



Summary

Claim: Strings like *How smart she is!* and *Who came!* are both grammatical in Russian, but they have distinct form (prosody) and meaning (affective & epistemic), warranting distinct analyses.

Lesson: No “secondary” aspects of form or meaning!

Background

English matrix *wh*-exclamatives (cf. exclamations of other sentence types) require degree readings (Elliott 1974; Rett 2011, a.o.):

- (1) a. How smart she is! / What a terrible friend you are!
- b. *Who came! / *What I will tell you!
- c. Look who came! / You won’t believe what I will tell you!

Nouwen & Chernilovskaya 2015: Sentences like (1b) are grammatical, a.o., in Dutch; both (1a) & (1b) involve scales, but languages & *wh*-items vary in what types of scalar meanings they can express.

ME: Strings like (1a) & (1b) are both OK in Russian, but have different structures: the latter are more like (1c); languages vary in whether they have prosodically expounded mirative predicates.

Type 1 vs. 2 in Russian: examples

Type 1:

- (2) Kakaja (že) ona umnaja!
what (ŽE) she smart
‘How smart she is!’
- (3) Do čego (že) on naglyj!
to what (ŽE) he audacious
‘How audacious he is!’
- (4) Kak (že) on menja dostal!
how (ŽE) he me reached
‘How fed up I am with him!’

Type 2:

- (5) Kto (*že) prišël!
who (*ŽE) came
≈‘[Look] who came!’
- (6) Kuda (??že) my poedem!
to-where (??ŽE) we will-go
≈‘[You won’t believe] where we’re going!’
- (7) Čto (??že) ja sčas rasskažu!
what (??ŽE) I now will-tell
≈‘[You won’t believe] what I’m about to tell you!’

Type 1 vs. 2 is about form & meaning, not degrees. Non-degree *wh*-items are incompatible w/Type 1, degree ones can occur in both:

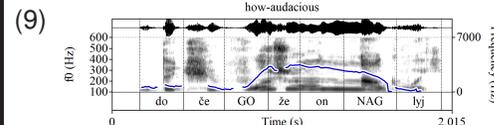
- (8) Skol’ko u nix deneg!
how-much at them money

Type 1: ‘How much money they have!’

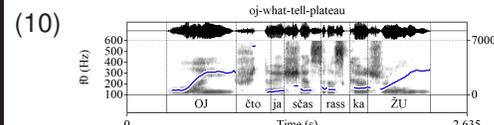
Type 2: ≈‘[You won’t believe] how much money they have!’

Type 1 vs. 2 in Russian: form

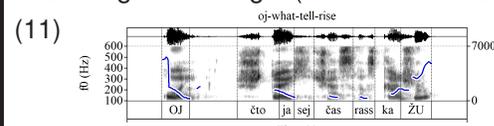
Type 1 prosody: falling boundary contour; contrastive focus on the *wh*-item and additional prominence on the associated predicate:



Plateau Type 2: singsongy mid-plateau boundary contour; no prominence can occur on the *wh*-item:



Rising Type 2: sharp rise(-fall) boundary contour; the *wh*-item can bear a high tonal target (different from contrastive focus marking):



Also: Type 2 are often preceded by interjections/vocalizations, which can be accompanied by a clap in rising Type 2.

Type 1 within a larger typology

Utterances that encode the speaker’s AFFECT about some CONTENT:

- A. primary AFFECT; expressive AFFECT: Type 1; *Fuck she’s smart!*
- B. primary CONTENT; expressive AFFECT: *She’s fucking smart.*
- C. primary AFFECT; truth-conditional AFFECT: *I am {surprised / happy / sad / infuriated / ...} that she is very smart.*
- D. primary CONTENT; truth-conditional AFFECT: *{Surprisingly / fortunately / sadly / much to my dismay / ...}, she is very smart.*

Also, B vs. A in Russian:

- (15) Ona pizdec (kakaja) umnaja. (16) Pizdec (kakaja) ona umnaja!
she FUCK (what) smart FUCK (what) she smart
≈‘She’s fucking smart.’ ≈‘Fuck she’s smart!’

Selected references

Elliott. 1974. *Foundations of language*. Jeong & Condoravdi. 2017. *BLS 43*. Nouwen & Chernilovskaya. 2015. *Linguistic variation*. Rett. 2011. *L&P*. Zyman. 2018. *Snippets*.

Type 1 vs. 2 in Russian: meaning

Type 1 semantics: old information, varied affect

- The primary goal is to express one’s immediate affect about a proposition about a (typically high) degree.
- This proposition can’t be completely new information (but you can be reacting to new evidence that further supports it).
- The affect can range from anger to awe, w/gradient aspects of prosody & facial expressions reflecting further nuance.

Type 2 semantics: new information, fixed affect

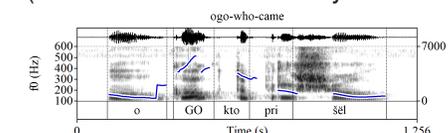
- Always involves acquisition of new info (by speaker or addressee).
- Plateau Type 2 convey mild/pretend amusement (e.g., ironic or child-directed); cf. (12). Rising Type 2 convey genuine excitement.
- Both are incompatible w/negative emotions: (13) vs. (14).
- Cf. English “calling contour” (e.g., Jeong & Condoravdi 2017).

- (12) Ogo kto prišël!

wow who came

≈‘I can’t believe who came!’ (new info, genuine surprise)

(cf. *Wow that she left!* in Zyman 2018—but is this abt old info?)



- (13) Čto sečas so mnoj proizošlo! (plateau or rising)
what now with me happened

≈‘[You won’t believe] what just happened to me!’

✓ I ran into a celebrity. ✗ I almost got hit by a truck.

- (14) Pizdec čto sečas so mnoj proizošlo! (prosody like (12))
FUCK what now with me happened

≈‘I’m fucking shook by what just happened to me!’

✗ I ran into a celebrity. ✓ I almost got hit by a truck.

Type 1 vs. 2 in Russian: conclusion

Type 1 are **matrix exclamatives**, i.e., sentences w/special syntax whose main goal is to express immediate affect about a proposition.

Type 2 are **interrogatives embedded** under a complex mirative predicate expounded prosodically (+ via other “secondary” means). Future: how do its meaning components (info acquisition, surprise, lack of speaker investment, etc.) map onto specific sub-exponents?