

What I will tell you about “matrix” *wh*-“exclamatives”!

Background *Wh*-exclamatives like (2) (hf. Type 2 sentences) are ungrammatical in English, unlike the *wh*-exclamatives in (1) (hf. Type 1 sentences) or embedded *wh*-interrogatives in (3).

- (1) How smart she is! / What a terrible friend you are! Type 1
- (2) *Who came! / *Where we are going! Type 2
- (3) Look who came! / You won’t believe where we are going!

Rett (2011) treats this as evidence that exclamatives (as a sentence type; cf. declarative/interrogative/imperative exclamations) must have degree interpretations. Nouwen & Chernilovskaya (2015) (N&C) claim Type 2 sentences are grammatical in several languages, including Russian. They (i) assume that both Type 1 & 2 sentences are matrix *wh*-exclamatives and (ii) argue that both involve comparison with other items placed on a scale, but said scale can rank individuals by the degree to which they have a certain property (Type 1) or events involving the *wh*-referent by their noteworthiness (Type 2), concluding that (iii) languages differ on if exclamatives can have both types of scalar readings and which *wh*-items can participate in which reading.

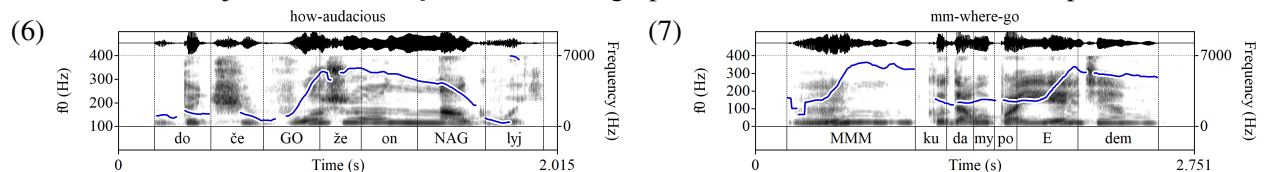
This paper contests N&C’s claims at least for Russian, arguing that: (i) Russian Type 2 sentences are not matrix exclamatives, but interrogatives embedded under a complex mirative predicate expounded prosodically (i.e., syntactically, they are like the English sentences in (3)); (ii) Type 1, but not Type 2 sentences in Russian involve comparison with grammatically evoked ranked alternatives. Thus, (iii) at least English and Russian differ only in whether they have that prosodically expounded mirative predicate in their lexicon.

Type 1 vs. 2 in Russian Indeed, Russian allows strings of both Type 1 (in (4)) and Type 2 (in (5)):

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| <p>(4) a. Kakaja (že) ona umnaja!
 what.ADJ (KONTR) she smart
 ‘How smart she is!’</p> <p>b. Do čego (že) on naglyj!
 to what.N (KONTR) he audacious
 ‘How audacious he is!’</p> <p>c. Kak (že) on menja dostal!
 how (KONTR) he me reached
 ‘How fed up I am with him!’</p> | <p>(5) a. Kto (*že) prišël!
 who (*KONTR) came
 ≈‘[Look] who came!’</p> <p>b. Kuda (*že) my poedem!
 to-where (*KONTR) we will-go
 ≈‘[You won’t believe] where we are going!’</p> <p>c. Čto (*že) ja sejčas rasskažu!
 what.N (*KONTR) I now will-tell
 ≈‘[You won’t believe] what I’m about to tell you!’</p> |
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However, the differences between the two suggest distinct structures with distinct semantics.

Prosody and vocalizations Type 1 sentences have a falling boundary contour; they mark contrastive focus on the *wh*-item and additional prominence on the predicate associated with it: (6). Type 2 sentences often have a singsongy, mid-plateau boundary contour; they bear a nuclear pitch accent on the last lexically stressed syllable and cannot have contrastive focus on the *wh*-item: (7). Also, Type 2 sentences are often preceded by vocalizations/interjections (*mmm, oj, oo*, simulated gasp, etc.), realized with the same mid-plateau contour.



Affective & attitudinal component The exclamative meaning component of Type 1 sentences is expressive, i.e., it is an immediate, non-truth-conditional expression of emotion, akin to swearing or yelling *Ouch!*, and is, thus, best modeled as a direct manipulation of the context (e.g., Potts 2007). The emotions thus expressed can range from anger to awe, with gradient aspects of prosody (overall pitch height/range, intensity, voice quality, etc.) reflecting further nuance. While surprise can be part of the exclamative affect, and Type 1 sentences are possible in information acquisition contexts, neither is obligatory, i.e., they are not inherently mirative.

In contrast, Type 2 sentences are always uttered when the speaker either just acquired some piece of information themselves or is about to divulge it to the addressee. Their affective component is restricted to either mild/pretend surprise/excitement of the speaker (e.g., (5a) can be uttered ironically when someone

