Russian constructions with 'take' expressing an unexpected event: Their historical origin and development in the 19th century

Daniel Weiss   iD

Slavisches Seminar der Universität Zürich, Switzerland
E-mail: dawe@slav.uzh.ch

Abstract

This study aims at elucidating the rise and expansion of four competing Russian constructions expressing the unexpectedness of an event. Three of them are built according to the pseudo-coordinative model 'take and do' and one follows the serial model 'take do'. The historical data stemming from the Russian national corpus and covering the whole 19th century reveals striking differences between these constructions in terms of frequency and grammaticalisation, the most peripheral being the serial model. Evidence for ongoing grammaticalisation is mainly based on the rise of non-canonical second verbs denoting an uncontrollable event and inanimate subjects. Special attention will be given to the meanings of the imperative and contextually bound pragmatic effects.

Keywords: "Surprise" constructions; pseudo-coordination; verb serialisation; syndetic linking; grammaticalisation of 'take'; imperativus dramaticus; pragmatic effects; Russian colloquial syntax

1.   Introduction

The present study is devoted to a family of Russian constructions that may be loosely described as 'take and V_2' with a varying linking element in between them and the approximate meaning 'suddenly do V_2'. These constructions have been discussed in several studies including Kuznetsova 2006; Kor-Šaxin 2007; Weiss 2007; Stojnova 2007; and Weiss 2008. In its overall conception, the present study continues the latter article but unlike all abovementioned studies, it examines the said constructions not in contemporary Russian but traces them back to their origin and historical development throughout the 19th century. Thus, it provides the East Slavic counterpart for Andrason, Gębka-Wolak and Moroz' analogous scrutiny of the Polish construction with *wziąć* (this volume). Moreover, since the construction with the imperative shows marked effects of an ongoing pragmaticalisation, this study also relates to the investigation of similar phenomena in Weiss forthcoming. The areal affiliations of such 'take'

constructions as illustrated in Coseriu 1966; Ekberg 1993; and Nau et al. 2019[1] as well as the riddle of the semantic change which brought about the transition from the literal understanding of 'take' to the meaning 'suddenly, unexpectedly' will only briefly be commented on in section 5.

The essence of the constructions to be discussed (at least in their non-imperative uses) has already been captured in Ušakov's 1935 dictionary, which provided the basis for all subsequent Soviet dictionaries of the Russian language:

> Взять 12. *Неперех. Разг.* «Употр. в сочетании с союзами *и, да* и следующим глаголом употр. для выражения внезапного или неожиданного действия».
>
> <div align="right">Ušakov 1935</div>
>
> Vzjat' 12. *Intrans. Coll.* «Is used in combination with the conjunctions *i, da* and the following verb to express a sudden or unexpected action».

Similar wordings have been chosen by all subsequent authors who examined the Russian 'take and do' constructions, notably Isačenko 1960; Prokopovič 1969; Fortuin 2000:149-161; and Kor-Šaxin 2007. The component 'sudden, unexpected' is indeed crucial for the semantic change of the first verb *vzjat'*, originally meaning 'take'. The term 'semantic bleaching', which is often used in descriptions of grammaticalisation processes, seems ill-fitted here since the meaning 'take' is not bleached but replaced by a completely different meaning that still has to be specified: 'unexpected' to whom? The current speaker, a fictive observer or a protagonist of the ongoing narrative? At any rate, we are dealing with a specific type of modality. The examples illustrated below will show that all three cases are met. Be this as it may, 'take' constructions come now to compete and/or combine with adverbs expressing surprise in Russian. In Balkan languages, the admirative mood serves a similar purpose.

The second component of Ušakov's definition that calls for clarification is the term *dejstvie* referring to V_2: in metalinguistic comments, *dejstvie* denotes much more than simple actions, it also covers events and even states. This will in particular be illustrated by those examples that allow for non-human actors. Moreover, the loss of the action meaning of 'take' is corroborated by the main syntactic change undergone by it: most authors claim that it can no longer govern a direct object – hence Ušakov's indication "intransitive". This feature is, however, questionable, as has already been shown in Weiss 2008:488-489. What remains unchallenged is another, semantic invariant: all these 'take' constructions denote one single event (probably the most appropriate metalinguistic equivalent of Russian *dejstvie*), which runs counter to any interpretation in terms of a coordinative linking of two clauses; hence the term 'pseudo-coordinative' intended to design such structures[2]. V_2 usually denotes an achievement or an accomplishment, seldom an activity but never a state in Vendlerian terms. *Vzjat'* may be said to function as a kind of adverbial modifier of V_2.

The further characteristics of said constructions may be summarised as follows:

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[1] The Irish English parallel construction of the type 'He took and died' will here be exploited in the translations of some Russian examples for the sake of more transparency.

[2] For a cross-linguistic investigation of such constructions see Ross 2016 and Giusti et al. 2022.

(i) the morphological outfit of both verbs is identical regarding ±finiteness and the grammemes of person, number, gender, mood, and voice, but not necessarily tense and aspect.

(ii) both verbs share at least the subject valence and may also have a common object slot and/or a common adjunct (adverbial) position.

