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DISCUSSION NOTES†

The Bloomfield-Jakobson Correspondence, 1944–1946

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The thirty letters and postcards reproduced in the Appendix to this article were written by Leonard Bloomfield to Roman Jakobson between February 25, 1944, and December 19, 1946. The correspondence not only sheds light on the relations between the two scholars and their rather different personalities but also provides insight into their quite divergent scientific views and approaches. It is to be regretted that Jakobson's side of the correspondence is not available. As Jakobson did not have a secretary, no copies were made of his letters. Inquiries made for me at the Yale University libraries, where some of Bloomfield's papers are housed, have failed to locate any letters from Jakobson to Bloomfield.

Jakobson arrived in the USA in the summer of 1941, in the middle of the second world war. In spite of many attempts, he was unable to obtain a regular university appointment during the war. I know from conversations with Jakobson that he had extensive negotiations with the University of Chicago and that Zellig Harris tried at one point to obtain an appointment for him at the University of Pennsylvania. None of these attempts was successful and, as we shall see in a moment, there is some indication that the failures were due to an active effort to block Jakobson from ever obtaining a regular university position in the United States. As a result he spent the war years lecturing at L'Ecole Libre des Hautes Etudes, the so-called University-in-Exile, which was organized at the New School for Social Research in New York. It was only in 1946 that Jakobson succeeded in being appointed to a regular faculty position at Columbia University.

During the war years, the American Council of Learned Societies had obtained a substantial grant from the Rockefeller Foundation for the training of teachers and the preparation of teaching material for foreign languages needed

† Editor's note: The two Notes in this section are based on papers presented at the Symposium marking the centennial of the birth of Leonard Bloomfield. The Symposium, held at the 1987 LSA Meeting in San Francisco, was co-chaired by Eric Hamp and Michael Silverstein.

* This is a revised and expanded version of a paper presented on December 28, 1987, at the Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America. The Bloomfield-Jakobson correspondence is part of the papers of Roman Jakobson (MC-72) located in the Manuscript Collection, Institute Archives and Special Collections, MIT Libraries, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Most of the papers date from 1942 and later—i.e. from the period of Jakobson's residence in the USA—since, with the exception of Trubetzkoy's letters to Jakobson, most of Jakobson's papers and archive were lost when Jakobson left Czechoslovakia for Denmark in the spring of 1939. I am grateful to Helen Samuels, Institute Archivist, for permission to publish these letters, and to Michael Silverstein for providing to me relevant materials of whose existence I was unaware. This work was supported in part by the Center for Cognitive Science, MIT.

by the military.¹ Bloomfield was a major participant in these activities. He wrote one of the two main manuals on methodology, the *Outline guide for the practical study of foreign languages*; he wrote both volumes of the *Spoken Dutch* course and co-authored (with Luba Petrova) the text of *Spoken Russian* as well as the grammatical introduction for the War Department's *Russian Dictionary*. And it appears that it was in connection with Bloomfield's work on the Russian course that he got to know Jakobson.

The correspondence begins with a postcard dated February 28, 1944, in which Bloomfield thanks Jakobson for a reprint of Jakobson's 1936 'Beitrag zur allgemeinen Kasuslehre' that Jakobson had lent him in consequence of a visit that Jakobson had paid to Bloomfield in New Haven. It is clear from the tone of the very first cards and letters that the two scholars 'hit it off'. Bloomfield, who was rather reserved in his dealings with others, was forthcoming and open in his relations with Jakobson. Already in his second letter to Jakobson (of March 28, 1944) he speaks openly about the difficulties that Jakobson was experiencing in integrating himself into American linguistics. Bloomfield writes: '... I heard yesterday a rather shocking story of how you had been treated in connection with your coming to this country. This ... may be inaccurate, but even if it is half true, it is bad enough.' The 'shocking story' evidently refers to the cause of the difficulties that Jakobson had in finding a university position.² Bloomfield then goes on to explain that there is no likelihood of a position for Jakobson at Yale and offers to 'write to people' to help Jakobson get a job. The possibility of an appointment at Yale is discussed again in the letter of April 16, 1945 (#11), and again Bloomfield is pessimistic about Jakobson's chances.

The first major scientific issue discussed by Bloomfield concerns the definitions of the meaning of the grammatical cases that Jakobson proposed in his 1936 'Kasuslehre'. Bloomfield writes (#2, March 28, 1944):

'... you have not persuaded me (I am sorry to say) to give up the very unpleasant view that our machinery for stating meanings is not good enough to help much with meanings as subtle and abstract as, say, the meaning of a case in an IE language. That is, after reading ... your exposition, I am no better at predicting R[ussian] case constructions than I was before... I can enjoy your statements as a subtle and sensitive description *post factum* of what you say in Russian; and I can profit by learning the examples... But I have not learned to predict (or in practical terms, to use the forms correctly)... In sum, I believe we have still to find a way of stating subtle meanings unambiguously & effectively. I hope it won't turn out to be just lists, e.g., of verbs that take dative object, etc.'

¹ For an account of these activities, see Cowan 1975.

² From conversations that I had with Jakobson and with others in a position to know I gather that the 'shocking story' had its origins in the concern felt at the time by a number of American linguists that—as R. A. Hall (1969:194) put it—'positions (for which they had trained and were eminently qualified) [not be] snatched from under their noses and given to European refugees'. It seems that a few individuals were moved to express this concern by mailing to Jakobson a dollar bill bearing their signatures and suggesting that he use the dollar as down payment on a return ticket to Europe at the earliest feasible moment. Jakobson's reception in America has also been discussed by Sebeok 1977 and Read 1987. Read's recollections are at variance with what I have been able to discover either in the documentary record or from conversations with knowledgeable persons.

