A phase-based approach to Russian free word order
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The present thesis is an attempt to provide a syntactic account of the word order freedom in Russian, a discourse configurational language. A number of analyses have been proposed until now (King 1995, Bailyn 1995a, 2003, 2004, Junghanns and Zybator 1997, Sekerina 1997, Rodionova 2001, van Gelderen 2003, Pereltsvaig 2004, Sioussar 2007, among others), some of which will be discussed in this work. However, the issue is still far from being resolved and there are some questions to be answered yet. There is unanimity among researchers working on the topic that word order permutations in Russian are always associated with certain interpretive effects, often referred to as Information Structure (IS) packaging. However, it remains highly debated whether displacement operations, which produce various surface structures, are IS-related (e.g. triggered by Topic, Focus, and the like) or are forced by some purely grammatical considerations (e.g. [EPP]-feature on some independently necessary functional projections), with the pragmatic effects being a by-product. In the latter case the interpretive effects turn out to be parasitic on the way some formal features are checked in narrow syntax. This work is another contribution to this on-going debate, which hopefully opens some new insights on the problem.

The questions that initiated the present research are (i) provided that the distribution of topical and focal information in a Russian sentence is edge-oriented (Topic is sentence-initial and Focus is sentence-final), can we characterize the observed permutations as linear (PF) phenomena, devoid of any deep syntactic motivation? (ii) if syntax happens to play a role in encoding IS-related information, does it have a direct access to this type of information or do the IS effects arise as a by-product of some IS-independent operations (e.g. some formal feature checking)? (iii) since the computation is argued to proceed cyclically, i.e. by phase (Chomsky 2001), does it mean that IS-related information is relevant at the phase rather than at the clausal level? (iv) because word order variations in Russian are often treated as optional, is it possible to reconcile the syntax of Russian with the recently developed theory whereby any syntactic operation is motivated by feature checking? These questions will be the catalyst in our investigation.

In this introductory chapter I present some background information which I consider useful for understanding the data and the analysis. Since the discussion will be centered on Russian, I first provide a concise description of the Russian morphosyntax to familiarize the reader with the language. In doing that, I concentrate on the issues that relate to the topic of the research, i.e. word order and scrambling, leaving other important details aside. As stated earlier, any analysis of Russian word order heavily relies on IS notions such as Topic and Focus, which until now lack an unanimously accepted definition. For the sake of clarity, in section 1.2 I explain what is meant by Topic and Focus in the present thesis. Finally, in section 1.3 I lay out the major theoretical assumptions adopted in this work related to the structure derivation and the role of IS in this process.
1.1 An overview of Russian morphosyntax

1.1.1 Basic word order
Russian is an SVO language. The term ‘subject’ is usually associated with a special morphology on the corresponding DP, namely Nominative case and agreement with the verb. In order to capture the facts correctly, I will often refer to grammatical functions of Subject and Object as external and internal argument, respectively. In these terms, the neutral word order in Russian is the one where the external argument precedes and the internal argument follows the verb (with an exception of pronouns and quantifiers to be discussed below). The external argument carries Nominative case and triggers agreement with the verb\(^1\).

(1) Ol’ga svarila pel’meni.
   Olga.NOM cook.PST.FEM pelmeni.ACC
   ‘Olga cooked pelmeni (Russian variant of raviolis).’

However, with a certain class of verbs it is the internal argument that triggers agreement and carries Nominative. This happens with unaccusatives.

(2) a. Prišla vesna.
   come.PST.FEM spring.NOM
   ‘The spring has come.’

   b. U menja pojavilis’ novye idei.
   at I.GEN appear.PST.PL new.NOM ideas.NOM
   ‘Some new ideas occurred to me.’

Note that since I stated the word order rule for Russian with reference to the argument structure notions rather than in terms of subject-/objecthood, sentences like those in (2) conform to it, since the postverbal nominative DP is an internal argument.

There is one exception to the basic rule. When the internal argument is expressed by a pronoun of any kind (personal, indefinite, negative, etc.), in the unmarked case the pronoun evades from occurring in the sentence final position. As a result, a pronominal internal argument usually precedes the verb. Thus a personal pronoun ego (3a), a negative pronoun niciego (3b), and an indefinite pronoun koe-čto (3c), are marginal in a post-verbal position.

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\(^1\) Agreement in Russian is exhibited in either person and number or gender and number depending on the tense marking on the verb: if the verb is in the past tense, it agrees with a DP in gender and number, otherwise agreement is in person and number. Since gender agreement in the past tense is possible only with singular nouns, I omit singular number specification on the past verb in the gloss.
a. Studenty ego obožajut (? ego).
   students.NOM he.ACC adore.PRS.3PL
   ‘The students adore him.’

b. Ja ničego ne sdelala (? ničego).
   I.NOM nothing.ACC NEG do.PST.FEM
   ‘I didn’t do anything.’

c. Marat koe-čto pridumal (? koe-čto).
   Marat.NOM something.ACC invent.PST.MASC
   ‘Marat has invented something.’

The requirement on the preverbal position of a pronoun is not absolute. If there is
another element following the pronominal object, it can stay in the canonical object
position, i.e. postverbally, as illustrated in (4). In (4a) the pronominal indirect
object im is followed by a direct object expressed by a full DP and thus does not
need to change its position relative to the verb. In (4b) the negative pronoun nikomu
is licensed in a post-verbal position due to the following NPI ni kopejki. And in (4c)
the position of the indefinite pronoun čto-to is secured by the following modifier.

a. Papa podaril im ščenka.
   father.NOM give.PST.MASC they.DAT puppy.ACC
   ‘Their father gave them a puppy.’

b. O na ne dala nikomu ni kopejki.
   she.NOM NEG give.PST.FEM nobody.DAT NEG kopek.GEN
   ‘She didn’t give anybody a penny.’

c. Ja vdrug vsprnnila čto-to važnoe.
   I.NOM suddenly remember.PST.FEM something.ACC important
   ‘I suddenly remembered something important.’

Thus the main requirement on pronoun placement is that they tend not to occur
clause-finally. Clause-final position is dedicated to focus in Russian. Therefore, the
tendency of a pronoun to avoid the focus position can follow from their tendency
not to be focused. The basic word order rule for Russian can be stated as in (5).

(4) a. Papa podaril im ščenka.
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   ‘Their father gave them a puppy.’

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   she.NOM NEG give.PST.FEM nobody.DAT NEG kopek.GEN
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(5) **Basic Word Order Rule for Russian**

In neutral contexts the external argument always precedes the verb and the
internal argument always follows it, unless the internal argument is a
pronoun (of any kind) in the sentence final position. In the latter case the
internal argument tends to precede the verb.

Any deviation from the general rule stated in (5) produces specific pragmatic
effects, which will be discussed in detail later on in the thesis.
In sentences with more than one internal argument the neutral word order is the one in which an Indirect Object (IO) precedes a Direct Object (DO). This strongly holds for DP arguments, i.e. in D(ouble) O(bject) C(onstructions) (6).

(6) Nastja pokazala Sergeju svoi pokupki.
Nastya.NOM show.PST.FEM Sergey.DAT REFL purchases.ACC
‘Nastya showed Sergey her purchases.’

