

The things that we can(not) exclaim!

Intro English has both wh- and nominal exclamatives (Portner & Zanuttini 2005): (1)–(2); but Russian only has the former: (3)–(4). I propose that both wh- and nominal exclamatives are instances of expressive intensification, but while English has a DP-internal expressive intensifier projection and can thus have nominal exclamatives, Russian doesn't and can't.

Exclamatives as intensification Exclamatives must be about degrees (Elliott 1974; Rett 2011): (5)–(6). Esipova (2021) argues true exclamatives are instances of *expressive degree intensification*, akin to (7), with the expressive intensifier “permanently promoted to the left periphery with its expressive component thus being the primary speech act”. Thus, they claim exclamatives like (5a) have the semantics in (8), where (i) the wh-constituent denotes a property of degrees, and (ii) E-FORCE modifies this property saying that d is “extreme”, iota-binds the d variable, and outputs an expressive speech act about this d .

I adopt Esipova's insight that exclamatives involve degree intensification, but instead of having an E-FORCE operator that permanently lives on the left periphery and does all these diverse things, I propose that:

- (i) expressive degree intensifiers carry compositionally independent degree intensification and expressive speech act components (cf. Esipova 2022);
- (ii) in non-exclamatives containing expressive intensification, this expressive speech act remains a secondary speech act;
- (iii) exclamatives are formed by moving an expressive intensifier head (ExprInt) into the left periphery FORCE projection so that its expressive speech act component becomes the primary speech act.

Note that segmental expressive intensifiers appear to sometimes be similarly promoted, too: (9).

Wh-exclamatives I follow Esipova 2021 in that in both English and Russian wh-exclamatives, the wh-constituents are relative clauses over degrees. But I depart from their analysis by proposing that in wh-exclamatives, these degree properties get intensified and the d variable gets iota-bound as separate steps, after which ExprInt moves into the FORCE projection making the expressive component of the expressive intensifier the primary speech act (while its degree intensification component remains interpreted in its original position): (10).

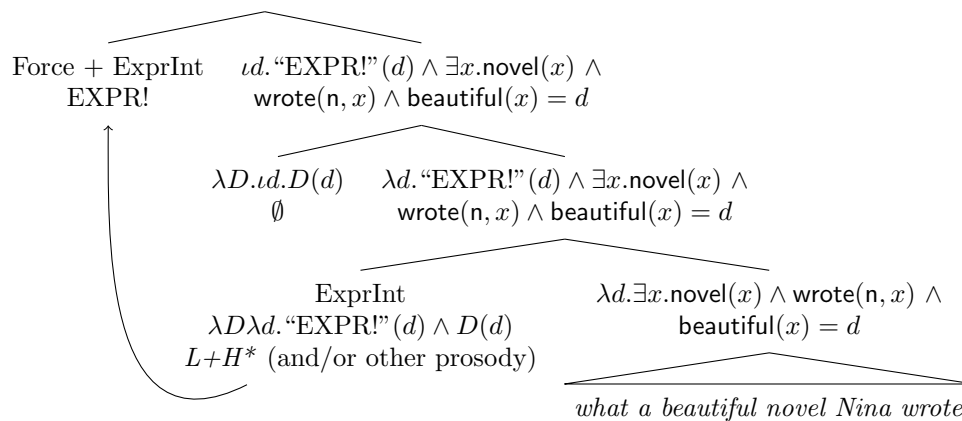
Nominal exclamatives I maintain that English has a DP-internal (also an AdjP- and AdvP-internal) ExprInt projection, which can be used to intensify NPs (coerced into a degree interpretation) in non-exclamatives: (11). In cases like (11), the degree variable gets existentially closed off, and we continue the derivation with a property of individuals (e.g., $\lambda x.\exists d.$ “damn”(d) \wedge coward(x) = d), while in nominal exclamatives like (2), it's the individual variable that gets existentially closed off after the degree is intensified (e.g., $\lambda d.\exists x.$ “EXPR!”(d) \wedge novel(x) \wedge wrote(n , x) \wedge beautiful(x) = d), and then *the* iota-binds the degree (not the individual!) variable, the rest of the derivation proceeding just like in (10).

Unlike English, Russian doesn't have a DP-internal (nor AdjP- or AdvP-internal) ExprInt projection. Russian expressive intensifiers can only modify relative clauses over degrees (impossible in English: (13)), and their expressive component can also be promoted to be the primary speech act: (12). Consequently, Russian only has wh-exclamatives, but no nominal exclamatives. It remains to be seen if this is connected to Russian lacking articles.

(498 words)

Examples and derivations

- (1) What a (beautiful) novel Nina wrote!
- (2) The (beautiful) novel that Nina wrote!
- (3) Kakoj (krasivyj) roman Nina napisala!
what.ADJ (beautiful) novel Nina wrote
'What a (beautiful) novel Nina wrote!'
- (4) *(Krasivyj) roman, čto Nina napisala!
(beautiful) novel what.REL Nina wrote
Intended: 'The (beautiful) novel that Nina wrote!'
- (5) a. How smart Anya is!
≈ 'I am expressing feelings about the (very high) degree to which Anya is smart.'
b. What a terrible friend you are!
≈ 'I am expressing feelings about the (very high) degree to which you are a terrible friend.'
- (6) a. *Who came!
≈ 'I am expressing feelings about the person who came or the fact that they came.'
b. *What I am about to tell you!
≈ 'I am expressing feelings about the thing that I am about to tell you or the fact that I am about to tell you that.'
- (7) Anya is damn smart.
≈ 'Anya is very smart + I am expressing feelings on the side'
- (8) E-FORCE($\lambda d.\text{smart}(a) = d$) expresses the speaker's feelings about $\iota d.\text{extreme}(d) \wedge \text{smart}(a) = d$
- (9) {I'm feeling damn good. / Damn I'm feeling good!}
(NB: In both cases, *damn* is prosodically packaged together with the rest of the utterance.)
- (10) EXPR! about $\iota d.\text{"EXPR!"}(d) \wedge \exists x.\text{novel}(x) \wedge \text{wrote}(n, x) \wedge \text{beautiful}(x) = d$



(EXPR! = “expressive speech act”; I adopt the demonstration-based semantics for expressive intensifiers from Esipova 2022, where “EXPR!”(d) means an instantiation of d warrants an “EXPR!” reaction)

- (11) He's a damn coward.
Possible interpretation: ≈ 'He's a coward to a “damn”-worthy degree + I am expressing feelings on the side.'
- (12) On {pizdec, oxuet', s uma sojti} kakoj trus(livyj). / {Pizdec, Oxuet', S uma sojti} kakoj on trus(livyj)!
he EXPR what coward(ly) / EXPR what he coward(ly)
≈ 'He's the “EXPR!” degree of a coward!' / 'EXPR! at the “EXPR!”-worthy degree that he's a coward.'
- (13) Anya is damn (*how) smart.

References

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