Bloomfield returns to the issue of the meaning of the cases in his next letter (#3, April 29, 1944). He writes: '... although I can see no better way of making such definitions, I do not think that even the best that we have is properly scientific; that is, a properly qualified reader, after studying the best such definitions, cannot by a mechanical procedure predict the use of cases, for instance—as he can, for example, predict the unvoicing of final stops and spirants in St[andard] R[ussian]'. To illustrate his views further Bloomfield sends Jakobson 'a popular article about meaning' which, according to Bloomfield, 'contains no contribution, but just says how I feel about this phase of our work'.³

The relationship between linguistics and psychology and matters connected with this issue are discussed in Bloomfield's letter #11 of April 16, 1945. Responding to a letter of Jakobson's, Bloomfield writes:

'I will confess to you frankly that I was somewhat taken aback by your statement about non-psychologizing. Of course I know that the fault to which you refer has been very rare for a long time—certainly since Delbrueck (about 1901) spoke of this matter, and I haven't suspected you or any reputable linguist of resorting to it. I don't care and in most instances I don't know whether in his basic assumptions any given linguistic scholar assumes mental factors or not. It seems to me to be a question of basic assumptions, working hypotheses about which one cannot argue, but can only wait and see what they give one in the way of results. Some 25 years ago I stated my basic assumptions in print; quite a few people expressed their disagreement, but no one abused me. There were and are only a few people, mostly outside of linguistics, who made similar assumptions. It is only in the last year or two that several people have started to speak abusively of me for having said things with which they disagree, and to create the fiction of a "School", which enables them to set up a system of collective responsibility. (Am I chauvinistic if I say that this was not started by any American workers, but by Spitzer and Whatmough?)⁴ Anyway, except that it provides an occasional topic of conversation, I don't see that there is any importance in divergence as to basic assumptions. The chances, if one may judge by experience, are that if you should look into the background of the assumptions that I make ... you would disagree with them, and I see no harm in it. Well, in view of all the circumstances, you can see that it gives me an odd feeling when you assure me that you don't disagree with me about one or another question. It would be strange if you didn't; when you do, I can often learn from you... All I would wish for is that people when they disagree should not resort to vulgar abuse and attempts at injury—and this is something of which I know you to be incapable.'

Bloomfield is adverting here no doubt to matters that were in the background of his polemical 1944 article 'Secondary and tertiary responses to language', which includes a sharp response to Spitzer's attack on Bloomfield and others for their antimentalism.

A very large part of the correspondence concerns detailed questions of Russian grammar. During the spring and summer of 1945 Bloomfield apparently arranged for Jakobson to be hired to review the second volume of *Spoken Russian* and discussed with him numerous questions of Russian usage, syntax,

³ The article in question apparently is 'Meaning', reprinted in Hockett (1970:400–5).

⁴ Leo Spitzer (1887–1960), a Romance philologist of Austrian origin, was on the faculty of the Johns Hopkins University. He is best known for his literary stylistic studies and as the editor of the *Schuchardt Brevier*, a selection from the writings of Hugo Schuchardt, who had become famous in the 1880s for his fight against the Neo-Grammarians doctrine of the exceptionless functioning of the sound laws. Joshua Whatmough (1897–1964), a scholar of British origin, was professor of linguistics at Harvard University. His major area of research was the Italic dialects.

and phonology. And it is during this period that their correspondence is especially frequent.

Upon receipt of Jakobson's corrections to Units 20 and 21, Bloomfield writes (letter #16 of May 29, 1945): 'Of course, I am making all the changes you suggest; the exceptions follow here, and if you have time you can help by commenting.' Among the questions raised by Bloomfield is one about Jakobson's suggestion that Russian *děvuška* be translated as 'girl' rather than 'young woman'.

'Here I think each of us is troubled by the values of the other's language. If *děvuška* is an adult, not yet married, "girl" alone can render it in slangy speech when the situation is clear, but otherwise would imply an immature person. "Young girl" would be nearer, but implies she has just recently reached maturity. "Young woman" would seem to me to be the nearest equivalent, but I have changed to "young girl" because of your comment.'

For some reason the Yale library had managed to acquire only three of the four volumes of Ušakov's 1935–1940 Russian dictionary and was unable to obtain the second volume for Bloomfield. As a result Bloomfield had to borrow it from Jakobson. As his letters show, Bloomfield studied the dictionary with extreme care. He observes, for example, that the dictionary gives accentual doublets for different prefixed forms of the Russian verb *rvát'* 'to tear', and in letter #12 of April 27, 1945, Bloomfield asks, 'Is this real? Or is it carelessness or pedantry?' He remarks that he 'can't find out about long consonants. Ushakov occasionally tells one when the consonant is short although the orthography has double letter (e.g., under *subbóta* ('Saturday')), but he does not carry this out [consistently]: no comment, for instance, under *rússkij*' (Letter #17 of June 1, 1945).

In letter #11 of April 16, 1945, Bloomfield comments on a Russian grammar by George L. Trager of which Jakobson had published—or was about to publish—a highly critical review (Jakobson 1944d): 'So far as I can see—that is, in matters which are known to me which I can look up—your criticisms of Trager's statements were right. I think you were wrong about the use of [j] as a sign for palatalized consonants: the saving, typographically is all important; ... But this is a question not of Russian grammar, but of literary style.' We know from Bloomfield's letter to J. M. Cowan of January 5, 1945 (mistakenly dated by Bloomfield 1944), that Bloomfield was quite unhappy about Trager's work and thought that Jakobson's criticism 'is justified' (see Cowan 1987).⁵

The discussions of Russian grammatical problems led Jakobson to propose to Bloomfield that they collaborate in the writing of a grammar of Russian. Bloomfield clearly liked the idea, but pointed out that he had too little practical knowledge of the language. He hesitated therefore to become an official co-