The detailed analysis of DOC is postponed till chapter two. For now, suffice it to say that the unmarked word order in such sentences is IO > DO.

The situation is less clear with verbs that take a DP and a PP argument. Slioussar (2007) states that PP arguments pattern with IO DPs in that both precede the DO. In some sentences this seems indeed to be the case.

(7) Pavel často priglašal v dom gostej.
Pavel.NOM often invite.PST.MASC to house.ACC guests.ACC
‘Pavel often invited guests to the house’.

The order of postverbal elements in (7) is the only felicitous one in an ‘all-new’ sentence. The reverse order, i.e. DP > PP, will necessarily trigger definiteness effect whereby the DP will be interpreted as being anaphoric to some entity in the preceding discourse. The resulting sentence would be a coherent answer to a question like Where did he usually invite his guests?

There is, however, a complication concerning verbs which include PPs in their argument structure. Namely, it is not always clear whether the PP is an argument or an adjunct. For instance, if optionality is taken as a diagnostics for adjuncts, the PP in (7) can well be an adjunct rather than an argument, since the sentence is grammatical with or without it.

With certain verbs the presence of a PP is obligatory, e.g. *stavit’* (to put). With verbs that obligatorily take two arguments one of which is a PP, the unmarked order is DP > PP. This is illustrated in (8).

(8) a. Mama postavila moloko v holodil’nik.
mother.NOM put.PST.FEM milk.ACC into fridge.LOC
‘Mother put milk into the fridge.’

b. Nina povela studentov v muzej.
Nina.NOM take.PST.FEM students.ACC to museum.LOC
‘Nina took students to the museum.’

The sentences in (8) are most natural in the beginning of the discourse or as an answer to the question What happened? On the opposite order of arguments (9), the sentences become more context-dependent.

(9) a. Mama postavila moloko v holodil’nik.
mother.NOM put.PST.FEM milk.ACC into fridge.LOC

b. Nina povela studentov v muzej.
Nina.NOM take.PST.FEM students.ACC to museum.LOC
Nina povela v muzej studentov.
Nina.NOM take.PST.FEM to museum.LOC students.ACC

For instance, (9b) can be felicitously used as providing information about a group of people that Nina has taken to her usual museum tour, i.e. as an answer to Who is Nina guiding this time?

The generalization concerning the distribution of PPs in a Russian sentence is that a PP argument should follow and a PP adjunct should precede a DO in the basic configuration. Thus we get DP > PP order for arguments of ditransitive verbs, and PP > DP for verbs that optionally take a PP, which I treat here as adjunct. (10) illustrates the unmarked position for PP adjuncts. The DP > PP order of (10b) is marked as compared to (10a) and requires a context like Where did Valya agree to meet Kolya?

(10) a. Valja ždet na verande Kolju.
Valya.NOM wait.PRS.3SG on veranda.LOC Kolya.ACC

b. Valja ždet Kolju na verande.
Valya.NOM wait.PRS.3SG Kolya.ACC on veranda.LOC

‘Valya is waiting for Kolya on the veranda.’

If we consider the other class of adjuncts, namely adverbs, these occur preverbally in the unmarked case. This concerns all types of adverbs, i.e. both high and low (Cinque 1999). An example with a high adverb is given in (11). (12) illustrates the same for low adverbs. As shown in the examples, an adverb is banned from the postverbal position in a neutral sentence.

(11) Roditeli často prihodjat (*často) k nam v gosti.
parents.NOM often come.PRS.PL to we.DAT to guests.ACC
‘Our parents often come to our place.’

(12) a. Vse prisutstvujuščie gromko zasmeljali (*gromko).
all.NOM present.NOM.PL loudly laugh.PST.PL
‘Everybody who was present loudly laughed.’

b. Petja bystro sdelal (*bystro) uroki.
Petya.NOM quickly do.PST.MASC homework.ACC
‘Petya quickly did his homework.’

It must be noted that the syntax of adverbs in Russian is very poorly studied, especially their position with respect to other preverbal elements. The ordering restrictions shown in (11) and (12) illustrate the general tendency of adverbs to precede the verb. As to their exact position in the preverbal field, low adverbs (e.g. manner) are usually immediately preverbal. They follow auxiliaries and, as a rule, other preverbal elements. High adverbs can occur in a number of positions depending on their scope, i.e. sentence-initially (preceding the subject), preceding
or following an auxiliary. The same can be said about adverbial DPs, such as utrom (in the morning), osen’ju (in autumn), and adverbial PPs, such as po vyhognym (on weekends), v subbotu (on Saturday). I am not going to indulge myself into the detailed analysis of adverb placement in Russian. However, since adverbs do play a role in determining the position of other elements, they cannot be totally ignored. Adverbs are often taken to indicate the position of the verb as being either inside or outside the verb phase. The discussion about adverb placement will be restored in chapter two, where we consider verb movement in Russian.

To recap, the basic word order in Russian can be summarized as in (13). As mentioned above, this basic word order can be altered in a number of ways rendering specific semantic/pragmatic meanings.

(13) \( (\text{ADV}_{\text{high}}) > \text{S} > (\text{ADV}_{\text{high}}) > \text{AUX} > (\text{ADV}_{\text{high/low}}) > \text{V} > \text{IO} > \text{PP}_{\text{ADJ}} > \text{DO} > \text{PP}_{\text{COMPL}} \)

1.1.2 Case
The possibility to alter the described neutral word order in Russian is traditionally associated with its morphologically rich case system. Russian has got six cases: Nominative, Genitive, Accusative, Dative, Instrumental, and Locative. As mentioned in the previous section, a grammatical subject carries Nominative case. A DO is usually marked Accusative. A number of verbs select for inherently case-marked DOs, whereby case marking is idiosyncratic. An IO is assigned Dative. Instrumental and Locative are mostly used on adjunct PPs, DPs, and APs.

Unlike some other languages (e.g. Turkish), Russian does not exhibit any correlation between case marking and displacement possibilities. In the unmarked case, sentence constituents are ordered on the basis of the hierarchy given in (13). Besides, a DP in any morphological case can undergo a pragmatically driven movement, or scrambling, as shown in (14-16)

(14) Gribovi r e b j a t a n ab r al i c e lu j u t i . mushrooms_GEN children_NOM pick_PST.PL whole_ACC basket_ACC
‘As for mushrooms, the children picked a whole basket of them.’

(15) Griby i m y b u d e m ž a r i t ’ t i . mushrooms_ACC we_NOM fut.1PL fry_INF
‘As for the mushrooms, we will fry them.’

(16) Gribam i dož d ’ t o l ’ k o n a p o ł ’ z u t i . mushrooms_DAT rain_NOM only_for good_ACC
‘As for mushrooms, rain is only good for them.’

The sentences in (14-16) illustrate the syntactic operation known as Topicalization. In (14) the genitive DP, which forms part of the internal argument, undergoes this type of displacement. In (15) this operation targets an accusative, and in (16) a dative DP.
1.1.3 Tense, Aspect, and Mood.

