and Avar, languages which are extensively treated by Hjelmslev to back up his theory.)

4.4 Hjelmslev's construction is beautiful. However, beauty by itself cannot legitimate a linguistic model. It has to be consistent, and, what is more important, it must not conceal inadvertencies or other products of sportive fancy. It turns out that Hjelmslev's model does not match such demands. When, for example, a case marker of a prepositionless NP in a particular language covers more than one of the postulated combinations of the Hjelmslevian semantic features, there is no way to avoid the embarrassing conclusion that an instance of obligatory case syncretism has been encountered. In other words, one overt case marker must stand for as many distinct covert cases as there are postulated feature combinations expressed by the overt case marker in question. This follows from what Hjelmslev later (Hjelmslev 1943:37) formulated as the glossematic virtuality principle: elements that have once been set up with the aid of commutation have virtual existence, even if they are not present in reality. The solution Hjelmslev chooses for avoiding this difficulty, viz. to declare that some cases are dominant vis-à-vis others, is just to sweep the problem under the carpet.

4.5 Now, the theory is even more cumbersome. In reality, neither the figure nor the number of possible cases assumed by Hjelmslev is quite correct. The dimensions may be either positively, negatively, or zero orientated. That is to say, if, for example, the dimension of direction is positively orientated, it indicates the direction towards something, while, if negatively faced, it shows the very same direction as going from something. If zero orientated, finally, it simply expresses lack of orientation with respect to direction.

Consider, for instance, the dimension of direction. Hjelmslev takes it to be positive in Tabasaran, whereas it is negatively specified in Lak. On the other hand, the dimension of coherence is orientated negatively in Tabasaran and positively in Lak (Hjelmslev 1935:146, 166). Thus, there is no theoretical hindrance, apart from common sense, against a drastic increase of theoretically possible cases. One is free to treble the number of imaginable privative oppositions of a dimension by acknowledging the coexistence of all three orientations, which would lead to the possibility of several thousands of separate cases ($18 \times 18 \times 18 = 5832!$).

Apparently, Hjelmslev's common sense exercised some conscious or unconscious censorship on his description. Therefore the number of distinct cases that can be inferred directly from Hjelmslev's text remain 216 ($6 \times 6 \times 6$) and the varying orientation of the dimensions – and the consequent manifold increased number of cases – is not taken into consideration.

4.6 Many a reader will probably object to this summary of Hjelmslev's theory as being unfair or overly negative. However, I am not beating a straw-horse. When all is said and done, this is what can be deduced from Hjelmslev's text, if anything substantial may be obtained from it whatsoever.

True, Hjelmslev's (1935:92f.) criticism of Noréen (1904:178ff.) for mixing up the notion of status (semantic role, deep case) with the grammatical category of case is quite justified. And obviously Hjelmslev recognizes a difference between the morphological category of case, and prepositions. His own definition of the case category is as follows: "/Cas est/ une catégorie qui exprime une relation entre deux objets." (Hjelmslev 1935:96) According to his own words, it is "juste et contient tout l'essentiel". However, he also admits that it is not definitive, because it fits equally well for the category of prepositions and that of verbal voice. Nevertheless, relying on this definition he becomes able to exclude the vocative as a

case: it does not express a relation between two objects. That is to say, the vocative cannot be syntactically dependent, and hence it is no case! On the other hand, a Latin adverb such as *celeriter* 'fast' in *Puer celeriter currit* 'The boy is running fast' is a case form, since the ending *-iter* expresses a relation between two abstract objects, viz. the running and the fastness of the action.

4.7 An adverb may thus express case. This is due to the fact that Hjelmslev denies case to be a nominal category. Case is for Hjelmslev simply a flexional category, a category which is simultaneously paradigmatic and syntagmatic (Hjelmslev 1935:105). For this reason also verbal voice must be understood as a kind of case. Hjelmslev rejects this consequence, but he is not able to advise a way out of the dilemma. He is content with saying that the risk of mixing up the two flexional categories concerned, that of case and that of voice, is minimal.