⁵ In that letter Bloomfield also expressed the belief that Jakobson would not publish the review. As indicated above, the review was published. It is perhaps significant that Jakobson did not choose to reprint it in his *Selected Writings* (The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter, 1962–), in spite of the fact that the review contains many original observations about Russian that Jakobson never found occasion to publish elsewhere.

author of the projected volume, but he was eager to see such a volume produced. On receipt of Jakobson's answers to his questions on the phonology of unstressed vowels in Russian, Bloomfield wrote (#18, June 8, 1945): 'Incidentally, this should show the best way of getting a Russian grammar: I will ask questions or point out gaps in such books as I have'. He returns to the projected grammar in the next letter (#19, no date): 'I am looking forward to the Russian grammar, and shall be glad to help, especially by raising questions—but I can't see myself as a collaborator, since even the simplest matters go beyond my knowledge.' The project is mentioned once again, in letter #21 of July 26, 1945: 'I do hope you will write the Russian grammar, and I promise to help you in every way I can; if your conscience demands it you can speak of this in the preface—but it would be presumption for me to figure as a co-author—the simplest things in Russian baffle me, for I've never heard the language spoken under anything like normal circumstances.' He speaks of the volume again in his postcard #22 of October 22, 1945, at a time when *Spoken Russian* had gone to press and Bloomfield was slowly returning to his pre-war pursuits: 'I have forgotten what little Russian I ever knew but I am still very much interested in the descriptive grammar and will be glad to help all I can'.

When Jakobson's enthusiasm for the projected grammar seems to wane, Bloomfield tries to rekindle it. On January 4, 1946 (#25), he writes: 'It is good to know that you are energetic again. Do try to find time for some topic of Russian grammar... As a practical matter (and also as a benefaction to the public) even an elementary Russian grammar would be a wise move.' In letter #26 of February 13, 1946, he expresses his pleasure on learning of Jakobson's appointment to a professorship at Columbia: 'For myself, of course, this is especially gratifying because of what I can learn from our talks and from helping with the Russian grammar. I hope you will be able to get at this soon. I suggest beginning with the a-declension, say with accent shift and enclisis in the accusative singular...'

Unfortunately, these plans were not to be realized. On May 27, 1946, Bloomfield suffered a stroke from which he never fully recovered. Jakobson apparently wrote to Bloomfield and offered to visit him, but Bloomfield was beyond this. His last letter, dated December 19, 1946, is reproduced here. The text of this letter and above all the shaky signature at its end render further comment superfluous.⁶

⁶ This letter and #15 of May 15, 1945 are the only items in the correspondence that were not written longhand by Bloomfield. These two letters were typed by the secretary of the Yale linguistics department, Eleanor Hill.

YALE UNIVERSITY
LINGUISTICS

December 19, 1946.

Professor Roman Jakobson,
Department of East European Languages,
Columbia University,
New York 27, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Jakobson:

Thank you for your letter of December 10th. I shall be very glad to see you when I can. But at present I can not carry on a conversation of any length, and it would not be worth your while to come here merely to exchange greetings. As soon as I am in better shape, I shall let you know.

I am no longer living at the hotel, but with a colleague. My wife has been in a sanatorium since November 27th.

Best wishes of the Season to you and Mrs. Jakobson.

Sincerely,



L3:h

APPENDIX: THE CORRESPONDENCE⁷

1

date stamped on reverse, February 28, 1944

Dear Mr. Jakobson—

Thank you for the reprint from TCLP 6.⁸ I shall read it with great interest then return it to you. It was a great treat to have you here. *Vsego xorošego!* ['All good (wishes)!']

As ever,
LB

2

March 28, 1944.

Dear Jakobson—

All this time I have been waiting for leisure to read the case study and to answer properly. Yesterday, our first day after the end of ASTP Russian, was still upset, and I have not yet finished reading the Russian case study.

In the meantime Miss Petrova has spoken of you in a way that disquieted me and in fact has made it painful to write. She said that you were hard up for a job and were placing your hope in Yale. Of course, I imagine that any such report is inaccurate, but even without being told, I can see the basis. I can see it especially as I heard yesterday a rather shocking story of how you had been treated in connection with your coming to this country. This too may have been inaccurate,

⁷ The Russian words and phrases in these letters were written by Bloomfield in Cyrillic script. I have transliterated them and provided translations in square brackets.

⁸ Jakobson 1936.

but even if it is only half true, it is bad enough. Therefore it is painful to have to write about the situation here; had I written to you even a week ago, I should not have felt it necessary to mention it. There is no prospect here of an appointment in Slavic languages. If the army should send another ASTP group, it would be run on the same makeshift basis as this last one. Apart from the army, if there should be demand for elementary Russian, the plan would be to train a drill master, not Russian but American, who would work with informants. Of course, all this may change, but this is the present prospect. If it is true that the job question is serious, please don't hesitate to have me write to people.

The main point at the beginning of the Russian case study is for me a matter of definition, hence inescapably true. Each case is a formal feature of the language, regardless of any varieties or irregularities of inflection. Any features common to all the situations in which the forms of any one case are used, constitute the meaning of that case.

Beyond that, I have read some of the statements of meaning that you give, but not all of them, and not with sufficient care. Up to the present, you have not persuaded me (I am sorry to say) to give up the very unpleasant view that our machinery for stating meanings is not good enough to help much with meanings as subtle and abstract as, say, the meaning of a case in an IE language. That is, after reading (to the extent that I have) your exposition, I am no better at predicting R case construction than I was before. If I had not memorized the special case, I could still say (as I once did) *blagodarjú* ['I thank'] with dat. Last night, practising, I used *soobščít'* ['to communicate'] with accusative. That is (as far as I have got) I can enjoy your statements as a subtle and sensitive description *post factum* of what you say in Russian; and I can profit by learning the examples (why are they in transliteration rather than transcription?) But I have not learned to predict (or in practical terms, to use the forms correctly). However, if I may keep the pamphlet a while longer, I will study some more. In sum, I believe we have still to find a way of stating subtle meanings unambiguously & effectively. I hope it won't turn out to be just lists (of verbs that take dative object, etc.).