Russian has a fairly simple system of Tense and a rather complex system of Aspect. The former is instantiated by the past/non-past opposition. The interpretation of non-past tense is aspectually determined: perfective non-past verbs have future reading and imperfective ones denote present (17).

\[\text{(17) } \begin{array}{ll}
\text{est’} & \text{s-est’} \\
\text{eat.INF.IMPF} & \text{PRF-eat.INF} \\
\text{‘to eat’} & \text{‘to have eaten’} \\
\end{array}\]

\[\begin{array}{ll}
a. \text{ e-st} & \text{s-e-st} \\
\text{eat-PRS.3SG} & \text{PRF-eat-FUT.3SG} \\
\text{‘(He/she) eats’} & \text{‘(He/she) will eat’} \\
b. \text{ e-l-a} & \text{s-e-l-a} \\
\text{eat-PST-FEM} & \text{PRF-eat-PST-FEM} \\
\text{‘(She) ate/was eating’} & \text{‘(She) has eaten’} \\
\end{array}\]

Russian is a synthetic language and as such it almost entirely lacks auxiliaries. There is only one auxiliary verb byt’ (be) which is used for formation of so-called, Imperfective Future. Compare (18) with (17a), where only the Present Tense interpretation is possible for the imperfective member of the paradigm. The auxiliary is a way to get future interpretation for imperfective verbs.

\[\text{(18) } \begin{array}{ll}
\text{bud-et} & \text{est’} \\
\text{FUT.3SG} & \text{eat.INF.IMPF} \\
\text{‘(He/she) will eat’} \\
\end{array}\]

The class of modal verbs is also very poor in Russian. There are only two modals that exhibit full verbal paradigm. They are moc’ (can) and umet’ (be able). Some modals are adjectival morphologically, such as dolžen, objazan (must), nužen (need). And some are used in impersonal constructions surfacing invariably in the neuter/third person singular, e.g. sleduet (ought).

When present in the sentence, an auxiliary or a modal is sandwiched between the subject and the lexical predicate. However there is no strict adjacency requirement. An adverbial or some scrambled material can intervene between the auxiliary/modal and the lexical verb and/or the subject (19).

\[\text{(19) a. Zavtra my skoree vsego budem celyj den’} \\
\text{tomorrow we.NOM sooner all FUT.1PL whole day} \\
\text{zanimat’sja. study.INF.REFL} \\
\text{‘Tomorrow we will most probably study the whole day.’}\]
b. Ja navernoе smogу tebe pomoč’.
I.NOM probably can.FUT.1SG you.DAT help.INF
‘I probably can help you.’

Aspect in Russian is represented by perfective-imperfective opposition. The majority of verbs perfectivize by means of prefixation (20). There is also a small class of verbs which are perfective in their unprefixed form (21). Another way of perfectivization, used to derive semelfactives, is by adding the suffix –nu (22) (Romanova 2007).

(20) a. delat’ s-delat’
    do.IMPF.INF PRF-do.INF
b. stroit’ po-stroit’
    build.IMPF.INF PRF-build.INF

(21) a. brosit’ b. dat’
    throw.PRF.INF give.PRF.INF

(22) a. kričat’ krik-nu-t’
    scream.IMPF.INF scream-PRF-INF
    ‘to scream’ ‘to give a scream’

b. kidat’ ki-nu-t’
    throw.IMPF.INF throw-PRF-INF
    ‘to throw’ ‘to throw once’

Interestingly, Russian allows for backwards aspeсtual transformations. This is shown in (23) for the verb pisat’ (to write).

(23) a. pisat’ vy-pisat’
    write.IMPF.INF PRF-write.INF
    ‘to write’ ‘to write out’

c. vy-pis-yya-t’ na-yy-pis-yya-t’
    PRF-write.IMPF-INF PRFSL-PRF-write-IMPF-INF
    ‘to be writing out’ ‘to write out a lot of smth.’

In (23b) the imperfective verb from (23a) is perfectivized by adding the lexical prefix vy-. This perfective form can be turned back into imperfective by means of the suffix –yya, the so-called secondary imperfective (23c). The resulting imperfectivized verb can be made perfective again by adding another perfectivizing prefix, here superlexical na-, on top of the initially used vy- (23d).

Note that a prefix can change or add to the meaning of the verb. Thus in (23b) the prefix functions as the corresponding particle in Germanic languages and changes the meaning from write to write out. Similarly, na- in (23d) adds a quantificational nuance to the interpretation of the verb, which now implies that the
action was carried out on a large number of objects (e.g. a lot of words were written out of the text).

Russian prefixes are classified into Lexical (LP) and Superlexical (SLP) (Babko-Malaya 1999, Romanova 2004, 2007), which is indicated in (23) by the corresponding subscripts. The classification is based on the semantic and syntactic differences exhibited by LPs as opposed to SLPs.2

The syntax of Russian Aspect has some implications for the analysis of V-movement. Therefore, we come back to this issue and provide some more details concerning the derivation of Russian perfectives in chapter two, where we consider verb movement possibilities in Russian.

1.1.4 Negation

Negation in Russian, both sentential and constituent, is encoded by the free-standing morpheme ne. Under sentential negation, ne must precede the finite verb and a strict adjacency is required between the two (24). Under constituent negation the particle immediately precedes the negated constituent (25).

\[
\text{(24) } \text{Ja davno ego ne (*davno) (*ego) videla.} \\
\text{I.NOM long.time he.ACC NEG see.PST.FEM} \\
\text{‘I haven’t seen him for a long time.’}
\]

\[
\text{(25) a. Oni poehali ne v Krym, a na Kavkaz.} \\
\text{they.NOM go.PST.PL NEG to Crimea.ACC but on Caucasus.ACC} \\
\text{‘They went not to the Crimea, but to the Caucasus.’}
\]

\[
\text{b. Ne roditeli poedut v Krym, a my.} \\
\text{NEG parents.NOM go.FUT.1PL to Crimea.ACC but we.NOM} \\
\text{‘Not parents but we are going to the Crimea.’}
\]

There is a morphological transformation that can occur under sentential negation related to case marking of the DO. It is known as Genitive of Negation (GenNeg). In a nutshell, case marking on a DO can change from Accusative to Genitive under negation. The change has a certain semantic effect. Namely, genitive object DPs always have weak reading. The difference between (26a) and (26b), indicated in the translations, is that wine in the (a) example can be interpreted as either some specific wine, which was served but has not been drunk, or just as a possible alcoholic drink, which was probably not even served. (26b) can only have the latter reading, i.e. the one where no presupposition of existence is required.

\[
\text{2 The differences between the two types of prefixes are discussed at length in Romanova (2004, 2007), among others.}
\]
(26) a. Ja ne pila vin-o.  
   I.NOM NEG drink.PST.FEM wine-ACC  
   ‘I did not drink wine/the wine.’

   b. Ja ne pila vin-a.  
   I.NOM NEG drink.PST.FEM wine-GEN  
   ‘I did not drink any wine.’

As shown in (26), the genitive DP occurs in the same structural position as its accusative counterpart, i.e. postverbally. Similarly to an accusative DP, it can also undergo scrambling (27).

(27) Da čto že ty za čelovek!  
   PTCL what PTCL you.NOM for person.NOM  
   ‘What a person you are!’

Knigi ne čitaeš’ ti, vina ne p’eš’ ti!  
books.GEN NEG read.PRS.2SG wine.GEN NEG drink.PRS.2SG  
‘Books, you do not read, wine, you do not drink!’

