THE FORM-FUNCTION MISMATCHES IN THE RUSSIAN “RELATIVE” CLAUSES

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In most approaches to the typology of relative clauses (RCs), 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” [1, p. 664]. At the same time, the bulk of research on RCs 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 RCs sensu stricto and adjacent phenomena, e.g. adjoined RCs, correlative constructions, etc., cf. discussion in [2]. It appears that discourse-pragmatic functions associated with relativization may be found in those constructions that do not show formal properties of RCs and, vice versa, those constructions that have the structure of RCs 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 “RCs”, nevertheless, show discourse properties associated with RCs (they contain backgrounded presupposed information, etc.).

The latter type of mismatches is exemplified by the un(der)described uses of non-restrictive RCs 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 as narrative clauses coding foregrounded information (see 2). Unlike other subordinate structures (and similarly to coordinate structures), these “narrative RCs” code events that are on the timeline of the narrative, these RCs are “tense-iconic” in terms of [3]. Moreover, if a structural RC is tense-iconic, then it can only be interpreted as a narrative RC (see 3 which can only be interpreted as a non-restrictive “narrative RC” due to the use of tut zhe ‘immediately’). The “narrative RCs” are used in those cases when a referent that has just been introduced into discourse becomes the topic of the next narrative chunk (cf. ‘policeman’ in 2); in other words it serves as a sui generis switch-reference mechanism. 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 [4]), the “narrative RC” is often used for re-topicalization of the protagonist of the narrative; usually it signals a tighter cognitive connection between the two clauses but allows more syntactic freedom (the topic of the relative clause must not necessarily be its subject, see 4).

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.’

2) Vozvrashchaetsja xozjain, vyzyvaet 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.’

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   ‘… for [a/the] policeman, who catches the criminal.’
(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) Katja sobrala chto-to v sumku, kotoruju srazu zhe zabral u nejo muzhik.
   ‘Katja put her stuff into the bag, which the man has immediately taken from her.’

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