Please write when you have time.

Best wishes—and please ignore the first page of this letter if it is impertinent or irrelevant.

As ever—

Leonard Bloomfield

3

April 29, 1944.

Dear Jakobson—

It was very good to get your letter of the 7th; have been wanting to write, but personal turmoils and depressions have kept me upset. Also, I am at last sending back your case article reprint. It seems to me to go as far one can go today in the direction of defining highly abstract meanings of this kind. For a reader as foreign as I am to the language concerned, a big dose of examples from the commonest everyday sphere might help, but so far as statements by a sensitive native observer go, I can't see how one could do more. I think I differ from you only in an academic question: Although I can see no better way of making such definitions, I do not think that even the best we have is properly scientific; that is, a properly qualified reader, after studying the best such definitions, cannot by a mechanical process predict the use of cases, for instance—as he can, for example predict the unvoicing of final stops or spirants in St(andard) R(ussian). So I am sending you a reprint of a popular article about meaning—it contains no contribution, but just says how I feel about this phase of our work.⁹

When you get time, please write. I heard about organizing a linguistics group in New York and of course am interested, but afraid of having to go to meetings or be on committees. When you write, please give me references to that Serbian writer's articles on Russian—I have lost the slip on which I wrote his name.¹⁰

Best wishes—

as ever

Leonard Bloomfield

⁹ See note 3.

¹⁰ Košutić 1911–1919. See also letter #4.

4

July 30, '44

Dear Jakobson—

I was glad to hear from you, but very sorry to hear you had been ailing and had missed the summer at Chicago. Thanks very much for the references to Koshutich.¹¹

I haven't answered before because my wife's illness was going through critical ups and downs and I could do nothing but work. Now she is much better, and I am picking up threads again.

Please let me know of your plans and, if you can, visit us here. It is really not hard to run up for a day.

Vsego xorošego! ['All good (wishes)!']

As ever
Leonard Bloomfield

5

Sept 1, 1944

Dear Jakobson—

Thank you for the two reprints. The St. Constantine seems most interesting (for the hagiography I lack the prerequisites).¹²

Best wishes—

Sincerely,
Leonard Bloomfield

6

September 11, '44

Dear Jakobson—

It would be a great treat for us all if you would come up here. I am out of town Tuesdays and Saturdays; any other day would be all right.

Best wishes—

as ever
LB

7

Nov 18 '44

Dear Jakobson—

It was a great pleasure to get your letter, and I thank you also for the magazine with the Igor translation.¹³ Only you overestimate my field of competence. I know Igor only by name, and as for Russian literary history, all I do is every few years to read *Crime & Punishment*.

Your sickness must have been a great nuisance—and you have certainly had a lot to contend with. I hope things will improve for you soon.

My talk to the Linguistic Club was only the annual orientation lecture for new students—but I hope you will find it possible to come up to Linguistic Club meetings, and, if you have a topic, to let Sturtevant know it & put you down for an evening.

On October 7th I fetched my wife from the hospital & we spent 2 weeks in the country and then came here, where we are living at the hotel, as before. She is quite well and cheerful—so I too am now alive again.

Vsego lučšego! ['All the best!']

As ever
Leonard Bloomfield

8

Jan 5 '45

Dear Jakobson—

Thank you for telling me about the Circle and the new journal. It is always a great pleasure to get a number of *Language* or of *IJAL*—and now this kind of pleasure will come more frequently. I hope the journal will be successful. The hard thing is getting enough interesting papers.

¹¹ See note 10.

¹² See Jakobson 1944a and 1944b.

¹³ Jakobson 1944c. At this time Jakobson was working on an edition of the Igor' Tale, a twelfth century Russian epic poem. The results of these investigations were ultimately published by Gre-goire, Jakobson, & Szeftel 1948.

Of course I should send a ms & submit it if I had anything, but I am working under pressure at the odd jobs of which you know, and don't get time to do anything real. As soon as things clear up, I shall try to write something.

I hope we can see you here soon, at Ling Club meetings or otherwise.

We have vols 1,3,4 of Ushakov & can't get vol 2.

Ushakov glosses *bégat'* ['to run'] in the main like *xodít'* ['to go']. Am I right in thinking that *bégat'* is used only of complex action, but *xodít'* both of complex action and of repeated action? That is, (*Káždyj dén'...*) *ja xožú v vánnuju ...* ['(Every day ...) I go to the bathroom ...'], but (*Káždyj dén'...*) *ja begú* (not *bégaju*) *v vánnuju ...* ['(Every day ... I run (def.), (not I run (indef.)) to the bathroom ...']

Best wishes for the new year.

As ever—

Leonard Bloomfield

9

March 21 '45

Dear Jakobson—

Thank you for volume 2 of Ushakov; it is a godsend to have it. I will return it on April 10th, unless you need it earlier.

Hope to see you here soon. Best greetings to Mrs. Jakobson.

As ever

Leonard Bloomfield

10

April 6 '45

Dear Jakobson—

I am swamped with the time-limit job for which I borrowed your Ushakov; the limit is April 15th & then I'll send it back, and also answer you decently.

As a result the 2d level work is halted till then. If you have finished the units you have, return them & I can profit from the corrections for the following part.

If you get time, let me have Mrs. Yampolski's address.