Even prepositions will be flexional markers according to this view. Yet they are not: prepositions constitute a lexical, not a grammatical category! Given the idea is maintained that case is not a category opposed to NP-flexional categories such as prepositions or postpositions, Kurilowicz (1949:24) of course is entirely right. A Latin prepositional phrase such as *extra urbem* 'outside the city (acc.)' should be interpreted as rendering a structure with a lexical kernel *urb* + a compound morpheme *extra ... em*. Thus there is no real point in Hjelmslev's argumentation.

5. Jakobson's (1936) model

5.1 For Jakobson, each Russian case has a general and intrinsically universal meaning (*Gesamtbedeutung*). These invariant meanings must be distinguished both from the main meanings (*Hauptbedeutungen*) of the cases, which are language specific, and from particular meanings (*Sonderbedeutungen*), which are derivable from the general, i.e. the invariant meanings. The latter can be determined with respect to four parameters,

viz. direction (Bezug), scope (Umfang), periphery (periphere Stellung), and configuration (Gestaltung). The enumerated features are not properly defined but rather estimated as to their relevance for distinguishing particular cases in privative oppositions said to hold between them.

Every case language has an absolutely unmarked case, serving as a point of departure for determining the general meaning both of the unmarked case *per se* and the general meanings of the other cases. Though he never explicitly says so, it can be deduced from the presentation that Jakobson considers caseless languages to be languages with one unmarked case. In Russian, this absolutely unmarked case is N, which gets its general meaning from being unmarked as opposed to A with respect to the feature $+/-$ direction, to I with respect to the feature $+/-$ periphery, to GI with respect to the feature $+/-$ scope, and to GII with respect to the feature $+/-$ configuration. The following figure, taken from Jakobson (1936:281), represents the semantic oppositions making up the Russian case system.

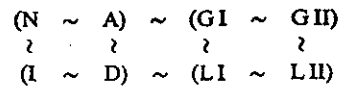


Figure 1.

For each opposition, the marked cases are placed to the right and/or beneath the unmarked ones. N, A, GI, and GII are thus unmarked with respect to the feature periphery. All cases except GII and LII are unmarked with respect to the feature configuration. N, A, I, and D are unmarked with respect to the feature scope, whereas only N and I are unmarked for direction.

5.2 That GI is marked for scope means, according to Jakobson, that it

expresses a limit for the participation of the denoted object in a given situation. N may but does not obligatorily express such a limit. For example, the sentence 'You need matches' has at least two Russian equivalents:

(11) Нужно спичек.

(12) Нужны спички.

The sentence with GI implies that there is a lack of matches, while the sentence with N does not imply such a lack. It would rather be used in a situation where you want to say that matches are pretty good things or that life would have been more difficult, had matches not been invented.

5.3 The meaning of the accusative is that of direction. A noun marked for A will therefore always be perceived of as being acted upon or affected by some other entity. It then follows that A by necessity implies subordination. Due to Jakobson, A as opposed to N signalizes the existence of a hierarchy of case meanings, where N by implication occupies the leading position in the hierarchy. Thus the Russian sentence

(13) Солдата ранило в бок.

simply implies a deleted subject as opposed to:

(14) Солдат ранен в бок.

where the N noun, so to speak, is the superordinate term.

5.4 The instrumental is among the cases that are marked for periphery. As opposed to N this means, as stated by Jakobson, that the speaker evaluates the object in question as something dispensable. Compare

(15) Течением отнесло лодку.

(16) Течение отнесло лодку.

The semantics of the two sentences is almost identical. The only difference is that (15) reports the carrier of the action as an adjunct of the predicate; thus the I noun could be done away with. In (16), on the other hand, the N noun is a true subject.

5.5 The meaning of the feature configuration is demonstrated with the parallel oppositions GI (genitive) – GII (partitive) and LI (prepositional) – LII (genuine locative). Consider the following minimal pairs:

(17) Он не пил коньяка.

(18) Он не пил коньяку.

(19) Сколько красоты в лесе.

(20) Сколько красоты в лесу.