Russian is known as a negative concord language, i.e. when negative quantifiers, often referred to as *ni*-words, are present in the sentence they are interpreted together with the negative particle as a single instance of negation.

(28) I nikomu ničego ne obešala.  
   I.NOM nobody.DAT nothing.ACC NEG promise.PST.FEM  
   ‘I did not promise anything to anybody.’

Recall the constraint on pronoun placement discussed in section 1.1.1. There it was stated that pronouns are normally not tolerated in the clause-final focus position. *Ni*-words, being pronouns, are subject to the same principle. If no other postverbal elements are present in the sentence, *ni*-words tend to precede the verb. In this case, no strict adjacency between the negated verb and the *ni*-word is required. As shown in (29), another constituent can intervene between the *ni*-words as well as between the *ni*-words and the negated verb. As other DPs, *ni*-words can also occur sentence-initially, as in (30).

(29) I nikomu poka ničego (poka) ne obešala.  
   I.NOM nobody.DAT so.far nothing.ACC NEG promise.PST.FEM  
   ‘I have not promised anything to anybody so far.’

(30) Nikomu ona etogo ne obešala.  
   nobody.DAT she.NOM this.GEN NEG promise.PST.FEM  
   ‘She did not promise this to anybody.’
1.1.5 Question formation

1.1.5.1 Yes/No-questions

Yes/no-questions in Russian are usually formed by resorting to a special question intonation whereby there is a strong accent on the finite verb and a rising contour by the end of the sentence. No special word order re-ordering is necessary (31). However the word order change becomes obligatory if the question involves the particle *li*. In this case the verb should move to the sentence-initial position where it is immediately followed by *li* (32). The particle cannot attach to the verb in situ.

(31) *My poedem* zavtra v gory?
we.NOM go.FUT.1PL tomorrow to mountains.ACC
‘Are we going to the mountains tomorrow?’

(32) Poedem *li my zavtra v gory*?
go.FUT.1PL LI we.NOM tomorrow to mountains.ACC
‘Are we going to the mountains tomorrow?’

Although *li* is often defined as a dedicated question particle, it will be shown in chapter six that this is a misconception.

1.1.5.2 Wh-questions

*Wh*-words in Russian obligatorily move, i.e. Russian lacks the *wh*-in-situ strategy. Usually this movement targets sentence-initial position (33).

(33) Čto on tebe skazal (*čto)?
what.ACC he.NOM you.DAT tell.PST.MASC
‘What did he tell you?’

However a *wh*-word can also occur in other positions in the preverbal area. To make the description more precise, let us consider a sentence containing as much IP-related material as possible. The sentence in (34) is such an example: it has an adjectival modal, *dolžen* ‘obliged’, a tensed copula, *byl* ‘be’, and a lexical verb, *otdat’ ‘give away’.

(34) Juraj dolžen byl *otdat’
Yura.NOM obliged.MASC BE.PST.MASC give.away.INF
drugu vse svoi diski.
friend.DAT all.ACC REFL CDs.ACC
‘Yura must have given away all his CDs to his friend.’

Leaving aside the most common sentence-initial position, a *wh*-word can occur in any of the slots shown in (35).
A *wh*-word can either precede or follow the Modal-Auxiliary complex. A *wh*-word cannot break the MOD > AUX sequence, as evidenced by (36).

(36) * Jura dolžen čto byl
Yura.NOM obliged.MASC what.ACC BE.PST.MASC
otdat’ drugu?
give.away.INF friend.DAT
‘What must Yura have given away to his friend?’

A *wh*-word can either precede or follow the Modal-Auxiliary complex. A *wh*-word cannot break the MOD > AUX sequence, as evidenced by (36).

(36) * Jura dolžen čto byl
Yura.NOM obliged.MASC what.ACC BE.PST.MASC
otdat’ drugu?
give.away.INF friend.DAT
‘What must Yura have given away to his friend?’

*Wh*-movement will be discussed in more detail in chapter six. Right now it is important to note that some sort of movement is obligatory.

1.2 Information Structure primitives

In the present section, I will define the notions of Topic and Focus, which will play a crucial role in describing the word order permutations in Russian. I will also say a few words about Contrast, which often figures in the definition of Focus and, to a lesser degree, Topic.

As a starting point, I assume that Topic and Focus are obligatory composites of a sentence interpretation, and that any language has some means to formally encode both.

The theory of IS to be adopted for the purposes of the present thesis is heavily based on the theory of Informatics developed in Vallduví (1992). Vallduví proposes that an adequate informational articulation should include both Topic-Comment (Kuno 1972, Reinhart 1982) and Focus-Background (Jackendoff 1972, Prince 1986, Chomsky 1971) dichotomies. The proposed articulation is represented in (37).

(37) Sentence = {Focus, Ground} [Vallduví 1992: 46]
Ground = {Link, Tail}

The initial partition extracts the informative part of the utterance, i.e. Focus. The Ground acts as ‘a vehicular frame for the informative focus, i.e. it guarantees an appropriate entry of information into the hearer’s knowledge-store, indicating to the hearer where and how the information must be entered.’ (Vallduví 1992:46). The two composites of the Ground particularize this storage process further. Link, similar to the ‘aboutness’-Topic (Reinhart 1982), is used to identify the address in the hearer’s knowledge store under which the information will be entered. The Tail indicates the exact way in which the information under the identified address is stored.
The motivation for the proposed trichotomy comes from the fact that neither Topic-Comment nor Focus-Background system can capture the fact that elements within the Comment or Background, respectively, are not informationally equal. In particular, Comment does not always constitute the informative part of the sentence in its entirety. Similarly, Background, is usually subdivided into a more prominent element (both phonologically and informationally) and the rest. For illustration, consider the dialogue in (38).

(38) A: What are you going to give your parents for their anniversary?  
B: I bought them a beautiful Swarovski picture frame.

The information required by the question concerns the exact identification of the gift. The noun phrase *a beautiful Swarovski picture frame* would be identified as Focus within the Focus-Background system. Within the Background, there is a certain asymmetry between the constituents as to their relevance for accommodation of the offered information by the addressee. The verb is the least important, in that although it fixes the exact manner in which the present was obtained it is not crucial for the communicated message. As to the two referential expressions, intuitively, only one of them represents the Topic. In this case it is, arguably, the subject. Thus, in terms of IS, B’s response in (38) can be structured as in (39).

(39)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I bought them</td>
<td>a beautiful Swarovski picture frame.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Background | Focus |

To be able to account for situations like those depicted in (38-39), following Vallduví, I assume a tripartite articulation, whereby a sentence, apart from Topic and Focus, can contain some discourse neutral material. The latter is defined in negative terms, i.e. as that part of the proposition that is neither Topic nor Focus. As in the case of Topic and Focus, some languages have formal means to encode this part of the proposition (see Vallduví 1992).

Topic and Focus are primarily pragmatic notions. There is an on-going debate whether or not they must be included into the Grammar. One of the arguments for excluding them from grammatical knowledge proper relates to the fact that Topic and Focus are relational in nature (Szendrői 2001, Slioussar 2007). As a result, they are sometimes defined in relational terms (Lambrecht 1994). For the purposes of the present thesis, I assume that we need to distinguish between Topic and Focus, in the definitional sense, and topic and focus exponents, i.e. their linguistic manifestations. The former might be, indeed, purely conceptual notions. But the latter, since they find linguistic expression, should be recognized as grammatical formatives.

