

## Two Relativisation Strategies under Superlatives in Russian

Daniel Tiskin

Saint Petersburg State University

**Preliminaries.** There are several relative pronouns available in Russian, incl. *kotoryj* ‘which’ and *kakoj* ‘~ what kind of’. According to the normative grammar [9], *kotoryj* is less specialised than *kakoj* and is therefore able to function in its stead in contexts such as (1). This exchange is precluded if *kakoj* has kind (as opposed to individual) reference, hence the semantic difference in (2), where *kotoryj* would mean that those very people, as opposed to people of that kind, have never been seen before (see also Spencer [7]).

- (1) samyj bol’šoj bulyžnik, **kotoryj** tol’ko byl u nego v karmane  
 most large stone REL PRT was PREP he.GEN in pocket  
 ‘the largest stone he had in his pocket’ (Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*)
- (2) Pojavilis’ neobyknovennye ljudi, **kakix** ran’še ne vidyvali...  
 appeared extraordinary people REL.ACC/GEN.PL earlier NEG see.PST.PL  
 ‘Extraordinary people appeared of the kind yet unseen’ (A. Tolstoy, *The Road to Calvary*)

The present paper examines the syntactic effects of the two pronouns in restrictive RCs embedded under superlatives (synthetic as well as analytic ones). The quantitative data was obtained from the RNC and filtered so that only such examples remained where a restrictive interpretation is possible. Only cases with REL followed by the subject (or a homonymous object) were included.

**Licensing behaviour.** The two pronouns behave differently w.r.t. the licensing of the particle *tol’ko* (table 1) and NPI pronouns of the *-libo* and *-nibud’* series (table 2, where all examples featuring *tol’ko*, none of which has an NPI pronoun, are excluded). Unlike in (1), *tol’ko* typically does not appear under *kotoryj*. NPIs are licensed by both, although quantities differ.

**Elective mismatch.** REL may fail to agree in number with the (overt or elided) RC head:

- (3) Možet byt’, samyj velikij ∅, kakix on znaet.  
 maybe most great REL.ACC.PL he knows  
 ‘Maybe the greatest one he knows’

This sort of mismatch is significantly facilitated by the presence of the elective construction (4) of the type *odin iz...* ‘one of’ (table 3); in fact, **all** mismatches in my corpus where REL is singular (despite the plural head) occur in the elective construction.

- (4) ...razrazilas’ odna iz samyx sil’nyx groz, kakuju ja zapomnju.  
 broke.out one of most strong thunderstorms REL.ACC.SG I will.remember  
 ‘one of the heaviest thunderstorms I can recall broke out’

Generally, *kakoj* does not have to share the number feature of its head [3]. For *kotoryj* mismatch is allowed in **appositive** RCs [5], but there is a difference between the two pronouns in my corpus: only one out of 5 mismatches with *kakoj* was in an elective construction; out of 9 mismatches with *kotoryj*, all were (Fisher’s exact test, two-sided:  $p < .01$ ). It is plausible that *kotoryj* in restrictive RCs may agree with *odin* instead of the RC head as if it were not bound but merely coreferential with the *odin*-DP, mismatches for *kakoj* being mostly due to its kind reference.

<i>tol’ko</i>	+	–
<i>kakoj</i>	34	171
<i>kotoryj</i>	6	332

Table 1: *Tol’ko* licensing  
 $(\chi^2 : p \ll .001)$

NPI	+	–
<i>kakoj</i>	51	120
<i>kotoryj</i>	55	277

Table 2: NPI licensing  
 $(\chi^2 : p < .001)$

Mismatch	+	–
elective	10	91
non-elective	4	438

Table 3: Mismatch & electivity  
 $(\chi^2 : p \ll .001)$

**Towards an account.** Appositive RCs with *kotoryj* are known to (be able to) have independent illocutionary force [5], e.g. that of a command within a sentence which is itself declarative; additionally, regardless of their restrictive/appositive status, *kotoryj*-relatives have been shown to exhibit a clause-like prosodic pattern [6]. The data above suggest that under superlatives *kotoryj* retains some degree of independence, so that (a) *tol’ko*, licensed higher in the structure than the relative pronoun is placed (see e.g. Bhatt [1]), cannot occur (the environment being “too factive” for it), (b) NPIs are less readily licensed under *kotoryj* than under *kakoj*, and (c) REL can interact with the elective head *odin* although it is within the scope of the superlative below *odin*. Note that *tol’ko* is licensed in other sorts of non-assertive contexts, such as (5).