So far, both the single event constraint and the restrictions (i)-(ii) are reminiscent of those that characterise the so-called double verbs in Russian as described in Weiss 2012:613-615. By contrast, the ban on the repetition of auxiliary morphemes found with double verbs does not hold without exceptions, and the inversion of the two verbs, which is frequent with double verbs, seems impossible in the case of 'take' constructions. Moreover, unlike double verbs, which allow for both the negation of V_2 and, though less often, for the negation of both verbs, in the 'take' construction only V_2 can be negated. The whole relationship between the two construction families is even more intricate since the 'take' family also features a serialized member (see below).

The abovementioned characteristics hold also for chains with the imperative *voz'mi/voz'mite*, although they do not carry the same meaning: as already noted by Ušakov 1935, their principal meaning is not related to unexpectedness but on the contrary, it marks an urgent request, or in Fortuin's words (2000:156): "... the *vzjat'*-construction is used to eliminate the addressee's possible hesitation to do the action." On the other hand, the 'take' imperative participates in several semantically dedicated constructions, among which the so-called 'imperativus dramaticus' is the most frequent one: not surprisingly, it marks an unexpected turn in narration, thus re-activating the meaning of the non-imperative constructions. It is, however, not available in the serial construction. In all these special uses, the imperative loses its directive meaning.

A final remark concerns the characterization of the 'take and V_2' model as colloquial. Most examples in my corpus are indeed quoted from direct speech and free reported speech, which allows for more freedom in the choice of colloquialisms. The same holds for the numerous examples from Internet communication (including social networks) in today's language quoted in Weiss 2008.

2.1   A first overview: the main properties

In what follows, I will attempt to summarise the principal findings in Weiss 2008. The following overview presents all available members of the whole construction family:

(a)   *vzjat' i X-ovat'*
(b)   *vzjat' da X-ovat'*   a)-c)   ➔ pseudo-coordination
(c)   *vzjat' da i X-ovat'*
(d)   *vzjat' X-ovat'*   ➔ serial verb
(e)   *vzjat', X-ovat'*   ➔ asyndetic linking

The first three constructions (a) – (c) contain coordinative conjunctions with the basic meaning 'and'. Yet, since there are no two separate events that could be conjoined, the whole constructions can only be subsumed under the pseudo-coordinative category. The construction with the complex conjunction *da i* is in Russian lexicography treated as an expression of

surprise, hence the variant c) is inherently redundant. Since it also co-occurs with the imperativus dramaticus, such examples exhibit a threefold marking of the same semantic element, i.e. 'take' + *da i* + imperativus dramaticus:

(1)   На этих порах отец мой — царство ему небесное — *возьми да и умри.* [И. С. Тургенев. Нахлебник (1848)]
        "At that time my father, bless his soul, took and died."

'Die' as V_2 is very frequent, see below, section 2.4. As if this were not enough, sometimes an adverb such as *vdrug* provides the fourth marker:

(2)   Странная игра случая занесла меня наконец в дом одного из моих профессоров; а именно вот как: я пришёл к нему записаться на курс, а он *вдруг возьми да и пригласи* меня к себе на вечер. [И. С. Тургенев. Гамлет Щигровского уезда (1849)]
        "A strange incident led me eventually to the house of one of my professors. And this is how it happened: I came to register for a class, and he suddenly invited me to his place for the evening."

Construction d) represents a case of true serialisation, more precisely: an asymmetrical SVC according to the typology sketched out in Aikhenvald 2006 and Aikhenvald 2018. Thus, the 'take' model overlaps with the VSC construction type, and we end up with a bundle of three pseudo-coordinative constructions and one serial counterpart. It should be added that the asymmetrical relation characterises the whole 'take' construction family. To quote from Aikhenvald 2018:55:

> "An asymmetrical serial verb construction consists of a verb from a relatively large, open, or otherwise unrestricted class, and a verb from a semantically restricted (or closed) class. Asymmetrical SVCs will tend to denote a single event described by the verb from the non-restricted class. The verb from a closed class provides an additional specification: …"

In our case, all this pertains also to the four constructions involved: V_2 belongs to a practically unrestricted class excluding only states, whereas *vzjat'* (the "minor verb" according to a different terminology) is the unique member of a restricted class and serves as an adverbial modifier of V_2. The only difference is that besides the serial pattern, the asymmetrical relation encompasses also three syndetic pseudo-coordinative constructions. To complete this picture it should be emphasised that the asymmetrical nature of the constructions under scrutiny distinguishes it from Russian SVC constructions in general, which may also belong to the symmetrical type (Weiss 2012:615-617).

Case e) requires a special comment. Contemporary examples suggest that uses with a prosodic break between the two verbs or its graphic equivalent with comma or dash should indeed be distinguished from "pure" serial linking (Weiss 2008:475). However, historical examples seem less reliable in this respect. Moreover, the comma variant often occurs in triplets of the type *vzjat', V_2 i V_3* like the following:

(3)   чуть только я попадал в большое праздничное собрание русских людей, тотчас всегда мне начинало казаться, что это они только так, а *вдруг возьмут, встанут и*

сделают дебош, совсем как у себя дома. [Ф. М. Достоевский. Дневник писателя. 1876 год (1876)]
"as soon as I joined some feast assembly of Russians I always got the impression that they only [pretend] but out of a sudden would get up and go on the rampage, as if they were at home."