We have to recognize the difference between the two. For instance, in (40) the subject DP is formally marked as focus and is pragmatically interpreted as the most informative part of the sentence.
(40)  (Context: Who broke my CD-player?)
    SAM did.

Sometimes there is no one-to-one correspondence between the formally marked and the pragmatic Focus. This is what happens in sentences with wide Focus, the phenomenon also known as Focus Projection. In (41), illustrating such a case, the object that carries formal marking is not the informational center by itself but is rather included into a larger IS unit.

(41)  (What’s up?)
    We are buying a new HOUSE.

Based on examples like (41), we can see that the Focus exponent does not need to constitute but has to be properly included into the pragmatic Focus. Hereinafter I will make the distinction between the pragmatic and grammatical focus by writing the former with a capital letter, i.e. Focus, and the latter with small letters, i.e. focus.

When we come to the syntactic analysis in chapter five, we will deal with topic and focus, rather than with their pragmatic counterparts. However it is important to establish from the start what is meant under Topic and Focus in this work, because exponents are always chosen on the basis of pragmatic structuring. In other words, it is by virtue of being (a part of) Topic or Focus that certain constituents are marked as topic or focus in the sentence.

1.2.1 Topic

Despite the differences with regard to the precise definition of Topic, there is one property which is underlined in most approaches, namely the existence of ‘aboutness’ relation (Strawson 1964, Kuno 1972, Reinhart 1982, Vallduví 1992). Following the formalization developed by Reinhart (1982) and Vallduví (1992), I take the Topic to be an address pointer, which indicates to the addressee where the information provided by the sentence has to be stored. This definition is based on the idea that discourse is organized in the form of file cards which accommodate all the information obtained during the communication process (Heim 1983).

The Topic of the sentence is usually encoded by a lexical item with individual reference. What makes a certain expression the topic exponent is the relation of relevance construed between the denotatum of that linguistic expression

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3 However there are exceptions to this rule. For instance in Gungbe, a sentence can carry topic marking.

(i)  [dò Sàgbó ná fin nú dó mi] yà ūn má lén
    that Sagbo FUT steal thing from 1SGTOP 1SG NEG think.PRF
    nú mónkòtô kpôn gbèdè.
    thing of.the.sort look never
    ‘That Sagbo would steal my things [as we now know], I never thought of anything of the sort.’

[Aboh 2004: 309]
and the information provided by the sentence. To put it simply, for a linguistic expression to become the topic, the sentence should be understood as enhancing the hearer’s knowledge about the referent of that linguistic expression.

The file card organization of the discourse implies that, first, the discourse is obligatorily thematically organized, and second, that there should not be any unaccommodated information. This means that there should be no Topicless sentences, i.e. every proposition is viewed as relevant with respect to a certain discourse referent. The idea that every sentence must have a Topic was developed by Erteschik-Shir (1997, 2007) and Kiss (2002), who propose that a sentence can contain either an individual or a situational Topic. The former usually has an individual referent, as illustrated by the italicized expression in (42).

(42) *This man* I will never invite again.

A situational Topic occurs in, the so-called, thetic, i.e. “all-new”, sentences. Thus a sentence like (43) is assumed to have an implied spatio-temporal Topic, which can be interpreted as “here-and-now”. Sometimes the topic position in a thetic is taken by a spatio-temporal adverbial (44).

(43) *It is raining.*

(44) *Into the room* came a stranger.

It is not always easy to identify what constituents the Topic of the sentence, if there are no dedicated morphological markers of topicality in the language. For instance, in the example (38), repeated below, it could in principle be either *I* or *my parents*.

In order to be certain about it, we have to consider the previous discourse.

(38) A: What are you going to give your parents for their anniversary?
B: I bought them a beautiful Swarovski picture frame.

Topics are often chosen among the discourse referents already evoked in a given context. However discourse givenness should be considered a tendency rather than a precondition for topichood. It has been mentioned on several occasions in the literature that the referential status of a constituent (new vs. old) is orthogonal to the ability of a corresponding lexical item to function as topic, or focus (Reinhart 1982, Gundel and Fretheim 1998).

Topic identification is most unambiguous in languages that have a specific (and often obligatory) morphosyntactic marking. For languages that have very restricted means of encoding pragmatic notions, e.g. English, in most cases only the preceding context can help to establish which part of a sentence constitutes the Topic.

It should be noted that there is usually a one-to-one match between pragmatic Topic and grammatical topic. This is most obviously seen in languages with morphological means to encode topicality. In footnote three, an example from Gungbe is given where the whole sentence that expresses Topic is marked by a dedicated particle *yà* and is preposed to the sentence-initial position. Similarly, in
the Japanese example (45) the Topic of the sentence corresponds to a complex clausal constituent. As a result, the entire constituent is marked with the marker wa, albeit after being nominalized.

(45) [korera no waribashi ga tairyoo ni seisan sarehajimeta these LK waribashi SB large.quantity in produce do.PASS.began no] wa koodosei-chooki ni haitte kara da.
NR TOP high.economic.growth.age to enter since COP ‘There waribashi began to be produced in large quantities after the age of high economic growth started.’

[Hinds 1987: 100]

1.2.2 Focus
Irrespective of the particular framework, Focus is assumed to constitute the most important and obligatory part of an utterance. Focus is what pushes communication forward. Following Lambrecht (1994), I will define Focus in relational terms, as the relation between a denotatum and a proposition which is non-recoverable or unpredictable at the time of utterance. Non-recoverability/unpredictability concerns the relation and not the focus exponent. Consider (46).

(46) A: Manuel is going to Turkey, but I’m not sure about Vlad.
    B: In fact, VLAD is going to Turkey. Manuel already had his vacations.

In the first sentence of B’s reply no element is non-recoverable as such. But the sentence, nevertheless, does provide information, namely that the event of a trip to Turkey is erroneously assigned to a wrong individual. Vlad is the focus of the sentence per se, but it is Focus only in relation to the proposition x is going to Turkey. Thus (46), on a par with (41) given above, exemplifies the lack of a one-to-one mapping between pragmatic Focus and grammatical focus.

Most languages have some means to formally encode Focus. However even for those which have special focus markers it is not always easy to identify Focus on the basis of the marking. For instance, Schwarz (2003) in his analysis of focus marking in Kikuyu provides the example given in (47).

(47) (Context: What did Abdul do?) [Schwarz 2003: 93]
    [ne mae]focus Abdul [a-nyu-ir-e]focus FOC water Abdul SB-drink-ASP-FV
    ‘Abdul DRANK WATER.’

Schwarz describes the particle ne as focus marker in Kikuyu. As shown in (47) it precedes the focused constituent and triggers its displacement to the left. Kikuyu is an SVO language. Although, as evidenced by the context, the Focus corresponds to the entire VP, it is only the object which is marked. This example shows that what is marked as focus does not have to correspond to the Focus of the sentence. This
makes (47) similar to the English example with wide focus in (41). The data like those in (41) and (47) underline the necessity to distinguish between Focus and focus exponent.

Focus is often associated with the notion of Contrast, to the degree that sometimes the two are equated. This association stems from the Alternative Semantics approach to Focus (Rooth 1996), according to which the main function of Focus is to introduce relevant alternatives to a given proposition.