- (5) Kak menja tol’ko ne nazyvali!  
 how I.ACC TOL’KO NEG call.PST.PL  
 ‘By what name have I not been called!’

A way to capture both restrictiveness and agreement in cases like (4) might be to stipulate that the set quantified over by the superlative is contextually restricted—whether by means of a variable in the syntax or by manipulating the interpretation function—and that the RC is used as the source of the contextual restriction:

- (6) [ odna iz [ samyx<sub>in D</sub> sil’nyx groz ] ],  $D = \{x \mid \text{I can recall } x\}$

This is improbable since (a) it does not explain why number mismatch is facilitated by *odin* and (b) the RC in (4) does not satisfy the criteria for appositeness, e.g. one cannot add an epistemic adverb [5] such as *požaluj* ‘perhaps’ to the RC in (4) (the same for *kakoj* replaced with *kotoryj*).

**The proposal.** A more promising analysis attributes the number mismatch to the referential (as opposed to bound) reading of the number feature on the relative pronoun, cf. the ambiguity of *I am the only one who did my homework* (bound: ‘no one else did his/her homework’; referential: ‘no one else did my homework’; Sudo [8] for discussion). Therefore, I conclude that an expression need not be bound in the all-or-none fashion: the index of *kakuju* in (4) is bound from above (see Erlewine and Kotek [2], whose analysis is however ultimately different, for why the relevant  $\lambda$ -abstractor may be above the *wh*-pronoun), but its number feature is referential.

The analysis is supported by the known fact that *kotoryj*-clauses allow for *de re* readings of the **person** feature of the embedded verb. Unlike the complementiser *čto* [10], *kotoryj* allows for 1/2 person on the verb with 1/2 person heads [4]:

- (7) Vy, kotorye kaetes’...  
 YOU.NOM.PL REL.NOM.PL repent.2PL (Yevtushenko; OK: *kajutsja* ‘repent.3PL’)

To account for the virtual lack of *tol’ko* under *kotoryj*, note that *kakoj* is used as a question word, whereas *kotoryj* (with the relevant interpretation) is not. *Kto*, which is also a question word, patterns with *kotoryj* in terms of mismatches. Cf. question-like semantics for RCs in [2].

**References.** [1] R. Bhatt. The raising analysis of relative clauses: Evidence from adjectival modification. *Nat. Lang. Sem.* 10.1 (2002), 43–90. [2] M. Y. Erlewine and H. Kotek. The structure and interpretation of non-restrictive relatives: Evidence from relative pronoun pied-piping. *Proc. of CLS* 51 (2015), 149–163. [3] N. I. Formanovskaja. Složnoe predloženie v sovremennom russkom jazyke [The Complex Sentence in Modern Russian]. 1989. [4] M. Kholodilova. Otnositel’nye pridatočnye [Relative Clauses]. *Russian Corpus Grammar*. 2014. URL: [rusgram.ru](http://rusgram.ru). [5] E. Lyutikova. Semantičeskie tipy russkix otnositel’nyx predloženij: analiz korpusnyx dannyx [Semantic Types of Russian Relative Clauses: A Corpus Analysis]. *Filologija i kul’tura* 26 (2011), 199–204. [6] V. Podlesskaja. Prosodija protiv sintaksisa v russkix otnositel’nyx predloženijax [Prosody vs. Syntax in Russian Relative Clauses]. *Acta Linguistica Petropolitana* 10.2 (2014), 537–567. [7] D. P. Spencer. Aspects of the Syntax of Relative Clauses in Colloquial and Standard Russian. PhD thesis. U. Toronto, 1993. [8] Y. Sudo. On the semantics of phi features on pronouns. PhD thesis. MIT, 2012. [9] N. Švedova, ed. Russkaja grammatika [A Grammar of Russian]. 1980. [10] A. Zalizniak and E. Paduceva. Sintaksičeskie svojstva mestoimenija *kotoryj* [The Syntactic Properties of the Pronoun *kotoryj*]. *Kategorija opredelënnosti—neopredelënnosti v slavjanskix i balkanskix jazykax*. 1979, 289–329.