Best wishes—

as ever

LB

11

April 16 '45

Dear Jakobson—

At last I have finished the introduction to the Russian dictionary—a piece of work for which I was not qualified, apart from the fact that I had only a month in which to do it. I am returning volume 2 of Ushakov; it was a great help to have it, and I am very much obliged to you for lending it to me. —Ushakov omits a great deal that he ought to tell, especially in such matters as choice of prepositions with nouns, enclitic nouns after stressed preposition (I don't even find *ná ključ* ['under lock and key']), semantic distinctions in verbs (he usually gives examples for only one of a pair of verbs that differ only in aspect) or in genuine past passive participles versus adjectives that resemble them. —I can't agree with you about Vassmer's re-edition of Berneker's little grammar: omissions and oversights have been taken into the new edition. Thus, p. 85, *odin* ['one'] inflects "ganz wie" *sám* ['alone, self'] (acc. fem!); p. 87 numbers treated as if the nom-acc were the only form. Both slips are taken over from Berneker. Also the confusing presentation on pp. 128–129. V(assmer) simply did not trouble to rewrite the book.¹⁴

I will confess to you frankly that I was somewhat taken aback by your statement about non-psychologizing. Of course I know that the fault to which you refer has been very rare for a long time—certainly since Delbrueck (about 1901) spoke of this matter, and I haven't suspected you or any reputable linguist of resorting to it. I don't care and in most instances I don't know whether

¹⁴ The German Slavist E. Berneker had published a Russian grammar in the German series *Sammlung Göschen*; in the 1930's this grammar was revised by M. Vassmer. It is this revised edition that Bloomfield criticizes here.

in his basic assumptions any given linguistic scholar assumes mental factors or not. It seems to me to be a question of basic assumptions, working hypotheses about which one cannot argue, but can only wait and see what they give one in the way of results. Some 25 years ago I stated my basic assumptions in print; quite a few people expressed their disagreement, but no one abused me. There were and are only a few people, mostly outside of linguistics, who made similar assumptions. It is only in the last year or two that several people have started to speak abusively of me for having said things with which they disagree, and to create the fiction of a "School," which enables them to set up a system of collective responsibility. (Am I chauvinistic if I say that this was not started by any American workers, but by Spitzer and Whatmough?¹⁵) Anyway, except that it provides an occasional topic of conversation, I don't see that there is any importance in divergence as to basic assumptions. The chances, if one may judge by experience, are that if you should look into the background of the assumptions that I make (I don't suggest you doing it; it's hardly worth the trouble), you would disagree with them, and I see no harm in it. Well, in view of all the circumstances, you can see that it gives me an odd feeling when you assure me that you don't disagree with me about one or another question. It would be strange if you didn't; when you do, I can often learn from you (and have, in the past). All I could wish for is that people when they do disagree, should not resort to vulgar abuse and attempts at injury—and this is something of which I know you to be incapable. I think you will find that we have in this country a very good tradition about entertaining divergent opinions and working together and even occasionally reaching agreement. When I cited a passage of Spitzer's as an example of abusive response to statements with which one disagrees, he merely printed some more abuse, instead of seeing the point.

So far as I can see, —that is, in matters which are known to me or which I can look up—your criticisms of Trager's statements about Russian were right.¹⁶ I think you were wrong about the use of [j] as a sign for palatalized consonants: the saving, typographically, is all-important; also, the symbol can then be used at the beginning of suffixes (or as a pseudo-suffix) to indicate that the presence of the suffix is accompanied by palatalization of an immediately preceding consonant, e.g. I(oc.) s(g). [-je] (and even, in certain cases, imperative [-j]). But this is a question not of Russian grammar, but of literary style.

I am very anxious to get your corrections for Units 13–18, so that I can make use of them for the later units. I hope you are not making a big job of this. Mere dogmatic correction where I am wrong is all that is needed. (I notice that Ushakov seems not to permit of Miss Petrova's use of *naprotiv* ['opposite'] as a preposition).

When you get a chance, please send me Mrs. Yampolski's address.

Best wishes to you & Mrs. Jakobson. We shall all be glad to see you here again.

I think I should tell you—though I have no real certainty—that it looks as if there should be no Slavic or Russian appointment here in the next years. The reasons are shortage of money, which is sure to be accentuated by dislocations after the war, and lack of students who could take advanced work. If we got large numbers for beginning Russian, some would want to go on, but so far there have been only very few elections of beginning Russian. I am telling you this because I know that, with your linguistic interests, you would probably prefer to come here, and I would not want you to miss other chances in the meantime—even if such an opening would serve only to tide over a few years.

As ever—
Leonard Bloomfield

12

April 27 '45

Dear Jakobson—

I have started to try getting data about verb accentuation from the 3 volumes of Ushakov that we have. For *rvar'* ['to tear'] I find the following:

¹⁵ See note 4.

¹⁶ Cf. Cowan 1987 as well as note 5.

past passive participle short F	past reflexive M	N	P
	rválsja	rválós'	rválís'
(1) sorvaná	sorválsja	sorválós'	sorválís'
	vo- " "	vo- " "	vo- " "
	za- " "	za- " "	za- " "
prorvaná	pro- " "	pro- " "	pro- " "
(2) podorvaná	podor- " "	podorválós'	podorválís'
(3) <i>perérvana</i>	<i>pererválsja</i>	pere- " "	pere- " "
(4) izórvana	izo- " "	izorválós'	izorválís'
razórvana	razo- " "	razo- " "	razo- " "
(5) dórvana	do- " "	dorválós'	dorválís'
úrvana	u- " "	u- " "	u- " "

Is this real? Or is it carelessness or pedantry?

Please don't make a lot of work for yourself on the Second Level: mere dogmatic corrections are all that is needed—a few hours should suffice. I shall be glad to get the units you have, so as to profit for the later ones.

Best wishes—

as ever

Leonard Bloomfield

(over)

Are these the right forms? (grammars don't mention the matter.)

Gdě *váši* pját' stáršix učeníkóv? ['Where are your five oldest students?']

<i>èti</i>	these
<i>vsé</i>	all

Ja vstrétil *vášix* pjátí stáršix učeníkóv. ['I met your five oldest students.']