I do not accept this idea in the present thesis. The main and the only function of Focus is to provide Information. Focus usually implicates Contrast. The latter, I assume, results from some general principles of communication (Grice 1975) rather than from some inherent property of Focus. As will be shown in the following section Contrast is a phenomenon that is independent of IS status.

1.2.3 Contrast

Contrast can be defined as generation of a membership set which includes semantically comparable members. Set availability gives rise to possible alternatives for a given proposition. Being a set-related phenomenon Contrast is subject to certain constraints dealing with set creation (Umbach 2004).

The assumption that Contrast is a separate phenomenon and cannot be viewed as a necessary prerequisite for focality or topicality has been defended extensively in the literature (Vallduví 1992, Lambrecht 1994, Vallduví and Vilkuna 1998, Hajicová and Sgall 2004, Molnár 2006). In my work, I am taking the position that Contrast is not a primitive of IS, but arises as a response to a particular discourse environment (Lambrecht 1994, Hajicová and Sgall 2004).

The independence of Contrast from Focus and Topic is evidenced by the following observations. First, Contrast can apply to Topics and Foci alike. Moreover, a sentence can contain more than one contrastive element at a time.

4 The wide Focus reading of (47) can be structurally derived by assuming that what is preposed and marked by ne is the remnant VP out of which the verb has been evacuated. However what we see on the surface does present a problem for interpretation, because the narrow object focus is expressed in the same way, i.e. by preposing the object (i).

(i) (Context: What did Abdul drink?)

[ne mae]_focus Abdul a-ra-nyu-ir-ε
FOC water Abdul 3SG-T-drink-ASP-FV
‘Abdul drank WATER.’

[Schwarz 2003]

There is a difference between (i) and (47) which is the presence of the suffix ra in (i) versus its absence in (47). Schwartz (2003) does not discuss the role of this morpheme in disambiguating the focus structure. However, ra cannot be some kind of an ‘out-of-focus’ verb marker because it can be present under IP Focus as in (ii).

(ii) (Context: Abdul drank non-purified water and got sick. Somebody wants to know what happened and asks: “What is wrong? What happened?”)

Abdul [ne-a-ra-nyu-ir-ε mae]_focus
Abdul FOC-SM-T-drink-ASP-FV water
‘Abdul DRANK WATER.’

[Schwarz 2007: 147]
(48) (Context: Who is going where for vacations?)

We will go to SPAIN, Nelly is leaving for CYPRUS, and Sergey is going to CROATIA.

(48) exemplifies the situation with a contrastive Topic, given in italics, and a contrastive Focus, indicated by capitals.

Furthermore, Contrast is a gradable notion. The degree of Contrast depends on different factors, such as the explicitness of the alternative set (explicit vs. implicit), the range of the set (open vs. closed), and the size of the constituent put in contrast (e.g. the narrower is the Focus the easier it is to perceive it as being contrastive) (Hajičová and Sgall 2004). Topic and Focus, on the other hand, are absolute notions, in the sense that an entity cannot be more or less topical/focal. What can vary is the degree of accessibility of a certain entity. But accessibility is orthogonal to IS status of a certain element, as mentioned in the discussion of Topic above. Therefore, the IS status of a given element should be established unambiguously without resorting to any gradation (more/less), i.e. it is either Topic, Focus, or discourse neutral. Otherwise no partition is possible at all.

Following Lambrecht (1994), I take Contrast to arise as a conversational implicature. Inside the Topic it implicates that some other alternatives are relevant for the discussion. With Focus, it, on the contrary, hints on the irrelevance or even exclusion of the alternatives for a given situation.

As any other conversational implicature, Contrast in Focus or Topic can be easily cancelled (cf. Potts 2007).

(49) Manuel slapped his DAUGHTER.

implicature: not his wife, or any of his other kids
cancellation: And not only her, his wife got a couple of boxes in the ear as well.

(50) Mary sent Daniel a birthday card.

implicature: there were other people who congratulated him
cancellation: In fact, she was the only one who happened to remember about his birthday.

Note that cancellation of the implicature does not influence the IS status of the corresponding constituents. They are still interpreted as being Focus in (49) and Topic in (50) even after Contrast has been eliminated.

Following Kehler (2002) and de Hoop and de Swart (2004), I take Contrast to be a relation that fulfills discourse coherence function. As such, I assume, it is independent of IS. Contrast, in opposition to Topic and Focus, is a discourse level, and not a sentence level phenomenon. Without a preceding context, in the form of a question or some narration, Contrast cannot arise. On the other hand, any sentence taken in isolation will always undergo a default IS partition. For instance, (51), if taken as a discourse opening sentence, would be analyzed as providing information about the Topic Mary.
No such thing as default Contrast seems to exist. Thus I conclude, following Molnár (2006), that Contrast is superimposed on the IS of a sentence. As mentioned above, IS is a sentence-level phenomenon. Contrast, on the other hand, is a global discourse linker. In my view, Contrast is similar to another discourse linking strategy, namely tail-head linkage, observed in many Papuan languages. De Vries (2005) characterizes tail-head linkage as “discourse strategy rather than a phenomenon of sentence grammar” (2005: 364), which comes very close to what I assume about Contrast. Interestingly, the encoding of both linking strategies is strikingly similar: both involve initialization of the part of the sentence that encodes this discourse link. The encoding strategy provides the very name for tail-head linkage. As to Contrast, the initializing strategy has been widely attested cross-linguistically (Vallduví and Vilkuna 1998, Rizzi 1997, Ward and Birner 1998, Molnár 2006).

As will be shown below, the fact that many languages, including Russian, have a way to formally encode contrastive Topic and/or Focus reflects the following facts. First, any language has ways to link a given sentence to the preceding discourse, e.g. by using dedicated particles, conjunctions, etc. Thus the fact that a contrastive element can have a dedicated position within a clause can be treated as another discourse-linking strategy. Note that there is a crosslinguistic tendency for a contrastive element to occur close to the left edge of the clause. Other discourse linking elements, e.g. conjunctions and linking adverbs (then, after that, etc.), also occupy the left-edge position. Secondly, a language can have a strategy to encode referential giveness, which is sometimes misanalysed as a dedicated contrast-marking device. There is a relation between contrast and giveness, since a contrastive constituent is, as a rule, discourse anaphoric. However, as will be shown in chapter three on the basis of empirical facts, giveness and contrastiveness are two separate phenomena.

1.3 Theoretical background

1.3.1 Phase-based derivations, parallel chains, and locality

The present thesis is worked out within the framework of Derivation by Phase (Chomsky 2001, 2005 a, b). Within the phase-based theory, a syntactic structure is decomposed into relatively independent chunks, or phases. Chomsky (2005b) defines a phase as a unit that is relatively independent at the two interfaces, LF and PF. At the LF side, the independence is reflected in a phase having a saturated argument structure or a full propositional structure. At the PF side, independence means that a phase constitutes a separate phonological unit (phonological or intonational phrase).