This constellation leads to an incongruency between the prosodic and the semantic articulation: semantically, the verb form *vstanut* belongs to the 'take' construction, whereas prosodically it enters the subsequent coordinative chain. Yet, such triplets never render one single event as required for the 'take' construction but the last verb enters a temporal sequence with the two preceding ones (Weiss 2008:486). As syndetic uses are sometimes also separated by a comma, I decided to disregard interpunction altogether in this study and count all chains of the type *vzjat'(,) V₂* as serialised.

2.2 The historical data

All characteristics described above may also be found in my historical corpus collected from the Russian national corpus (NKRJa). A caveat concerns the composition of this corpus: its unbalanced structure with a marked preference for literary texts at the expense of almost all other genres makes itself even more felt in the 19th century. Not surprisingly, my historical data comprise almost only literary sources and a few examples of the press (*Russkaja mysl'*). If we wanted to obtain a more balanced sample we would have to systematically mine personal letters, diaries, and the like, which is beyond the scope of this study. The search was limited to immediately juxtaposed components of the string except for negation, e.g. *vzjat' da ne V₂*. Taking into account strings with one or two intermediate components before V₂ might substantially alter the proportions, as was shown in Weiss (2013:329-332) with double imperatives. It will be the object of a later investigation.

The chronology of the above-listed constructions does not vary substantially: the first attestations range from 1827 to 1844. However, the divergence in terms of numeric representation is remarkable: it varies between 41 (serial construction) and 416 instances (*da i* construction). The following table presents the numerical distribution of the different constructions.

	First attestation	n	Imperativus dramaticus	Ambiguous cases	Additional adverbial markers
vzjat' da V₂	1827	81	7	18	7
vzjat' da i V₂	1839	416	47	26	29
vzjat 'i V₂	1851	147	9	12	12
vzjat' V²	1844	41	–	6	1
Total sum		685	63	62	49

Table 1: Distribution of the different constructions with 'take'

The preponderance of the inherently redundant type with *da i* becomes even more striking considering that 11% of these uses are additionally marked by the imperativus dramaticus (the

first occurrence dates from 1843). Taking into account cases with an additional adverb such as *vdrug* as in (3) with a cluster of four different markers, it seems obvious that the 'take' constructions are prone to the maximal expression of the intended meaning right from the beginning. This impression is corroborated by the figures in the last column: they represent additional adverbial markers with the meaning "suddenly", such as *vdrug, ni s togo ni s sego* or the combination of these two. Another synonymous adverb would be *vnezapno,* which is not attested in my corpus;[3] *neožidanno* occurs only once (*Starik vzjal i podpisal neožidanno dlja menja,* A. Čexov 1894). On restrictions of *vdrug* cf. Kor-Šaxin 2007:237, more on adverbial markers Weiss 2008:476. Interjections like *bac!* or *bux!* replacing V_2 serve a similar purpose in contemporary language (Weiss, ibidem) but do not occur in the historical corpus.

In terms of grammatical categories, all persons, genders, tenses and moods are represented; for aspect, see section 1.4. As for voice (of V_2), only one passive form was noted (example 10), but the quotation does not reflect standard use anyway. Among non-finite forms, only infinitives were found.

2.3   Ambiguity

As the rubric 'ambiguous cases' suggests, the counts reflected in the table are not fully water-proof. Two sources of ambiguity may be singled out (Weiss 2008:488f.): the existence of a direct object of *vzjat'* and the exact meaning of *vzjat'* itself. Theoretically, an existing overt object may precede *vzjat'*, follow V_2 or occupy the intermediate position. Instead, the object may be (and in colloquial Russian very often is) covert (elliptical), which increases the possible variants to four. Moreover, V_2 may itself be transitive; if we take into account that an object may depend on *vzjat'*, V_2 or both, we end up with twelve different possibilities. Note that position and dependency are not interrelated due to the free word order within such coordinative strings, cf. *Ja tebja sižu i ožidaju* lit. 'I you sit wait' / I am sitting here and waiting for you', where the object is preposed to an intransitive verb.

In my sample most overt objects follow V_2, while pre- and interposition practically never occur. Things get more complicated when it comes to the more frequent elliptical objects: a ø governed by *vzjat'* is hard to distinguish from the non-existence of an object in the new meaning of unexpectedness. In this situation, determining the meaning of the first verb becomes decisive. Several examples do not allow the literal reading because this would create a misleading temporal sequence. Such is the case in

(4)   Ардальон сразу огорошил князя такою новостью, что все журналисты, мол, сволочь, эксплуататоры честного труда и вдобавок ни уха, ни рыла не смыслят, и что гораздо лучше *взять да основать* свой собственный отдельный и независимый орган, и в нем уже невозбранно печатать все, чего только душа пожелает. [В. В. Крестовский. Панургово стадо (Ч. 3-4) (1869)]
"Ardal'on at once baffled the count with the news that all journalists are scoundrels, exploiters of honest work and don't have the faintest idea of what they are writing about, and that it is far better to [unexpectedly] *organise* one's own individual and independent journal and to publish whatever one wishes."

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[3] The reason seems to be that *vnezapno* (unlike *neožidanno*) does not open a valence for an observer, as is pointed out in Šmelev 2002:149-164.

Obviously, you cannot first 'take' a journal and then establish it, therefore *vzjat'* does not function in any literal sense but lends itself only to the pseudo-coordinative reading. The next fragment refers to an already established referent with an anaphoric pronoun:

(5)   Вдруг родители *взяли, да и выдали* ее за какого-то пьяницу-чиновника силком. [В. И. Немирович-Данченко. Соловки (1874)]
        "Suddenly her parents took [her?] and married her by force to a civil servant addicted to drink."

