

An indicative null C in Russian, they said. But it is a slifting parenthetical.

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A growing body of work assumes that Russian has an indicative null C during clausal embedding, as in (1); see Bailyn (1992), Stepanov and Georgopoulos (1997), Szczegielniak (1999), Antonenko (2006), Rojina (2011), Hansen et al. (2016), and Morgunova (2021), among others. This view warrants further examination.

- (1) Ja znaju, Maša hočet stat' v'et'erinarom.
I know Masha wants to.become veterinarian
'I know Masha wants to become a vet'

Stepanov (2001: 190) notes that "...[t]here is a possibility that [the matrix clause in (1)] is some sort of a parenthetical constituent" but that it is impossible to decide in the absence of a clear test. The battery of syntactic and semantic tests below suggests that (1) should be analyzed on a par with a slifting parenthetical in (2a) and not with a clausal embedding in (2b). See Bresnan (1968), Jackendoff (1972), Ross (1973), Corver (1994), Rooryck (2001), and Potts (2005) about the syntax of s(entence-)l(ifting) parentheticals in English.

- (2) a. The Titanic, John knew, is unsinkable. (slifting parenthetical)
b. John knew the Titanic was unsinkable. (clausal embedding)

First, the construction in Russian does not allow local *wh*-movement (3a), which follows if this is a syntactically orphaned parenthetical, but is unexpected for a well-behaved matrix clause, cf. (3b). Note that if a null C were available in Russian at all, it would mask the structure with a parenthetical, thus rendering the *čto*-less option in (3a) grammatical.

- (3) a. Kto skazal, *(čto) Marina uvl'ekajetsa b'egom?
who said that Marina likes running
'Who said Marina likes running?'
b. Who said (that) Titanic was unsinkable?

Second, the construction does not permit being embedded, which is unusual for clausal embedding, but typical for slifting parentheticals, which cannot modify embedded clauses:

- (4) Maša uv'er'ena, čto Kol'a dumajet, *(čto) lošadi l'ub'at sahar.
Masha is.certain that Kolya thinks that horses love sugar
'Masha is certain that Kolya thinks horses love sugar'

Third, the construction resists negation within the slift, which is another property of slifting parentheticals (see Koev 2021: 130ff.).

- (5) Ja n'e dumaju, *(čto) Kol'a čital Monten'a.
I not think that Kolya read Montaigne
'I don't think Kolya read Montaigne'

Finally, as shown in (6), the parenthetical assertion cannot be weakened and then added to the question under discussion (Simons et al. 2010). Without *čto*, a modal adverbial is only able to modify the slifted clause assertion.

- (6) Vozmožno, Kat'a znala, #(čto) Ser'eža igrajet na trub'e.
Probably Katya knew that Seryozha plays on trumpet
'Probably, Katya knew that Seryozha plays a trumpet'

In conclusion, we saw evidence that a string-identical Russian counterpart of a null C sentence in English is underlyingly a slifting parenthetical, which is only possible if Russian does not have an indicative null C.

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