In the extensional sense, phases are traditionally defined as CP and v*P, where v* stands for a verb with full argument structure, namely a verb with an external argument. Chomsky excludes passives and unaccusatives as possible phase heads. However, Legate (2003) shows that passive and unaccusative verbs exhibit exactly the same phasal properties as transitives. For the purposes of the present thesis I assume an extended definition of the verb phase, without recourse to the
verb’s argument structure. This means that unaccusative and passive VPs can also be phases in my account. Recently, DP has been argued to be another candidate for phasehood. I consider this to be a viable hypothesis. However, for the present work two phases are of crucial importance – the clausal phase and the verbal phase.

Following Chomsky (2005a, b), I assume that the structure is built by the operation Merge which can be of two kinds: internal or external. External Merge mainly satisfies theta-requirements. Internal Merge is what is otherwise known as Move. The derivation is assumed to proceed strictly by phase. A phase head, or rather its features, triggers all the operations. Phase head features are classified into Agree- and Edge-type. Chomsky defines Agree-features as $\varphi$-features and Edge-features are those that relate to scope-discourse properties. He discusses only one Edge-feature – [wh]. In the spirit of Rizzi (1997), I take other discourse properties to be instantiated by proper syntactic features, such as [Topic], [Focus], [Focus], [wh] are the Edge features which will be our primary concern in this work. Agree-features, in the present account, are those that instantiate all sort of formal features, such as [Tense], [Aspect], [\(\varphi\)], etc. Checking of Agree-features gives rise to A-chains. Edge-features trigger construction of A’-chains.

Chomsky (2005b) introduces an important revision to the way feature checking is carried out and chains are constructed. Namely, mixed chains of the form A-A-A’ are precluded. It is proposed instead that Agree and Edge features are checked in parallel with homogeneous A and A’ chains being built. To illustrate the point, a wh-question like (52a) is assumed to be derived as in (52b).

(52) a. Who phoned me?

b. $[CP \text{whow} [C^\circ [TP \text{whow} [ T^o [vP \text{whow phoned me }]]]]]$

Both the $\varphi$-feature of T$^o$ (assumed to be inherited from C$^\circ$) and the [wh]-feature of C$^\circ$ probe down and find the goal who$^o$, i.e. a wh-word in its first-Merge position. The two features are checked in parallel and two chains are formed anchored to the same foot: who$^o$-who$^o$ and who$^o$-who$^o$. There is no derivational link between who$^o$ and who$^o$ as was previously assumed in the theory. The assumption is that once Agree-features are checked the chain becomes invisible and nothing can be extracted from the head position of the constructed A-chain to satisfy an Edge-feature. That is why the head of the A-chain in (52b) is not PF visible, which is indicated by strikethrough. A specific property of Edge positions is that once an element is raised to the Edge it has to be spelled-out there. This condition is reminiscent of the Criterial Freezing (Rizzi 2004), which is also adopted in the present work.

Criterial Freezing concerns Edge-phenomena. Rizzi argues that criterial features, which are the same as Edge-features, cannot be checked in passing. Once a constituent is raised to an Edge/criterial-position it gets ‘frozen’ in place and cannot move further.

Finally, in my analysis I am relying on Relativized Minimality as worked out in Rizzi (2001a). The author argues that a coarse A versus A’ distinction is not
sufficient for a formulation of locality principles. The conventional view was that an element in an A-position is an intervener for another A-movement across it, while an element in an A'-position blocks A'-movement to a still higher A'-position. Rizzi argues that A'-movement, i.e. Edge-feature driven movement, must be further subcategorized according to which Edge-feature is checked. For instance, it is shown that a topicalized phrase does not function as an intervener for the purposes of wh-movement or focus-movement. Similarly, some types of adverbial modifiers block wh-movement across them while others do not. All of the mentioned movements are of the A'-type, but locality conditions imposed on them are obviously different. To capture the facts, Rizzi proposes that locality conditions constrain movement of elements of the same type, where type is established on the basis of the feature typology given in (53).

(53) Argument: person, number, gender, case
Quantificational: focus, wh, negation, etc.
Modifier: negative, celerative, epistemic, etc.
Topic

Therefore, movement of a quantificational constituent is blocked by an intervening quantificational element. Similarly, case driven movement of an argument can be disturbed if there is another argument requiring case on the way. The only special specie in (53) is Topic. Rizzi proposes that a topic does not affect movement of the other topic. As will be shown in chapter five, this assumption might require some modification. The proposed Minimality theory results in a very fine-grained cartography of A'-positions (54), which I largely adopt in my work.

(54) \[
\text{[ForceP Forceo} \text{[TopP Topo} \text{[InterP Intero} \text{[TopP Topo} \text{[FocP Foco} \text{[ModP Modo} \\
\text{[TopP Topo} \text{[FinP Fino} \text{]}}]
\]
\]

1.3.2 Feature checking: Pesetsky and Torrego (2007)
In the present work, I follow the algorithm of feature checking developed by Pesetsky and Torrego (2007). The authors propose that there are two independent components to a certain syntactic feature: interpretability and valuation. As a result, the following types of features are distinguished: (i) interpretable but unvalued; (ii) interpretable and valued; (iii) uninterpretable but valued, (iv) uninterpretable and unvalued. What is supposed to drive the derivation is valuation of features, rather than interpretability (contra Chomsky 2001). In other words, only heads endowed with features of type (i) or (iv) can act as Probes, whereas Goals should bear features of type (ii) or (iii). Features enter into an Agree relation. Agreement is understood as feature sharing and is defined as in (55).
(55) Agree
(i) an unvalued feature F (a probe) on a head H at syntactic location \(\alpha\) \((F_\alpha)\) scans its c-command domain for another instance of F (a goal) at location \(\beta\) \((F_\beta)\) with which to agree.
(ii) Replace \(F_\alpha\) with \(F_\beta\) so that the same feature is present in both locations.

Interpretability does not anymore act as a trigger in this model. It is maintained that uninterpretable features should be “painted blue” by LF, since they are not legitimate LF objects. However, it is proposed that what is deleted is not the feature as such, but rather an individual instance of this feature at some location in the structure.

Let us see how exactly this model works taking Pesetsky and Torrego’s illustration of [Tense] feature checking. The whole process is schematized in (56).

(56) \[ T^0 \leftarrow \text{Agree} \rightarrow [\_ \text{walked}] \rightarrow T^0 \ [\_ \text{walked}] \]

For a language in which tense morphology occurs on the verb rather than on the Tense node itself, it is assumed that the lexical verb enters the derivation with a valued but uninterpretable \([uT+past]\) feature. \(T^0\), on the other hand, carries an unvalued but interpretable \([iT]\). \([iT]\) starts searching its c-command domain until it hits \([uT+past]\) on the verb. The two agree and as a result the value of the goal gets shared with the probe, which is indicated as indices in the square brackets in (56). Before agreement they were two distinct occurrences of the [T] feature. After agreement they become one occurrence of \(T[2]\) with two instances at two locations: \(T^0\) and \(v^0\). At LF one instance, that on the finite verb, becomes invisible. But the feature content of the two nodes is indistinguishable since both carry the same value.

1.3.3 Accommodating [Topic]/[Focus] within Minimalism
An objective of the present thesis is to provide a syntactic account of word order variations in Russian. As mentioned earlier, these variations are IS-driven. Within the theoretical model outlined above it means that the initial numeration must include [Topic] and [Focus] features. This assumption has always been a point of discord.