(17) implies, according to Jakobson, that the drinker did not appreciate the cognac, whereas (18) simply denies the action of drinking. In (19) the forest is taken as a kind of object, a carrier of the property of beauty, while in (20) it is a mere location of the beauty talked about.

On the other hand, Jakobson does not tell the whole truth about (17) and (18). The unmarked GI has a less specific meaning than the marked GII. Consequently, GI covers the meaning of GII, which means that (17) perfectly well could be used to convey the content of (18). (Cf. 3.5) And the pair LI–LII cannot constitute a genuine privative opposition, since these two cases have a partially overlapping distribution, but far from all marked LII's are substitutable by LI's (cf. 3.7).

5.6 What Jakobson does in Jakobson (1936:277–281 and 1958:147f.) is to show that GII and LII are distinct grammatical cases different from GI and the LI, without giving any proof of the privative opposition's existence. For example,

(21) Ищут чего–то в снегу,

i.e. the snow is the location of the search,

(22) Ищут чего–то в снеге,

i.e. snow is the carrier of the property being sought.

6. Jakobson's (1958) model

6.1 The problem with Jakobson is on the one hand the elusive character of the features, and on the other hand the predicted privative oppositions

and markedness relations. The examples above are comprehensible, but now and then the postulated oppositions and relations are so far-fetched that they actually run counter to the intuitions of native speakers. At times they are merely claimed to exist. Volodin (1974:274) points out that Jakobson now and then commits violence on the Russian language in construing example pairs like

(23) ?цветы без запаха

(24) В букете нет цветов без сладкого или горького запаха.

(25) ?в песку

(26) в золотом песке

According to Volodin the question-marked expressions do not sound Russian. At any rate it is bad Russian.

The arbitrariness of Jakobson's approach was confirmed by the revised version of Jakobson (1936), viz. Jakobson (1958), where a radical change of the whole description, the number of features, and their place within the system was made, although the original way of reasoning was kept practically intact.

6.2 The model is represented by a cube (Figure 2), the corners of which stand for the eight Russian cases. The right angles of the lines representing privative oppositions between individual cases, limit the number of such oppositions for a given case to three. Only three features are needed, and the feature *configuration* of Jakobson (1936) has been left out. As a consequence, however, the model cannot provide actually existing oppositions a proper place within the system, while, on the other hand, it creates dubious oppositions that otherwise would not have been recognizable.

The four bottom cases of the cube are marked /+periphery/, Russian /+периферийность/, while the four back cases are marked /+scope, Ru. /+объемность/, the four front cases being unmarked for this feature. The four cases of the right side of the cube, finally, are marked /+direction/, Ru. /+направленность/, while the four left-side cases are unmark-

impossible to claim that /+direction/, which is always positively orientated as a direction towards the referent of the NP in question in Jakobson's description, is present in the use of attributive genitives of subject: *желание героя*. It would have been much more logical to say that GI is unmarked for direction, while GII is negatively marked for –Direction, but that would have destroyed Jakobson's elegant case cube. The only reason for Jakobson to postulate such unintuitive and implausible relationships was his inclination to cut down the expenditure at all costs. Jakobson felt forced to 'fold' the original model in such a way that a cube would be obtained with corners representing the cases, and three features would suffice to make a unique identification of each case. As a consequence, Russian has to possess just eight cases – no more and no less.

6.4 As to the opposition between the corresponding peripheral cases, I (unmarked for direction) vs. D (marked for direction), Jakobson himself does not present a single instance of a pair of expressions differing only via the presence of a D form (marked for the directional meaning) vs. an I form (unmarked for the directional meaning), though it is possible to construct such minimal pairs:

(27) Письмо послано отцу.

(28) Письмо послано отцом.

Jakobson's own comparisons (made in passing) concern some non-genuine minimal pairs, such as

(29) Он нам не судья.

(30) Он ростом богатырь.