The adverb 'suddenly' points to an unexpected event but is compatible with the idea that the parents seized their daughter physically to marry her, all the more so as the adverbial 'by force' may also be related to physical violence. Yet, the sequence 'seized and married her' is not well-formed for temporal reasons, since the second action usually presupposes a lengthy and careful preparation. Therefore, this is also an unequivocal instance of the pseudo-coordinative *vzjat'*. The following context allows for both the literal and the derived meaning:

(6)   Вот *возьму да поставлю* всю мебель вверх ногами, вот и перемена. Но где же, я вас спрашиваю, вековая мудрость, вековая опытность, которая поставила мебель именно на ноги? Вот стоит стол на четырех ножках, и хорошо стоит, крепко? [А. Н. Островский. На всякого мудреца довольно простоты (1868)]
        "Suppose, I will out of a sudden turn all furniture upside down, that is a change. But where is, I am asking you, the old wisdom, the old experience that put the furniture on its legs? Look, a table stands on its four legs, and it stands well, firmly, doesn't it?"

The physical action of turning a table upside down is of course possible but also pretty senseless and hence unexpected, which is elaborated in the subsequent two rhetorical questions. Thus, this is an example of true ambiguity. Interestingly enough, the first seven attestations of the pseudo-coordinative construction with *da i* including the famous quotation from Gogol's "Nose" (see below, example 16) all represent the same type of ambiguity. This might be interpreted as evidence for the initial stage of the grammaticalisation process. On the whole, one has to admit that most ambiguous examples call for a lengthy discussion and often do not yield a satisfactory solution. Whether they provide the turning point for the emergence of the meaning of unexpectedness remains an open question.

2.4   Further evidence of continuous grammaticalisation

So far, only examples with 'take' in the perfective aspect have been examined. There is, however, also an alternative with the imperfective counterpart *brat'*. In Weiss (2008:480-481), I discussed a few contemporary uses with iterative meaning in the present and past tense and with the historical present. Predictably, the progressive meaning was not represented, as this meaning runs counter to the punctual character of the event characterised as sudden. My historical sample from the NKRJa contains only two instances of the construction *brat' i V2* in the iterative present and one with the imperative (*beri i sadi*); all three stem from the end of the 19th century.

(7)   Простой смертный, если он видит, что нет ему пользы от купания или что купание ему вредит, *берет и бросает* это купание, и конец… [В. П. Мещерский. Мои воспоминания (1897)]
        "A simple human, if he sees that bathing is harmful to him, [takes and] stops bathing…"

The constructions with *brat' da* and *brat' da i* in the NKRJa are attested as late as 1991 and 1967, respectively. The contemporary examples quoted in Weiss 2008 belong to all three types of pseudo-coordinative linking (with *i, da* and *da i*). The late appearance of the imperfective counterparts suggests that this criterion should likewise be taken into consideration for a comprehensive account of the grammaticalisation process.

Another criterion that might be significant is the non-concordant marking (Aikhenvald 2018:101) of aspect, i.e. the combination of both grammatical aspects in the same chain. This usually also triggers a change of tense as in *vzjal i pišu* 'I took.PST and write.PRES' (Weiss 2008:479). The same combination was found in a quotation from 1877 (*Vzjal i pišu: «Syn! Kogda ty menja nazyvaeš' tjaten'koju, to ja tebja synom nazyvaju»* 'I took and write: My son! When you call me daddy, I call you son'), and a similar example (*Vzjal i molču* 'I took.PST and am silent.PRES' dates from 1865. In such cases, the imperfective V$_2$ serves as a historical present.

A combination of two different aspects in the same future tense appears in the formula *voz'mu i ne budu*, which today serves as a pragma-phraseme, expressing a note of humoristic defiance, cf. *Voz'mu i ne budu vzroslet'* lit. 'I'll take and not grow up'. The phraseme obviously emerged only in the 20th century; the first attestation in the NKRJa dates from 1950, the only earlier unequivocal instance being remarkable in that it denotes a state (*ne budu ljubit'*), which does not fit in the overall characteristics of the 'take' pseudo-coordinative constructions. Nowadays, this phraseme has become very frequent in Internet communication and appears in all grammatical persons. However, the historical corpus already yields the synonymous variant with *stanu*:

(8)   Наверху собирается толпа. Сережка, при виде зрителей, еще больше волнуется. — *Возьму и не стану* делать… [А. П. Чехов. Художество (1885-1886)]
        "Seeing the spectators, Sereža becomes even more upset. "I will take and not do [it]…""

The non-concordant combination of both aspects is illustrated in a few cases with V$_2$ denoting an activity:

(9)   наконец строгий и в то же время благодушный лик придавали ему какой-то библейский характер — кажись, так *бы взять да и писать* с него Моисея, какого-нибудь пророка или апостола. [В. В. Крестовский. Петербургские трущобы. Книга о сытых и голодных. Части 1-3 (1864)]
        "his severe but at the same time complacent look imparted him a biblical appearance – as if one suddenly wished to paint Moses, a prophet or apostle after his portrayal."

