

Narrative-advancing relative clauses in Russian

In most approaches to the typology of relative clauses, this notion is defined based on a combination of semantic and structural criteria, cf. “[a] relative construction is a construction consisting of a nominal (...) (which may be empty) and a subordinate clause interpreted as attributively modifying the nominal” [Lehmann 1986: 664]. At the same time, the bulk of research on “relative clauses” shows that their structural and semantic-pragmatic properties do not necessarily match, which leads to the recognition of various constructions that occupy an intermediate position between relative constructions and adjacent phenomena, e.g. adjoined relative clauses, correlative constructions, cf. discussion in [Croft 2001], pseudorelative construction, etc. It appears that discourse-pragmatic functions associated with relativization may be found in those constructions that do not show formal properties of relative clauses and, vice versa, those constructions that have the structure of relative clauses can be used for purposes that deviate from the prototypical functions of relativization. The two types of mismatches are analyzed on the data from Russian corpora.

The former type of phenomena is e.g. found in the complex structures encountered in informal registers of Russian (see 1) where the reference of a NP is identified with the help of a clause that does not bear overt syntactic markers of its subordinate (dependent) status (except for possibly intonation). These non-embedded “relative” clauses, nevertheless, show discourse properties associated with relative clauses (they contain backgrounded presupposed information, etc.).

The latter type of mismatches is exemplified by the un(der)described uses of non-restrictive relative clauses that are structurally identical with the unmarked pattern of relativization in Russian (the use of the relative pronoun *kotoryj*) that are unusual in that they may be used to code foregrounded information (see 2a). Thus, unlike prototypical relative clauses, the construction illustrated in (2a) is “narrative-advancing” (or “continuative” in Jespersen’s terms, cf. discussion in [Lambrecht 2001: 495]). The most usual context for the usage of narrative-advancing relatives in Russian are those contexts where a new referent has been introduced in the main clause by way of a presentational or functionally similar construction (cf. the O-referent of *vyzvat* ‘to send for someone’ in (2a)) and where the next information unit is somehow centered around this newly introduced referent.

Thus, unlike other subordinate structures, these complex sentences function as a *sui generis* switch-reference mechanism that shifts topical status from one referent to another. “Narrative-advancing” relative clauses are “tense-iconic” in terms of [Haiman 1983] (cf. e.g. (2a) where the three Present Tense forms are all interpreted as describing subsequent events, unlike the usual Present Tense relative clauses). Moreover, if a structurally relative clause is tense-iconic, then it can only be interpreted as a non-restrictive switch-reference clause (see 3). If compared to other means that shift the topical status from one referent to another in the Russian discourse (e.g. the pronoun *tot*, lit. demonstrative *that*, cf. discussion in [Podlesskaya 2001]), the construction at issue signals a tighter cognitive connection between the two clauses. Thus, seizing the criminal in (2a) is logically related to the fact of sending for a policeman; if the continuation were that the policeman e.g. did not show up despite being called for, the use of the relative construction of the type illustrated in (2a) would have been very unnatural, cf. (2b).

The narrative-advancing relative constructions just described are also different from other means of switching the topical status in that they are often used for re-topicalization of the main topic / protagonist of the narrative; in this latter case the relative pronoun is usually followed by *i*, literally ‘and’, which is in this case the formal marker of re-topicalization, as in (4); this marker *i* is obligatorily placed in the left adjacency of the verb.

The paper discusses in great detail the formal and functional varieties and properties of such non-prototypical relative clauses in Russian. By and large, the findings of the study constitute evidence against the widely held view that communicative contrasts (such as e.g. topic – comment distinctions) are mostly grammaticalised in matrix clauses.

- (1) *Zajdi k barinu v vos'moj nomer, so mnoj priexal, skazhi, chto ja sejchas pridu k nemu.*
 'Go to the **gentleman** in the 8th room, (**who**) **has arrived with me**, tell him I'll be at once'.
- (2a) *Vozvrashchaetsja xozjain, vzyvaet milicionera, kotoryj lovit ^etogo prestupnika.*
 'The owner comes back, sends for a policeman and the policeman catches the criminal' (lit. '... for [a/the] **policeman, who catches the criminal**').
- (2b) *???Vozvrashchaetsja xozjain, vzyvaet milicionera, kotoryj ne prishjol.*
 Intended meaning: 'The owner comes back, sends for a policeman, but the policeman did not show up' (lit.: '... for [a/the] **policeman, who did not show up**').
- (3) *Natella... - skazal Rustam zhenshchine, kotoraja tut zhe podnjalas' iz-za stola.*
 "'Natella...'", Rustam said **to the woman, who immediately** [after she has been addressed to] **raised from the table**'.
 (*'... to the woman who immediately raised from the table').
- (4) {Left context: description of a gathering of labor veterans that took place in a certain club. Then follows a short description of the place where the gathering takes place}.
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| <i>S</i> | <i>nedavnix</i> | <i>por</i> | <i>zdes'</i> | <i>dejstvuuet</i> | <i>sovet</i> | <i>stroitelej,</i> | <i>po</i> | <i>iniciative</i> |
| From | recent | times | here | functions | council | of.builders, | by | initiative |
| <i>kotorogo i</i> | <i>sostojalos'</i> | <i>chestvovanie</i> | <i>znatnyx</i> | <i>zemljakov.</i> | | | | |
| of.which and | took.place | celebration | of.famous | fellow.countrymen | | | | |
- 'Since recently, a board of builders functions in this place, and it was on the initiative of this very board that the celebration of the famous countrymen took place.' (Lit.: 'here functions a board of builders, on whose initiative (and) took place the gathering'). NB: it is essential that 'the celebration of the famous countrymen' is the same 'gathering of labor veterans' which was the topic of the first part of the text.

References

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