(Jakobson 1936:271) On the other hand, Jakobson (1936:273f.) shows that in certain similar constructions the claimed marked D is replaced by I without any substantial change in meaning, for example

(31) Я радуюсь твоей радости 'I am happy at (i.e. because of) your happiness (D)'

32) Я радуюсь твоей радостью 'I am happy at (i.e. share in) your happiness (1)'

6.5 The reduction of four features into three that are mathematically necessary for a binary description of a system consisting of eight elements is something typical even of post-Jakobsonian case descriptions. In order to achieve the maximal economy of case descriptions, the number n of features used is given by the formula

$$2^{n-1} < x \leq 2^n$$

where x is the number of cases in the language described. In other words, an effort is usually made to achieve an ideal, most economic model with a minimal number of features necessary to differentiate between the given number of elements.

Actually, I find it difficult to understand why the frugality of Jakobson's case model has become a rule in so many later descriptions. The father of privative oppositions in phonology, N. S. Trubetzkoy, would not dream of striving to reduce the number of distinctive features of a phonological system consisting of thirty-two phonemes to five just because such a binary description with five features is theoretically possible. After all, it is an established fact that there is redundancy in natural languages.

Consider in this connection Fant's warning against an application of the economy principle at any cost:

"This requirement can come in conflict with the principle of consistency, i.e. there is the risk that one or more minimal pairs in which a feature is supposed to operate do not conform sufficiently well with the rest of the system. Seemingly elegant solutions may thus have to be rejected because they do not apply in specific contexts." (Fant 1973:153)

Notice that these words were originally directed to Jakobson himself (To Honor Roman Jakobson 1967) with respect to their joint work Jakobson, Fant & Halle (1952).

6.6 The distinctive features of Jakobson and his followers are used in order to discover the invariant case meanings, i.e. the *Gesamtbedeutungen*. The features themselves, however, seem to reflect some kind of intuitive categorization of grammatical cases, based on prototypical semantic roles corresponding to particular grammatical cases. In other words, in spite of the endeavour to find the invariant meanings, one nevertheless searches for these invariants by way of an implicit analysis of an assumed one-to-one correspondence between a given case and a semantic role. This equals an analysis in terms of core or main meanings – Jakobson's *Hauptbedeutungen*.

Only by being aware of the true intention of a distinctive feature analysis in Jakobsonian terms, we may grasp the postulation of, say, the */+direction/* feature of all Russian accusatives. The Jakobsonian A is simply the case typically corresponding to some sort of semantic object, patient, goal or whatever one may call it. The main meaning of his A, being the grammatical case of the semantic object and thus carrying the feature */+direction/*, is then overgeneralized into an invariant meaning. When an instance of the Russian accusative is encountered where no such correspondence between the accordingly identified case meaning and the role of patient exists, one will stick to the same distinctive feature for the sake of descriptive uniformity. Obviously, there is no way to verify the relevance of such an arbitrarily ascribed feature. A temporal adverbial in the accusative as in

(33) *Весь день он писал эту статью.*

is, without any support, claimed to carry the feature */+direction/*. This is nothing but an *ad hoc* postulation.

The weakness of Jakobson's case description is its lack of consistency. Jakobson is a master of conjuring tricks; he presents some plausible semantic oppositions, plausible as long as objective criteria for the recognition of privative oppositions are not applied. While the reader is enchanted by the sophistication of Jakobson's description, Jakobson smuggles into

the case system more and more arbitrary oppositions, the only purpose of which is to make the description more elegant still.

6.7 Pauliny (1943:30–56), the remarkable Slovak case grammarian working 25 years before Fillmore, uses concepts of the Prague school such as privative oppositions and marked vs. unmarked features to describe the case system of Slovak in terms of oppositions between the main meanings. For Pauliny a typical nominative expresses an active animate participant in an action, whereas a typical dative expresses an animate about whose active participation in the action nothing is said. In contrast, a typical accusative expresses a corresponding inanimate participant, while an instrumental expresses an active inanimate participant. A genitive does not say anything about the distinction animate – inanimate, nor about active participation or non-participation. Finally, a locative expresses non-participation and is unmarked for animacy. Thus Pauliny deviates from the letter of Jakobson's model but makes the implicit spirit of Jakobson explicit.