(10) А я не по шуткам твоим говорю; а оно место такое есть, что *возьмёт да и уничтожается* место. И Демид, слышь ты, Демид Васильевич говорит, что уничтожается место [Ф. М. Достоевский. Господин Прохарчин (1846)]
"I am not talking as in your jokes; that place is such that it suddenly gets destroyed. And Demid Vasil'evič, listen, also says that the place gets destroyed."

The speaker's command of standard Russian in (10) seems, however, not impeccable. On the whole, this historical data is too scarce to serve as evidence for an ongoing grammaticalisation of the pseudo-coordinative constructions under discussion. The same holds even more for negation (recall that only V$_2$ may be negated): example (8) is the only unambiguous attestation. By contrast, in the 20th century the NKRJa yields dozens of hits with *vzjat' i ne V$_2$.*

A more reliable criterion is also illustrated by example (10): the detransitivisation of *vzjat'* is often accompanied by the loss of the agent role of its subject. This makes possible the use of non-human subjects as in *mesto* 'place', which already marks an advanced stage of deagentivisation. All preceding stages are attested in my material. To begin with, animals may be assigned an agentive role, for instance, *Sobaka-to ... vzjala da i šmygnula v perednjuju* 'the dog suddenly slipped to the front (Turgenev 1847). The *da i*-construction features ten animals as subjects, among them a bear, a fox, a snake, a cock, a seagull, and a pike, the construction with *i* has four animals (a dog, a hare, a he-goat, a cock).

Close to the canonical subjects of *vzjat'* in its principal, physical meaning are human beings that involuntarily undergo a process such as 'die', 'forget', 'remember', 'fall asleep', 'get angry', 'mix up', 'break down', etc., expressed by V$_2$. Such examples are quite numerous in all syndetic constructions: they amount to a total of 51, among them 29 belonging to the lexical field of dying, including such verbs as 'croak', 'get poisoned', or 'drown'. Yet, they are very unequally distributed: the construction with *da i* features 39 occurrences, among them 19 with the meaning 'die', while the construction with *da* has only 5 instances (among them 3 uses of dying but also 2 instances of *vzjat' da udavit'sja* 'suddenly hang oneself'), and the *i*-construction features 6 cases of dying. Even more striking is the complete lack of involuntary events within the serial construction.[4] All this allows for a first conclusion: being the most innovative and advanced of the three pseudo-coordinative competitors, the construction with *da i* also allows for most diversity.

Inanimate entities do not lend themselves to an agentive role and hence represent a stage more remote from the starting point of the grammaticalisation. The *da i*-construction features twelve subjects referring to physical objects (the sun, a roof beam, a boat, a place) and abstract entities (rumours, disputes, the nature, illness, a feeling, society, the general conversation, and England), while the *i*-construction has only two such subjects (an idea and strawberry flowers). The following excerpt in the imperativus dramaticus illustrates the use in question:

(11) Только не рассчитал, что *матица*-то гнилая была. Как только он на нее ступил, она *возьми да и провались*. Повис майор на воздухе; видит, что неминучее дело об

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[4] For pragmatic effects based on playing with one's own death, see section 4.

землю грохнуться, а ему не хочется. [М. Е. Салтыков-Щедрин. Сказки / Медведь на воеводстве (1869-1886)]

"He only didn't foresee that the roof beam was rotten. As soon as he stepped on it, it suddenly broke down. The major is hanging in the air; he sees that hitting the ground is inevitable but doesn't like the idea."

Some uses, such as *spletni* 'rumours' and *Anglija* 'England', are based on metonymy and may thus be said to be closer to the starting point.

Table 2 summarises the results of the last two criteria examined:

construction	inanimate subjects	involuntary events with V_2	Among them with 'die'
vzjat' da V_2	–	5	3
vzjat' da i V_2	12	39	19
vzjat' i V_2	2	7	6
total number	14	51	28

Table 2: Inanimate subjects and involuntary events in the different constructions with 'take'

Interestingly enough, the serialized construction *vzjat' V_2* does not manifest any of the properties indicating ongoing grammaticalisation discussed here and was therefore not included in the table. Its only particularity consists in its proneness to enter coordinated triplets (30 out of 34 non-imperative uses) as illustrated above in example 3.

Against the state of affairs in contemporary language (Weiss 2008:490-495), the cases discussed look rather modest: today, one even finds uses with an impersonal (subjectless) weather predicate, cf. *kak vdrug voz'mi da primoroz'* 'when it froze out of a sudden' or *voz'mi da i zamerzni* (same meaning).

That the grammaticalisation is still underway is corroborated by another observation. Some authors seem to feel the need to mark the unusual character of the new construction metacommunicatively. Such is the case of Turgenev, who in the next example not only puts the form *vzjal* in brackets but adds the metacommunicative marker 'as they say':

(12)   Не знаю, чем я заслужил доверенность моего нового приятеля, — только он, ни с того ни с сего, как говорится, *«взял» да и рассказал* мне довольно замечательный случай… [И. С. Тургенев. Уездный лекарь (1848)]
"I don't know how I came to gain the trust of my new friend – anyway, he suddenly, as they say, "took" and told me a quite interesting episode…"

Note the adverb *ni s togo ni s sego*, which underlines the unexpectedness of the whole event. Thus, not only the contents are marked as unexpected but also the wording. The second example dates much later but may be conditioned by the non-canonical V_2 combined with an abstract subject:

(13) общий разговор *вдруг*, как говорится, *«взял» да и ожил*, — да ожил-то не только в интеллигентном человеке, а что особенно удивительно — буквально во всех классах общества,…   [Г. И. Успенский. Из путевых заметок (1889)]
"the general conversation, as they say, out of a sudden ["took" and] came back to life, and not only with intelligent people but, which is particularly amazing, in all classes of the society."