<i>èti</i>	these
<i>vséx</i>	all

Gdě *váši* dvádcát' dvá stáršix (stáršie) učeníká? ['Where are your 22 oldest students?']

<i>èti</i>	these
<i>vsé</i>	all

Ja vstrétil *vášix* dvádcát' dvá stáršix (stáršie) učeníká. ['I met your 22 oldest students.']

<i>èti</i>	these
<i>vséx</i>	all

13

9-5-'45

Dear Jakobson—

Today I sent off the *Guide's Manual* ms. (over 100 pp.)—the Terentiev's translated the R(ussian) part—and am now released from this incubus, except for proofreading. For some time now I have been forgetting each day ¼ of the Russian that I knew the day before. If you want me to be in any shape to comment or help on a R. grammar, you had better start writing it before my R. entirely gives out.

Hope you had a good vacation.

Best wishes—

as ever

Leonard Bloomfield

14

May 15, 1945.

Professor Roman Jakobson,
Columbia University,
New York, N. Y.

Dear Jakobson:

Yesterday there was a telephone call from Washington, asking me to give them the rest of the Russian second level with all possible speed. Therefore, if circumstances prevent your making the corrections in Units 13–19 within a few days, please send them back to me as they are, and I will do the best I can. Needless to say, your corrections would mean a tremendous improvement, and I beg you to make them if you possibly can manage; I shall then send you the rest of the units as I get them ready. The whole thing should not be more than two or three days' work at the outside, since arbitrary corrections of mistakes or less desirable forms will suffice.

Please let me hear from you in any case.

With best regards,

sincerely,
Leonard Bloomfield

LB:h

15

May 15 '45

Dear Jakobson—

Just after I wrote this morning I got your letter & the corrected Units. Your comments are exactly what I hoped for and will be invaluable. I will give you the other units as we go along. Yesterday I was told that this is to be a rush job.

I am sorry you were ill & hope you are all right again.

May 22d will be all right. I shall expect you towards noon & we can have a dinner together.

Best regards to Mrs. Jakobson.

As ever—
Leonard Bloomfield

16

May 29, '45

Dear Jakobson—

Thank you very much for Units 20 & 21; it is a great help, apart from the manual itself, to get your comments, for they throw light on many features. Of course I am making all the changes you suggest; the exceptions follow here, and if you have time you can help by commenting.

Čtó-ž tepér ['What now?'] From Ushakov I get the impression that they now use space before *ž*: *čtó ž tepér*. Is that right?

Prostíte, čto já ne příxal vó-vremja ['Forgive me that I did not arrive on time'] (said by guest arriving later than he had promised). Here *příxal* is your addition, so I am uncertain about its being in the right place: did you intend to have it between *ne* and *vó-vremja*?

No èto váša kómnata ['But that is your room'] (guest to host when the latter assigns a bedroom to him); you correct to *Nó ved' èto ...* As we haven't had *ved'* and this sentence is in a part of the Unit where new words may not be introduced, I'd like to get around it. Is the original wording (without *ved'*) too queer?

Onó za málen'koj rekój ['It is on the other side of the small river'] corrected to *rěčkoj* ['river'] (dim.). Can we avoid the new word by saying *Onó za rekój* 'It's on the other side of the river'?

Kakája krasívaja dévuška! 'What a beautiful young woman!' Corrected to 'girl'. Here I think each of us is troubled by the values of the other's language. If *dévuška* is an adult, not yet married, 'girl' alone can render it in slangy speech when the situation is clear, but otherwise would imply an immature person. 'Young woman' would seem to me to be the nearest equivalent, but I have changed to 'young girl' because of your comment. Later, where the formal statement of meaning is made, I have kept 'young woman'; here you suggest 'virgin', but this is in ordinary speech a technical term with purely physiological sociological meaning (she has not lost her virginity); in elevated language 'virgin' appears as a non-technical term, though the meaning here still includes virginity: I imagine it would rather match *déva*. For *děvka* I give 'slut' rather than 'prostitute', since the latter is more official (also euphemistic); the plain word ('whore') would probably not be

allowed in the manual, since it certainly would offend some readers. The real problem lies in *dévuška*. As for *dévočka*, the point is in English as with *mál'čik* ['boy']: the word 'little' is mechanically & habitually prefixed to 'girl' and 'boy' whenever there is any doubt possible as to immaturity or maturity.

Your comment on the [o] of *sólnce* ['sun'] is very enlightening. As soon as one gets a certain way into a language, one finds breaks and outcroppings in the phonemic system. I take this to be due to the constant workings of sound change—some of these manifest themselves in this way; the system is never completely in balance. Of course I shan't put this in the manual, which gives only a crude outline of pronunciation.

As to *palatal* and *noun*, you are of course absolutely right; I am simplifying at the cost of technical terms; not needing a distinction I take the shortest term. I wish now that I had used *hard & soft* for *plain* and *palatized*.

I have for the present kept the remark "one also hears *samú, samojú* ['herself' (acc.)]" because I was unable to get anything else from our informants here. This and the oblique case forms of *čej* [whose] (except asf *č'ju*) greatly surprised me: whenever I gave a sentence, I got forms other than those in the grammars. However, if your feeling entirely rules out *samú, samojú*, I shall cross out the remark.

'They don't live in the town itself' *oní ne žívút v sámom górode*. You comment "*nexorošo?*" ['not good']. If the Russian is unnatural or ambiguous, or does not render the English, I can put in something else. The sentence was manufactured by me and may be entirely off the track.

Please don't waste time & energy on the grammatical introduction to the dictionary. It is meant to serve a purely utilitarian purpose—no one will every try to learn Russian from it. Only gross misstatements should be corrected or canceled. (I will send new units of manual as I get them typed.)