7. The principal weak points of Jakobson's models

7.1 Wierzbicka (1980:XIVff.) maintains that features such as /+periphery/ are even less self-explanatory and verifiable than the traditional labels of supposed case meanings. This is no less true of the wholly abstract oppositions a1 vs. A1, a2 vs. A2, and a3 vs. A3 of the glossematic variety of Jakobson presented in Sørensen (1973:181–193). Wierzbicka (1980:XV) points out that a "person who does not know Russian cannot learn to use the Russian cases on the basis of Jakobson's formulas". This objection is not wholly relevant, since the theoretical value of a grammatical description is not immediately dependent upon its didactic advantages. But Wierzbicka goes on to demonstrate the impossibility of making correct predictions with Jakobson's formulas with examples like

(34) Иван убил Петра топором.

where one might agree that I is used because the axe is seen as peripheral to the action, and

(35) *Давид убил Голяфа пращей.

where the usage of the instrumental, based on the same motivation, would lead to a grammatical error. Similarly, compare the correct Polish and Czech sentences

(36a) Jan wyskoczył oknem.

(36b) Jan vyskočil oknem.

where the instrumental must be used for the adverbial and the incorrect Russian equivalent

(36c) *Иван выпрыгнул окном.

(36c) is grammatical in the sense 'John jumped out with the aid of the window'. The grammatical Russian equivalent to (36a) and (36b) is, of course,

(37) Иван выпрыгнул из-за окна.

Wierzbicka is certainly in her right to ask why the Russian window is not equally as peripheral as the Polish or Czech ones, considering the high degree of similarity of the Slavic case systems.

7.2 Wierzbicka also argues that Jakobson's distinction between the general meaning (*Gesamtbedeutung*) and the particular meanings (*Sonderbedeutungen*) is not sufficient. The latter are regarded by Jakobson as positional variants of the former, i.e. of the invariant. However, similar contexts in different languages do not always create identical particular meanings. In other words, the particular meanings are not mere functions of invariants and specific contexts, but, according to Wierzbicka, constitute facts of the language system itself.

7.3 Jakobson's case meanings are certainly vague. This deficit, however, could be remedied, since they are based on intrinsically sound observations on the use and function of the Russian cases. More alarming is the fact

that the very concept of privative opposition in descriptions of morphological semantics remains fuzzy.

As already indicated, N is the absolutely unmarked case in both versions of Jakobson's theory. This idea can be traced back to Peškovskij (1920:118) and Karcevskij (1927:18). Through Jakobson's endorsement it has become an unquestioned truth. It can be found even in those descriptions of Slavic case systems that have retained privative oppositions but, otherwise, made substantial revisions of the Jakobsonian system, e.g. in Miko (1968), who treats the Slovak nominative as the completely unmarked case in a description based on privative oppositions, but in other respects Miko's oppositions have no similarity to Jakobson's original proposal, or in Oliverius' (1972) description of the Russian case system. Also Běličová (1982:40) characterizes the Czech and Russian nominative as the minimally semantically loaded case.

The problem with all such descriptions is that the concept of unmarked member of a privative opposition in the semantics of grammatical case, when all is said and done, seems to be an empty notion. There is no possibility either to verify or to falsify its correctness.

7.4 Kučera's conclusion is that

"the markedness analysis, advocated by the Prague school, is really not based on the logical property of inclusion at all, but is essentially functional, having to do simply with the semantic scope of the expression. Consider the problem of tense /.../. Clearly, the implication that an assertion in the past (the marked tense) entails the truth of the assertion in the present, is not tenable. What is claimed, rather, is that the "unmarked" tense, i.e. the morphological present, can function in a wider variety of functions than the past tense. /.../ This is, essentially, nothing more than an uneven partitioning of the semantic domain among the various surface forms, possibly with some functional intersection of these forms. But this, in logical

terms, is quite different from the Praguean markedness relation which, if taken literally, is a purely semantic relation and /.../ is required to exhibit certain specific logical properties." (Kučera 1984:72f.)

7.5 As for the privative oppositions supposed to exist between grammatical cases in the models of Jakobson and others, the impossibility of testing such claims is quite obvious when the test of logical entailment is applied. There is no way to show that the propositions corresponding to the (a) sentences below entail the propositions corresponding to the (b) sentences. None of the latter are grammatically correct sentences:

(38a) Книга прочитана Иваном.