The unexpected character of the event is again enhanced by *vdrug* and the additional marker 'particularly amazing' in the subsequent string.

All in all, we may conclude that the different criteria for grammaticalisation examined in this section are represented very unequally. The imperfective aspect of the minor verb is attested only three times at the end of the period under scrutiny and negation of V_2 only once. By contrast, inanimate subjects and uncontrollable events denoted by V_2 begin to appear in the second half of the 19th century. Both processes are mainly reflected within the most frequent construction with *da i*. Strikingly enough, more than half of all instances of involuntary events are centred around the general meaning 'die'; other meanings begin to appear in the construction with *da i*. All these findings call for a comparison with a sample of similar size from the 20th century to grasp the full grid of different grammaticalisation paths. As has already been mentioned, the later period brings a rise of negated V_2 constructions and uses of the imperfective *brat'* but it also remains to be clarified whether the parameters already productive in the 19th century continue to gain momentum in the subsequent period.

A look at the general historical development of the most frequent construction with *da i* in the NKRJa shows a sharp increase between 1840 and 1856, which brought about a quadruplication of hits, and another peak in 1882, followed by a smooth decrease until 1900 ending up with about half of the hits against the peak. The amount of noise during the whole period is negligible but recall that this statistic also contains 26 ambiguous cases. The majority of inanimate subjects and involuntary events denoted by V_2 are located within the same period. The count starts with seven ambiguous instances, which makes the graph even steeper. The 20th century sees the *da i-* construction in decline: the last hit dates from 2004. A similar fate affects the much less frequent construction with *da*: it reaches its peak in the early 1850s, its last occurrence in the NKRJa being from 1987. Due to the scarce data and the unbalanced composition of the Russian national corpus, these numbers can, however, not be considered statistically significant. By contrast, the third construction with *i* still flourishes and has become the most frequent of all three syndetic constructions.

3.   Imperatives and conditionals

As mentioned in the beginning, imperatives do not fit in the semantic characteristics of the *take*-constructions if they do not represent an imperativus dramaticus. Yet, it turns out that the latter constitutes the majority of all uses: the 63 cases by far outnumber all other uses taken together. To begin with, the directive meaning ascribed to *voz'mi(te) da/da i/i V_2-uj(te)* by Russian lexicographers ('don't hesitate, go on') underlies only four examples within the *i*-construction, among them three by Čexov and one by Gor'kij. The following example illustrates the addressee's hesitation, if not unwillingness to perform the requested act:

(14)   — Баба старая уж, много ли ей надо? Долбануть ее разик — она и готова! — говорил извозчик. — Ну вот, *возьми и долбани*! Убирайся! — сказал Павел Николаевич, раздражаясь. — Я не могу. [Максим Горький. Извозчик (1895)]
"The woman is old, does she need much? Just smash her once, and she will be ready! the coachman said. – Yes, don't hesitate, smash her! Get lost! –Pavel Nikolaevič said, getting angry. – I can't."

The *da i*-construction features five directive uses, the *da*-construction two other ones.[5] All other uses are not directed at a concrete addressee but represent modal uses of the imperative. The latter may function as a marker of a conditional or concessive clause:

(15)   Вѣдь ужъ какъ любились-то, какъ любились, казалось, вотъ *возьми да и рѣжь* насъ на части, а мы все-бы цѣловались, да цѣловались! [М. К. Иогель. Между вѣчностью и минутой // «Русская Мысль», 1880]
"We loved each other so tenderly, even if you cut us into parts, we would kiss each other on and on!"

Most probably, this utterance is no longer directed at a concrete addressee but a generic 'you'. The same holds for three uses introduced by *xot'*. They render a hypothetical consecutive meaning as described in Fortuin 2000:112 f:

(16)   Холодно! Одежа мокрая, *хоть возьми да выжми,*… [А. П. Чехов. На большой дороге (1885)]
"It's cold! My clothes are wet, one could just squeeze [them out]."

Cf. the paraphrase 'so wet that one just could…' This dedicated construction still combines with 'take'- pseudo-coordinative constructions in contemporary language, cf. Weiss 2008:481-484. The particle *xot'* may also co-occur with or be replaced by *prosto* 'just'. Such is the case of a famous quotation from Gogol's Nose:

(16)   … но без носа человек — черт знает что: птица не птица, гражданин не гражданин, — просто *возьми да и вышвырни* за окошко! [Н. В. Гоголь. Нос (1836)]
"…but without his nose a man is the devil knows what: a bird or not, a citizen or not – just take and throw [him] out of the window!"

Note that this example is not fully waterproof since *voz'mi* could also be interpreted literally, the elided object referring back to the human being without a nose.

