

Notes to MA Thesis:

"The case for negation: the direct object of negated transitive verbs in contemporary standard Russian."

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
1979

NOTES

1. Paul Goodman provides an illustration of the concept of scope with this overheard conversation: "whore to cop: 'Why in the fuck don't you restrict the scope of your business and mind it?'" (Goodman 1966:193).

2. Willard Quine, in talking about the struggle for clarity in language, writes: "No wonder that in mathematics the murky intensionality of attributes tends to give way to the limpid extensionality of classes" (Quine 1964:457).

3. Later, he understood Lorca's despair, that white and waxy lemon. That was his heart. It was No.

You can squeeze it one way or  
squeeze it another, smother it in the warmest  
of wind  
Once the blood has fallen out of it  
the blood has fallen  
out of it. (Kline smiling. (Sorrentino 1971:113-114)

4. For a general discussion of the category determined/non-determined, with specific reference to the post-posed particle -to in Russian, see Fahey, 1977.

5. The negative particle, if considered as a modal element, specifically relates to the speaker's attitude toward the propositional content of an utterance. Thus Anna Wierbicka suggests that "in the last resort the concept of negation is related to the concept of will. 'S is not P' means, in fact, more or less, 'I don't want to assert that S is P.'" She posits that "want" and "diswant" are semantic primitives "occupying alternately the same position in deep structure." The difference between a positive or negative assertion "does not lie in the desired or abhorred state of affairs (which is the same) but in one's mental attitude toward it" (1972:211-213). Similarly, the question of definiteness or individuation also has a modal quality, as seen in this insightful comment by Paul Goodman:

The articles "a" and "the" in natural languages are not adequately translated by the logician's "x" and "a, b, c, . . ." and " $\exists$ ". . . . They involve attentiveness of various kinds and so bridge the gap between psychology and semantics. The problem is how

something is given for judgement to begin with. This is of course the theme of Kant's Critique of Judgment. It is neglected by the logicians. (1966:14)

Freud's essay "On Negation" is interesting in the combined context of Wierbicka and Goodman's assertions. He proposes that negation allows us to consider subject matter which has been repressed in the unconscious, and through the intellectual action of judgement "to put an end to procrastination" (1959:182-185).

6. The separation between syntax and semantics poses some difficulties: Green presents the sentence "'Mary burned John a steak because she didn't realize he didn't like it that way'" as "'perfectly grammatical and acceptable'" (Green quoted by Oehrle 1977:203). It would seem that "burn" and "cook" have somewhat different syntactic constraints in English. Fodor addresses himself to this problem:

There are grounds for believing that the syntax of natural languages is inherently richer than the syntax of standard formal languages, and that this extra syntactic complexity has semantic importance. (Fodor 1974:185-186)

7. Although corrigibility may be an intuitively useful concept it is at the moment under fire. Bar Hillel writes:

The jungle of phenomena around degrees of grammaticality, semi-grammaticality, semantic anomaly, oddness, bizarreness, category mistakes, type violation, and a host of other related concepts is now in a state of almost utter confusion, after a decade of intense and well-meant discussion which has exhibited linguists, logicians and philosophers at their dogmatic and insensitive worst.