All the trouble I have with Russian reenforces my belief that one generally does not get very far with a language unless one has lived in the community where it is spoken. Anything else breaks down in what H. Sweet (Practical study of languages) called "the grammatical fallacy."

Best regards to Mrs. Jakobson. I hope you will both come here for Linguistic Club, June 4. If you do, let me know beforehand.

As ever,
Leonard Bloomfield

17

June 1 '45

Dear Jakobson—

Here are 2 pages of Key to Unit 20 and all 48 pages of Unit 22.

Thank you very much for return of grammatical Introduction, and for the comments. As always, they are very helpful. I have written to see whether they can still be incorporated.

Ushakov says *ery* ['name of letter in Cyrillic alphabet'] is an antiquated name—I can't see how he would distinguish the names of [the letters] *i* and *y*.

I get the point about not writing [y] before [i]: *na ix* ['on them'] versus *moix* ['my' g.pl.] Only I can't make the proper statement: does [y] drop out before every [i] except in *im, imi, ix* ['they' dat., instr., gen.] Does it drop before unstressed [i] which arises through weakening of [a,o,e]? Don't trouble to write about this if it's a bore—I'll ask about it when I see you.

I can't find out about long consonants. Ushakov occasionally tells one when a consonant is short although the orthography has a double letter (e.g. under *subbóta* 'Saturday'), but he does not carry this out [consistently]: no comment, for instance, under *rússkij* ['Russian'].

Why not *ból'sij* 'bigger'? Does one say, e.g., *pereéxat' v ból'suju kvartíru* ['move to a bigger apartment'] etc. Unfortunately Ushakov gives no examples for this important word.

Retention of distinctions in initial vowels of inflectional endings when unstressed [kríś^{am}], etc. is not clear to me—i.e. is there complete weakening or merely the weakening that otherwise occurs in a pretonic syllable? And in what forms does the retention take place? And only after [š,ž] or after all consonants? Again, you don't need to write if it's a bore.

Best wishes—
as ever
LB

18

June 8, 1945

Dear Jakobson,

Thank you for corrected Key to Unit 20, and, above all, for your letter and the outline of unstressed vowel phonology. Incidentally, this should show the best way of getting a Russian grammar: I will ask questions or point out gaps in such books as I have. As to authorship, even simple matters are beyond my ken, and indeed, all I know or know how to assemble is in the Introduction to the dictionary. I am glad to say that they had not gone to press & have allowed me to put in your corrections—but they are handling the ms so badly that I fear for the final result.

I am now fussing with nom. pl. *-i* and gen. pl. *-of* on neuter nouns—but I won't let myself take time to do any reading or collecting, since I must get the Second Level done—and it is a hateful task.

Best wishes—
as ever
Leonard Bloomfield

19

[no date]

Dear Jakobson—

Thank you for letter and information. I was especially glad to get your definite statement about *samoë* ['self'] and the oblique forms of *čej* ['whose'], on account of the methodical importance of the thing: with several informants, including some well educated ones, I was unable to elicit these forms, and got things like *čijego*, and these were evidently given with some hesitation. This shows that the descriptions we get by the ordinary field work procedure are bound to be very faulty. We need either grammars by linguistically trained speakers or, second-best, a long stay in the community where one hears natural speech and learns to estimate levels.

How is the historical note on accent? I thought at the time that it seemed more probable than Meyer's account.¹⁷

I enclose some notes toward your Russian grammar: 1st declension nouns with stress on endings, omitting those which are singular only and omitting, of course *L* to *O*.¹⁸ It seems that Ushakov sets up lots of BB accents,¹⁹ perhaps artificially. Also notes on the instances where his statements seemed ambiguous or incomplete. I have not read through Ushakov, but only looked up the words for which I had notes.

One should add, of course, the enclitic uses—*ná goru*, *pód goru* ['on the mountain, under the mountain'], but my notes are unreliable and Ushakov seems to be careless about registering these forms. In accented texts one finds e.g. both *na zémlju* and *ná zemlju* ['on earth'] and *na gólovu* and *ná golovu* ['on the head'], and I don't know whether there are differences of meaning or level involved.

I am sorry you were not here yesterday.

I am looking forward to the Russian grammar, and shall be glad to help, especially by raising questions—but I can't see myself as a collaborator, since even the simplest matters go beyond my knowledge—which was well represented in the grammatical sketch which you read. (I hope to be allowed to correct it.)

Best regards—
as ever
Leonard Bloomfield

20

July 3 '45

Dear Jakobson—

Here is Unit 27; I hope to send 28 & 29 soon. The War Dept is getting impatient, especially Quartermaster's Office, who tend to printing priorities; so I shall have to work as fast as I can—and I beg you to make the corrections as fast as possible.

¹⁷ See Meyer 1923.

¹⁸ I.e. those in volume two of Ušakov's dictionary, not available to Bloomfield.

¹⁹ Stress on post-stem syllable.

Shall be glad to hear from you otherwise also. Best wishes—

as ever
LB

21

July 26 '45

Dear Jakobson—

Could you translate into Russian the Guide's Manual for our course? The English covers 9 big pages—equivalent to about 15 pages of ordinary typescript. They will pay \$25.00 for this, and I am sure that you could do it in an hour or two, since the contents are purely factual, with no refinements. There is one slang phrase that might offer difficulty: the title "Getting Around"—and for this I would suggest saying merely *ežednevnye frazy* ['everyday expressions'] or the like. Let me know and I will send you the copy.

I am writing to have them send you the check for what we have done & I hope they will add a little for expenses, such as postage.

Thanks very much for information and for your comment on the history of accent. I hope I may someday get a chance to read Bubrich's study.²⁰

I do hope you will write the Russian grammar, and I promise to help you in every way I can; if your conscience demands it you can speak of this in the preface—but it would be presumption for me to figure as a co-author—the simplest things in Russian baffle me, for I've never heard the language spoken under anything like normal circumstances.