[Topic] and [Focus] are often expelled as righteous syntactic features (see e.g. Szendröi 2001, Brunetti 2003, Slioussar 2007) on the assumption that they violate the Inclusiveness Condition. This Condition requires that no new syntactic objects are added in course of the derivation apart from those that were initially included into the Numeration. Topic and Focus are relational in nature, i.e. they are identified on the basis of the relation between the denotation of the given item and the proposition. Features, on the other hand, must be properties of particular lexical items. Furthermore, as shown above, syntactic focus and pragmatic Focus do not always map one-to-one. For instance, focus marking on the direct object can encode Focus on the entire proposition. In this case the [Focus] feature on a lexical item does not seem to contribute to the interpretation of that particular item alone.
As a counterbalance to the antagonists of [Topic] and [Focus], Aboh (2007a) argues that the Inclusiveness Condition does not invalidate but, on the opposite, implies the existence of these features. The strongest argument of Aboh comes from languages with morphological topic/focus makers. One such language he discusses is Gungbe. This West African language exhibits dedicated morphemes for topic (yà) and focus (wẹ). These are not used to express any other meanings. Importantly, topic and focus are not only signaled by the morphemes but they occur in dedicated syntactic positions at the left periphery of the clause in a strict order - Topic > Focus. Moreover, the focus morpheme in Gungbe is an obligatory constituent of a wh-question and an elliptical sentence akin to English I know he bought something but I don’t remember what. Wh-movement and ellipsis are both considered to be derived in syntax. Given the connection between focus morpheme and wh-questions/ellipses in Gungbe, it is not obvious why focus should be given some special non-syntactic treatment. Furthermore, the author points to the fact that cross-linguistically a question requires a particular answer. For example, if a language allows for both ex-situ and in-situ strategy for a wh-question, the choice of one or the other predetermines whether the substitute for the wh-word in the answer occurs in situ or ex situ. In other words, the syntactic form of a question is copied in the answer. As a rule, the ex-situ option requires the presence of a focus marker.

The above discussion triggers a question - where do these discourse markers come from? Or, on a general note, how is focus marking in the answer in a question-answer pair carried out? The Inclusiveness Condition requires that the resulting product of the derivation is composed only of what has been included into the Numeration. Aboh therefore assumes that IS meanings also come from the Lexicon, much as markers for other type of information, e.g. Number, Tense, Case, Aspect, etc. Morphosyntactic cues have always been taken as motivation for the existence of independent functional heads. Note Chomsky’s (2001: 4) quote given below:

\[(57)\] The existence of these features [talking about [EPP], [φ], and [Case]] is a question of fact: does L(anguage) have these properties or not? If it does (as appears to be the case), we have to recognize the fact and seek to explain it […]

The explanation mentioned in the quote usually boils down to including the given features into the Numeration and operating on them in course of the derivation. In light of (57), Aboh is right and in order to explain wh-/focus correspondence and the morphological evidence coming from languages like Gungbe, we have to include [Topic] and [Focus] into the Lexicon and consequently into the Numeration.

To further substantiate the idea I am going to illustrate that [Topic] and [Focus] can be checked in exactly the same way as other well-recognized features. The proposal is cast within the model of Pesetsky and Torrego (2007), described above.

One of the problems with [Topic] and [Focus] often noted before is that they do not conform to the conventional way of feature checking, whereby an
uninterpretable-interpretable pair is of crucial importance. Rizzi (1997) resolves this issue by treating Topic and Focus as Criteria satisfaction rather than feature checking, because they must be interpretable on the attracting head and on the attractee and cannot be deleted. However, the revised feature-checking-as-feature-sharing approach helps to avoid the problem of LF interpretability. Features are not deleted in this model. Moreover the distinction between value and interpretability allows to treat [Topic]/[Focus] on a par with other features, say [Tense]. Let me illustrate how the system can work using [Focus].

I assume that the feature properties of the functional head Foc\(\circ\) can be represented as \(iF[\ ]\), i.e. it is interpretable but lacks a value. The focused lexical item carries the feature \(uF[\text{val}]\), i.e. the feature is uninterpretable but valued. Value here can be understood as ‘what type of information is provided’. For concreteness we can take the value to correspond to something like [location], [manner], [event], etc., depending on what type of constituent is focused. Thus, what I mean by lack of value with respect to Foc\(\circ\) is that it does not have any content. It is like a blank billboard, and anything that can appear on it would count as Information. The feature on the lexical item is uninterpretable in the sense that it gets interpreted as focus only once it occurs in the clause. There is nothing inherently focal about, for instance, a noun or a verb. Using the billboard metaphor, a constituent becomes Information only after it appears on the billboard. Based on the representation in (56) the [Focus] checking can be schematized as in (58).

(58) a. Tim left YESTERDAY.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Foc}\circ & \xleftarrow{\text{Agree}} \text{XP} & \text{Foc}\circ & \text{XP} \\
iF[\ ] & uF[\text{time}] & iF[\text{time}] & iF[\text{time}]
\end{align*}
\]

The features are present from the very start in the derivation. As soon as Foc\(\circ\) is merged into the structure it starts scanning its c-command domain for a matching feature which can ensure valuation. As soon as it hits F[\text{val}] on the adverbial, the value is copied to Foc\(\circ\) and the features of these two distinct syntactic objects become one and the same feature. When the structure is shipped to LF the focused constituent gets the relevant interpretation even though the Focus feature on the item itself was uninterpretable. This happens due to feature sharing: the feature content of the focused phrase and the Foc\(\circ\) are indistinguishable at LF.

This model of agreement has the following benefits. First and foremost, no special properties need to be stipulated for [Topic] and [Focus]. Second, it preserves the intuition about the relational nature of Focus/Topic: a lexical item cannot be interpreted as focus or topic by itself. It gets the interpretation only after entering into agreement with the corresponding functional head.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The primary goal of this thesis is to account for word order permutations in Russian, which were said to reflect the IS. However, to start with, we should have a clear picture of what the structure of an unmarked SVO sentence is. This issue is taken up in the next chapter. There, I am going to focus on the lower part of the
clause corresponding roughly to the verb phrase. Two issues will be touched upon. First, I will address the issue of verb movement and identify the lowest position a finite verb can occupy in the clause. Second, I will look at the base position and the relative order of internal arguments, since the base position of the subject is quite uncontroversial. Chapter three presents a detailed description of the word order/IS correspondence in Russian. One of the issues thoroughly investigated in this chapter is the interpretive effect of focus fronting. In chapter four, I present and critically discuss the existing analyses of Russian scrambling. Chapter five is devoted to my own analysis worked out within the cartographic approach (Rizzi 1997, 2001a,b, Belletti 2001, 2004, Benincà and Poletto 2001). The discussion is structured around two main issues: the role of CP and the role of vP in encoding the IS. It is argued that part of the structure present at the clausal left periphery is replicated on top of the vP phase. The make up and the interrelation between the two peripheral domains are investigated. In chapter six, the wh-movement is considered. In particular, I am interested in the question of why the distribution of focus in Russian partly differs from the distribution of wh-words. After having reviewed some earlier analyses, I propose that Russian must be grouped together with the so-called optional wh-movement languages like French. Chapter seven concludes the thesis. Some ideas concerning cross-linguistic validity of the proposed analysis of Russian scrambling are presented.