(38b) *Книга прочитана Иван.

(39a) Иван любит Наташу.

(39b) *Иван любит Наташа.

(40a) Иван выпил чашку чаю.

(40b) *Иван выпил чашку чай.

Also the substitutability of the involved Russian grammatical cases is only slightly more than nil. For this reason it is impossible to give any proof for the existence of a privative opposition between N and A (–direction vs. +direction), N and I (–periphery vs. +periphery), all this according to Jakobson (1936 and 1958), let alone N and GII (–scope vs. +scope in Jakobson 1958). Consequently, such claims are empty ones. There is no way either to verify or to falsify them. Neither is it possible to find some other kind of entailment that would confirm the marked or unmarked nature of two cases in a postulated privative opposition. Not even entailments based on existential presuppositions will do. It is certainly correct that if the proposition that corresponds to

(41) Иван читает книгу.

is true, then the proposition that corresponds to

(42) Книга существует.

is also true. This is, however, not a question of logical entailment. It is merely a matter of statistic probability: we speak mostly about things that do exist. On the other hand,

(43) Иван рассказывал о единорогах.

does not imply that unicorns exist at all. Nevertheless, we can form the corresponding existential sentence

(44) Единороги существуют.

The simple reason is that we are allowed to speak about non-existing referents. Or, rather, we are allowed to make false implications. Thus the use of the nominative itself does not imply the existence of the referent. Consider

(45) Ему виделись экзотические города.

The exotic cities must be imaginary ones. Accordingly, the existential implication cannot be drawn.

Consequently, it is impossible to accept the traditional concept of markedness as applied in Jakobson's model. Moreover, Jakobson's case models do not, in fact, differ substantially from the explicit localistic theory of Hjelmslev, which follows primarily the old Wüllner (1827). Jakobson's main meanings disguised as invariant meanings are described in equally localistic terms. (That is why Sørensen 1973:181–193 could translate Jakobson's model into the Hjelmslevian framework so easily.) And as Hajičová (1983:154) put it in another context,

"/.../ the localist approach is not the best solution: it is certainly justified to a certain extent to look for something "directional" with Accusative and "local" with Locative, but it cannot be stated that this is the basic meaning of these morphemic cases. It is also possible to assume that this was the situation in previous stages of the development of some languages (e.g. this tendency is stronger in Latin than in Czech), but the modern development of languages goes in a different direction, the primary functions of most prepositionless cases being of a syntactic rather than semantic character. The loca-

list approach includes a hypostasis of "case meanings" as directly referring to extralinguistic objects, which seems to be based on a false analogy with the meanings of tense, number and other morphemic categories."

The semantic features have to be searched for elsewhere. (Cf. Bílý, forthcoming.)

8. Summary

8.1 Hjelmslev's plethora of covert cases is unacceptable. So is his lack of differentiation between genuine case languages and filter (caseless) languages with positionally defined markers of NP-inflexion. The legion of Hjelmslevian cases would have to represent universal categories of all human (and other!) languages, which is rather an unpalatable claim.

8.2 Jakobson's implicit acceptance of one-case languages also obscures the important intrinsic structural difference between case and filter languages.

8.3 Jakobson's invariant case meanings (Gesamtbedeutungen) are in fact the old main meanings (Hauptbedeutungen) in disguise.

8.4 The criteria of the existence of semantic privative oppositions lead to the unavoidable conclusion that while some such oppositions do exist, many others must be reconsidered.

8.5 Owing to the eloquence of Roman Jakobson his approach has been taken for granted. The undisputable elegance of Jakobson (1932, 1936, 1958, etc) has made several generations of linguists believe in a number of semantic privative oppositions in the systems of tenses, aspects, cases, etc., without the necessary critical stance.

8.6 Russian has two semantic privative oppositions in its case system — between the marked GII and the unmarked GI and between the marked vocative and the unmarked nominative, but, as a rule, such privative oppositions are exceptions, rather than usual semantic relationships between cases.

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