As soon as the Second Level is done (my part of it—word-lists, etc.) I want to get back to my own studies after 3 years of these confounded manuals.

Best wishes to you & Mrs. Jakobson for a good vacation.

As ever,
Leonard Bloomfield

22

Oct. 22 '45.

Dear Jakobson—

I have not heard from you for ages and should like to know how you are getting along. I have forgotten what little Russian I ever knew, but I am still very much interested in the descriptive grammar & will be glad to help all I can. I should like to get your reaction to the fem. noun lists I sent you—can anything be done toward bringing the forms into a system?

Best regards to you & to Mrs. Jakobson.

Are you coming here for Linguistic Club meetings?

Sincerely
Leonard Bloomfield

23

Nov. 6 '45

Dear Jakobson—

One of our letters must have got lost—I had been waiting to hear from you.

I have again given your address for notices of Linguistic Club meetings.

Please come Saturday (Nov. 10). If you get here before 5, please come to the office; if after 5, please come to the hotel. We can have dinner together. If Mrs. Jakobson is willing, please bring her along. We shall be very glad to see you.

I shall ask Cowan to send you the Norwegian manual, the first part of the Russian, and when it appears, the 2d part.

Best regards—as ever
Leonard Bloomfield

²⁰ D. V. Bubrix (1890–1949) was a Russian linguist who began as a Slavist but in the latter part of his life became a leading specialist in the Finno-Ugric languages. I am guessing that the study recommended by Jakobson to Bloomfield was Bubrich 1926.

24

11-6-45

Dear Jakobson—

Just after mailing my letter to you today, I learned that there is to be a big football game here on that day. This means that the trains will be crowded, no room in the eating-places, and impossible traffic conditions. Can you come Monday instead? Come so as to have dinner with us in the evening, and bring Mrs. Jakobson. Please drop me a line.

Best Greetings—L. Bloomfield

25

Jan 4 '46

Dear Jakobson—

Glad to hear from you. Don't worry about my talk on Monday—it is only an annual talk on elementary linguistics for new students.

Please don't forget to send names & addresses of possible Russian tutors. We have two good ones now, but like to keep a list.

Enclosed are the Russian 1st decl nouns. Thank you for the comments. It is good to know that you are energetic again. Do try to find time for some topic of Russian grammar—say, these very nouns.

Best wishes for the coming year.

Hope you can pay us a visit soon.

As ever

Leonard Bloomfield

As a practical matter (and also as a benefaction to the public) even an elementary Russian grammar would be a wise move.

I will urge Cowan to send you Lesnin & Petrova (Units 1–12).²¹ The rest has not appeared—I don't know why.

26

Feb. 8, '46

Dear J—

Have you received Army Russian 1–12 (Lesnin & Petrova) and Army Russian 13–30 (on which you helped)? I have extra copies of 13–30 and should be glad to send you one. Have not heard from you for a long time—hope everything is all right.

As ever—

LB

27

Feb. 13 '46

Dear Jakobson—

I am very happy about your good news. It was certain that if you chose to stay in this country you would sooner or later get a suitable call, but in the meantime, naturally, all your friends were concerned about you. So that even in a selfish way everyone will be glad about this. Please let me know whether I may tell people—I have not told anyone so far except my wife, who was very much pleased.

For myself, of course, this is especially gratifying because of what I can learn from our talks and from helping with the Russian grammar. I hope you will be able to get at this soon. I suggest beginning with the a-declension, say with accent shift and enclisis in the accusative singular, types *rúku* ['hand' acc.] and *zá ruku* ['by the hand']. You have my collection from Ushakov, which covers all but Volume 2. The foreign student asks (1) for a correction of Ushakov (e.g., he omits *góru* ['mountain' acc.]), and (2) for statement of meanings and examples wherever two forms exist (e.g. *góru*, *gorú*, *ná zemlju*, *na zémlju* ['mountain' acc., 'on earth'])—the kind of thing the books don't do.

²¹ I. M. Lesnin was the pseudonym that Bloomfield chose for himself as co-author of Book 1 of *Spoken Russian*; his own name appears on Book 2. See Cowan (1987:29).

I hope you can come here soon. (It is hard & very costly for us to go to New York, on account of many relatives & friends).

Best wishes & congratulations—
as ever
Leonard Bloomfield

28

Feb 15 '46

Dear Jakobson—

An extra copy of Lesnin & Petrova, Russian 1–12 has just reached me; I am sending it to you along with Bloomfield & Petrova, 13–30. The dictionary seems not yet to have appeared. In both publications my prefatory notes, naming you, have been omitted.

As ever
LB

29

Feb. 27 '46

Dear Jakobson—

Thank you for the data sheet about Mr. Mansietov, which I am returning, here enclosed. I have given the data to Cornyn²² for his file; he is likely to need people from year to year. This year he has had good luck—two excellent men.

I am sending you a copy of the French verb inflection.²³

I hope to see you here soon.

As ever—
Leonard Bloomfield

Did you get Russian 1–12 and 13–30? Cowan says that he too has sent you a copy of these, as well as of the Norwegian. Did you get them?

30

December 19, 1946.

Professor Roman Jakobson
Department of East European Languages,
Columbia University,
New York 27, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Jakobson:

Thank you for your letter of December 10th. I shall be very glad to see you when I can. But at present I can not carry on a conversation of any length, and it would not be worth your while to come here merely to exchange greetings. As soon as I am in better shape, I shall let you know.

I am no longer living at the hotel, but with a colleague. My wife has been in a sanatorium since November 27th.

Best wishes of the Season to you and Mrs. Jakobson.

Sincerely,
Leonard Bloomfield

LB:h

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²² William Cornyn (died 1971) was professor of linguistics at Yale.

²³ Bloomfield 1945.

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