

## Focus, cliticization and verb movement in Russian *li* questions

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Russian has two fundamental ways of signalling a yes-no interrogative: either (i) by attaching the enclitic particle *li* to the first phonological word of a sentence (*li*-interrogative), or (ii) by imposing a specific accent and prominence pattern on what otherwise looks superficially like a declarative clause (*intonational* interrogative). *Li*, according to King (1994), can be analyzed as a clitic element originating in the complementizer head; it may be enclitic on the finite verb raised to C, or to an obligatorily focused phrase in Spec,CP. Franks & King (1999) argue that *li* placement necessarily involves *prosodic inversion* (PI), a PF operation which moves *li* to the right of the first word of a focused phrase, or to the right of a raised verb (under their analysis, the latter two syntactically land below C). The main motivation for postulating PI comes from a cross-linguistic contrast, namely from the fact that *li* can follow larger constituents in Bulgarian, but always only one phonological word in Russian. Bošković (2001, 30), taking issue with the operation of PI, points to the fact that *li* cannot just arbitrarily split up phrases even in Russian: E.g., in NPs containing an attributive adjective followed by *li*, it is the adjective which has to be minimally (or contrastively) focused, rather than the whole NP, as should be expected under Franks & King's (1999) analysis. (Schwabe 2004 tries to reconcile this fact with King & Franks 1999, assuming a specific NP-internal focus structure.) All elements preceding *li* are syntactically motile independently; being generally non-branching, they undergo head adjunction and check the focus feature of *li*, according to Bošković.

There are conceptual and empirical problems with the above analyses. Conceptually, neither of them makes explicit whether it identifies the focus of a YNQ on the basis of accent marking, or of appropriate answers (or a combination of the two). To put it differently, it is unclear whether only contrast or also other focus types should be involved, and what the concept of focus in questions is actually supposed to mean. Curiously, the verb raising option does *not* involve focusing; but King (1994), following Restan (1972), remarks that later foci are possible in this construction. The trigger for verb movement remains obscure under both accounts. Franks & King (1999) presuppose (contrastive?) focus movement to a TP-initial position in Russian, for which there is no evidence whatsoever in declarative clauses. Empirically, there is authentic data showing that obligatory focusing in the sense of accentuation and/or contrast is not at stake even in *li* questions: In (1), an XP containing a focusing particle is split up by *li*, with the accent on the post-*li* part. (2a,b) demonstrate that *li* questions with a (zero) copula regularly come with unmarked word order and a clause-final accent. Even in run-of-the-mill transitive clauses with *li* supported by a non-verbal constituent, constituents later in the clause may freely be contrasted and carry the most prominent accent in appropriate contexts (3). Notably, the item in front of *li* still corresponds to the focus of an appropriate answer.

The present paper seeks to consolidate the empirical perspective on Russian *li* questions, using authentic data from a large corpus of Russian radio discussions. As it turns out, the case of post-*li* focusing is rather common, even with XP-fronting. The analysis to be proposed capitalizes on this point, illustrated also in (3). We argue that it is instrumental to be precise about the concept of focus which should be involved in *li* placement; we postulate that *li* is not a focus particle in the sense present in the above analyses, but a clitic question particle which attaches to the leftmost word of the constituent corresponding to the focus of an appropriate answer. Focus marking by maximal prominence may coincide with the focus of the answer, or it may be used to express contrast. Verb fronting is an independent operation driven not by *li*, but by the formation of syntactic yes-no interrogatives. As already noted by Restan (1972), yes-no questions involving verb fronting are invariably proper interrogatives, rather than presumptive questions (i.e., declaratives used as questions). The focus of the answer in this case corresponds to sentence polarity. The same holds for copular clauses of the type illustrated in (2a,b), which are information-structurally monolithic; they once-more demonstrate the principal independence of *li* from focus marking by prominence. Finally, the paper scrutinizes the situation in *embedded* yes-no interrogatives, with *li* in C being the obligatory

marker of sentence type, where examples with preposed foci occur extremely rarely and are generally degraded compared to those involving verb fronting.

#### Examples

- (1) *No tol'ko li v Etom sostoit problema?*  
 but only LI in this consists problem  
 'But does the problem only amount to THIS?'

- (2) a. *proverit', vse li na MEste*  
 control everything LI at place  
 'control whether everything is in place'

- b. *Eto li ne velikaja uDAča?*  
 this LI not great success  
 'Isn't that a great success?'

(Uppsala Corpus)

- (3) [Context: "Some pensioners now get their money from a special fund." — "Do they get enough?" — "No."]

- A dostatočno li polučajut ostal'NYe pensionery? — Net, tože ne dostatočno.*  
 and enough LI get-3PL other pensioners no also not enough  
 'And do the other pensioners get enough? — No, (they do) not (get) enough either.'

(Radio Mayak)

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