All in all, we may conclude that the overwhelming majority (63 = 80%) of the 78 attested pseudo-coordinative imperative forms occur in the construction of the *imperativus dramaticus*, whereas the prototypical directive function of the imperative is represented only in 11 (= 14%) cases (and the remaining modal uses yield 5 (= 6.4%) cases. This amazingly small portion of prototypical (directive) uses is all the more striking as the serial construction has only imperatives with directive meaning (seven instances). Thus, serial imperatives with *voz'mi/voz'mite* behave more like serial imperatives in general, which seldom lose their directive function even if they take new pragmatic meanings (Weiss 2013:334-336). Recall that

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[5] Besides "true" imperatives, the directive function also characterises two uses of the preterit *vzjal,* see below, examples 23 and 24.

the serial *voz'mi/-te* construction also never functions in the imperativus dramaticus. Example 17 illustrates the directive use:

(17)   Вотъ какъ учить нужно: когда онъ подростетъ и будетъ мальчонка лѣтъ пяти, *возьми сходи* ты въ баню, принеси вѣниковъ, выдерни изъ него прута два [Н. А. Лейкин. Крестины в Ямской (1871)]
       "This is how you should teach: when he will grow older and be a little boy of about five years, [take and] go to the bathhouse, bring a broom and pull two twigs out of it."

In sum, imperatives reveal two main tendencies: a marked divergence between pseudo-coordination and serialisation and a drift away from the core meaning of the imperative in the case of the pseudo-coordinative constructions.

Forms of the conditional, including both the l-form and the infinitive (see example 9), occur 20 times in the historical corpus. As was mentioned in the beginning, unlike with serial verbs, the auxiliary morpheme *by* may be repeated:

(18)   Ах, как бы мы могли быть счастливы! И зачем это люди все злятся, все сердятся, ненавидят друг друга? Так бы, так *бы взял да и растолковал бы* им все!
       [Ф. М. Достоевский. Село Степанчиково и его обитатели (1859)]
       "Ah, how we could be happy! Why are people so angry, so upset, why do they hate each other? How I would like to expound all to them!"

Otherwise, the morpheme *by* may be placed between the minor verb and V$_2$ or else after V$_2$. As for their semantic interpretations, conditionals do not offer any new insights but appear in most typical contexts, such as wishes (18) and entire or abbreviated conditional periods (cf. *inoj by vzjal da uexal* 'somebody else would [take and] leave').

4.   Pragmatic effects

Some pragmatic effects that were illustrated in Weiss 2008:495-497 with contemporary data can already be found in the historical corpus. They may be divided into deviations from the lexical characteristics of V$_2$ in the given context and a seemingly irregular structure of the whole discourse fragment. The first type occurs in jocular reports or announcements of somebody's death: 'dying' as the most frequent non-canonical meaning of V$_2$ (see above, section 2.4) lends itself to a pragmatic reinterpretation where the act of dying is conceived of as controllable:

(19)   Меня хотят выгнать из службы, но я их надую, *возьму да и умру*! [В. А. Шомпулев. Записки старого помещика (1897-1908)]
       "They want to fire me from service but I'll cheat them, I'll [take and] die!"

The implicit meaning 'against sb.'s will' present in (19) comes to the fore in explicit markers such as *naperekor, na zlo*:

(20)   Пусть осуждают там, проклинают, а я вот *на зло* всем *возьму и погибну, возьму вот и погибну*… [А. П. Чехов. Попрыгунья (1892)]
       "May they condemn and curse me but I will in spite of all them [take and] die, I'll [take and] die…"

In terms of speech act theory, this may be called a mocking threat. Intentional death can also be interpreted ironically:

(21)   Ведь Тарас Ермилыч был огорчен: угощал-угощал дорогого гостя, а тот *в награду взял да и умер…* [Д. Н. Мамин-Сибиряк. Верный раб (1891)]
"Taras Ermilyč was upset: he had treated the dear guest so carefully, and now the guest took and died as a reward."

The adverbial 'as a reward' obviously renders the protagonist's perspective, thus providing a clear illustration of Wilson and Sperber's (2017) echo theory of irony. Similarly, the speaker takes his distance toward another's utterance in (22):

(22)   К сожалению, не так просто все развязывается. И любить по закону нельзя. Странный рецепт: *возьми да люби*! [И. А. Бунин. На даче (1895)]
"Unfortunately, all this cannot be solved as easily. And to love according to the law is impossible. What a strange recipe: [take and] love!"

Note that this example is unique in violating the selectional restriction of V_2 formulated in section 1: *ljubit'* denotes a state, not an activity, achievement, or accomplishment. This semantic deviation additionally marks the awkwardness of the echoed attitude.

Another effect arises in replies to questions which express a doubt about the feasibility of the act to be performed:

(23)   Нет, этакую штучку-то пустить бы этак в оборот, –…– Да как же пустить? — спросил Розанов. — Как? *Одно слово*: *взял да и пустил*. [Н. С. Лесков. Некуда (1864)]
"One should launch such a thing, …– But how shall I launch it? Rozanov asked. – How? *In one word*: just [take and] launch it."

The simple resumption of the interlocutor's wording contradicts the meaning of unexpectedness. In other words, this example belongs to the second of the aforementioned types (unusual structure of the discourse fragment). What should, however, be explained first is the use of the past tense together with the zero subject: it serves as another marker of a directive act, much as in, for example, *pošel von!* 'go away!' According to this interpretation, the seeming contradiction turns out to fit neatly in the meaning 'don't hesitate' described for directive imperatives above, cf. (14). Yet, there seems to be an additional critical note which is not inherent to directive imperatives and which may be paraphrased as 'Look, it's so easy!', cf. 'in one word'. Example (23) explicitly states that it is generally known how to act in the way requested:

(24)   Больше ничего, как выбросить надо этого пономаря с кладбища. — Да как ты его выбросишь? — *Известно как*: *взял, да и выбросил.* — Поп не согласится. — Согласится, небось. [Н. С. Лесков. Засуха (1862)]
"There is nothing else left than to throw this sacristan out of the cemetery. – But how will you throw him out? – *As is well known*: just take and throw him out! – The vicar will not agree. – I bet he will agree."

Weiss 2008:499 discusses similar examples in contemporary texts that likewise point to an ultimate assessment of the type 'no need of further explanation'. The prerequisite of such uses seems to be the mention of V_2 in the preceding utterance by the interlocutor. However, for the time being the data is too scarce for any general conclusions. This holds also for the next case in which the speaker himself resumes a past tense form as V_2 in a pseudo-coordinative construction:

(25)   Университант, гуманный, эмансипе, а не устыдился старика посетить. Забыл отца и вдруг вспомнил. *Взял да и вспомнил*. Дай, подумал, своего старого хрена вспомню! Хо-хо-хо. [А. П. Чехов. Святая простота (1885-1886)]
"A college student, humanist, emancipated, but he was not ashamed to visit his old man. He had forgotten his father and suddenly remembered him. Out of a sudden, he remembered him. Let me remember my old bastard! he thought. ha-ha-ha."

The sarcasm conveyed first by the initial sentence ('not ashamed to visit') and then by the triple marker of surprise (*vdrug, vzjal da i*) is boosted by the subsequent act of an alleged willingly remembering.

5.   Conclusions

This study has examined the emergence and expansion of four competing Russian constructions expressing the unexpectedness of an event, three of them being built according to the pseudo-coordinative model '*vzjat' and V_2*' and one following the serial model *vzjat' V_2*. The historical data (683 unambiguous examples) taken from the Russian national corpus and beginning in 1827 shows a marked divergence between the serial type and the three coordinative types with the conjunctions *da, i,* and *da i* in terms of frequency and further grammaticalisation. Most striking is the weak representation of the serial model: it reaches only 5,7% of the whole bulk[6]. Within the pseudo-coordinative model, the *da i*-construction constitutes 65% of all instances; it exceeds the *da*-construction five times in frequency. The corpus contained a considerable amount of ambiguous cases due to the competing literal vs. new reading of *vzjat'* in the given string and the presence or absence of overt or covert direct objects. The exact number is hard to determine but may well amount to 10% of the whole bulk. Ambiguity is more widespread at the beginning of the period under discussion: the first seven hits of the most productive construction *vzjat' da i V_2* are all ambiguous.

The three pseudo-coordinative constructions tend to boost the surprise semantics by the so-called imperativus dramaticus, which constitutes almost 10% of all hits, and additional adverbials with the meaning 'suddenly'. The directive function of the imperative 'take and do! = don't hesitate to do' runs counter to the overall surprise semantics but is far less frequent than the other uses of the imperative, especially the imperativus dramaticus. Evidence of ongoing grammaticalisation involves mainly inanimate subjects and V_2s denoting uncontrollable events (notably related to the semantics of dying), whereas the imperfective aspect *brat'* of the first verb and the negation of V_2 appear only at the end of the period and are negligible in number. By contrast, the serial construction *vzjat' V_2* remains behind all this both in terms of frequency and grammaticalisation. In the historical corpus, it most often provides the first two parts of

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[6] As evidence from Latgalian (Nau, this volume) shows, the divergence between the SVC model and the pseudo-coordinative model may also be due to a difference of registers: SVC dominates in older oral folklore texts, whereas it is completely absent in modern Latgalian and also in the first written Latgalian texts.

coordinative triplets of the type *vzjat' V₂ i V₃*. Additional pragmatic efforts, notably those resulting in irony or sarcasm, originate either from lexical-semantic anomalies or unusual repetitive patterns; they are again limited to the pseudo-coordinative model.

A final, although speculative word concerns the presumable origin of the semantic change undergone by *vzjat'*. The meaning 'do suddenly', ignored by Heine and Kuteva 2002, is far less widespread than the completely unrelated grammaticalisation resulting in an instrumental meaning ('take the knife and cut' → 'cut with a knife'). Less frequent, but semantically closer to unexpectedness is the new meaning 'begin', attested in many European languages, cf. Coseriu 1966 and Ekberg 1993. Nevertheless, the step from 'begin' to 'do suddenly' still remains to be explained, all the more so as in the history of Russian nothing indicates that *vzjat' i V₂* or *vzjat'* alone previously had come to mean 'begin'. The contemporary Russian constructions have striking areal affiliations in Polish (Andrason, this volume and 2018) and even more so in Baltic (Lithuanian and Latvian, Nau et al. 2019). Much as in Russian, in Baltic the pseudo-coordinative model prevails. The Estonian (Tragel 2017) and Finnish equivalents are both geographically and structurally at the periphery of the areal convergence. Whatever the mutual relations between these neighbouring languages may be, it deserves our attention that there exists a close parallel in Brazilian Portuguese (Aikhenvald 2018:125): *pegou falou* lit. '(he) took (he) spoke' means 'he spoke all of a sudden' along with *pegou e falou* 'he took and spoke'. All in all, an updated and comprehensive typological overview of the possible grammaticalisation processes of 'take' seems highly desirable.

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