

## CASE ATTRACTION IN NON-STANDARD RUSSIAN

### 0. Introduction

#### 0.1. Crucial terms

- **Case attraction** (*attractio relativi*): “the case required by the matrix context is, as it were, superimposed on the *wh*-word” (Riemsdijk 2006).

#### (1) Non-standard Russian

*Bol'suju sobaku zvali Dunkan, kotoruju pomen'se – Tom.*  
 big.ACC dog.ACC they.called Dunkan which.ACC smaller Tom  
 ‘The big dog was called Dunkan, the smaller one was called Tom’. (Yandex<sup>1</sup>)

- **Free (= headless) relatives** are generally defined as “relatives without an overt nominal head” (de Vries 2002: 42).
- **Light-headed relatives** (false free relatives, semi-free relatives): “no overt head N, with overt head D” (de Vries 2002: 43).
- For a further discussion of free relatives and light-headed relatives see part 4.

#### 0.2. Material

- speakers’ judgements;<sup>2</sup>
- some quantitative data achieved via the Yandex search engine (yandex.ru).

### 1. Russian relative pronouns: basic facts

- The most frequent relative pronouns (excluding adverbial relative pronouns and the possessive relative pronoun): *kotoryj* ‘which’, *kto* ‘who’, and *čto* ‘what’.

Table 1. The distribution of Russian relative pronouns

	<i>kto</i> ‘who’	<i>čto</i> ‘what’	<i>kotoryj</i> ‘which’
noun modifying relatives	* (with some exceptions)	* (with some exceptions)	<b>OK</b>
correlatives, free relatives, and light-headed relatives with personal antecedents	<b>OK</b>	*	<b>OK</b> in Non-Standard Russian; * in Standard Russian (with some exceptions)
correlatives, free relatives, and light-headed relatives with inanimate antecedents	*	<b>OK</b>	*

- *kotoryj* ‘which’ in Standard Russian: only relative clauses with nouns in the head;
- *kotoryj* ‘which’ in Non-Standard Russian (see e.g. Spencer (1993)) without an overt head:
  - in non-elliptical contexts:
    - OK with reference to people (2a)
    - ungrammatical with reference to inanimates (2b)
  - OK in elliptical context with reference to inanimates (2c).

(2) *Te, kotorye vysokie, zdes' ne pomestjatsja.*  
 those which high/tall here not fit.in

a. (Out of elliptical context.) <sup>OK</sup> ‘Those (people) who are tall won’t fit in here’.

b. (Out of elliptical context.) \* ‘Those things which are high won’t fit in here’.

c. {Put only the small vases on this shelf.} <sup>OK</sup> ‘Those (vases) which are high won’t fit in here’.

<sup>1</sup> The Yandex search engine (yandex.com) was used.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to thank all those who took part in the survey.

## 2. Data

- Case attraction is basically limited to Non-Standard Russian. In Standard Russian, a nominal head is usually necessary if a case mismatch is expected (see 2.2.1 for the constructions which are slightly more standard).

### (3) Standard Russian

*Bol'suju sobaku zvali Dulkan,*  
big.ACC dog.ACC they.called Dulkan

a. *tu, kotoraja pomen'she – Tom.*  
that.ACC which.NOM smaller Tom

b. *#kotoraja / \*kotoruju pomen'she – Tom.*  
which.NOM which.NOM smaller Tom

‘The big dog was called Dulkan, the smaller one was called Tom’.

- The set of restrictions seems to differ for the three types of relative clauses:
  - noun modifying relative clauses;
  - light-headed relative clauses and FRs with inanimate antecedents;
  - light-headed relative clauses and FRs with animate antecedents.

### 2.1. Noun modifying relatives (with *kotoryj* ‘which’)

The availability of case attraction depends on several conditions:

- **The head:**

- CA is best when the nominal head is ellided;
- Even if a demonstrative is present, the sentence is grammatically degraded:

(4) *²Bol'suju sobaku zvali Dulkan, tu, kotoruju pomen'she – Tom.*  
big.ACC dog.ACC they.called Dulkan that.ACC which.ACC smaller Tom  
‘The big dog was called Dulkan, the smaller one was called Tom’.

- If a noun is present in the head, the construction is even less acceptable and close to ungrammatical:

(5) *²²Bol'suju sobaku zvali Dulkan, tu sobaku, kotoruju pomen'she – Tom.*  
big.ACC dog.ACC they.called Dulkan that.ACC dog.ACC which.ACC smaller Tom

‘The big dog was called Dulkan, the smaller one was called Tom’.

- **Not** free relatives.

- animacy and pronoun choice:
  - *kotoryj* ‘which’ in clearly non-elliptical contexts can only be used with reference to people (2);
  - *kotoryj* under attraction is possible with reference to animals (1) and inanimates (6).

(6) *Turniketov – dve nezavisimye sekcii, u toj, čto sprava stojat oxranniki, u kotoroj sleva kontrolja net*  
of.turnstiles two independent sections near.that which at.the.right stand safeguards near.which at.the.left control no

‘There are two independent sections of turnstiles. The security guards stand near the one at the right, and there’s no one to control the passage near the one which is at the left’. (Yandex)

- for more discussion see part 4.

- **The predicate:** normally no agreeing predicates (see 2.2.1 for some more details)
  - no finite verbs;

(7) *²²Bol'suju sobaku zvali Dulkan, kotoruju byla pomen'she – Tom.*  
big.ACC dog.ACC they.called Dulkan which.ACC was smaller Tom  
‘The big dog was called Dulkan, the smaller one was called Tom’.

- not even adjectival forms which agree with the subject in numbers and gender (8).
- The comparative forms of adjectives like *pomen'she* 'smaller' in (1) do not decline.

(8) *Bol'suju sobaku zvali Dunkan, kotoruju mal'en'kaja / mal'en'kuju – Tom.*  
big.ACC dog.ACC they.called Dunkan which.ACC small.NOM.F.SG small.ACC.F.SG Tom  
'The big dog was called Dunkan, the small one was called Tom'.

- The non-comparative adjectival forms are not as good in all relatives with a zero copula (i. e. in the present tense); see (Zaliznyak, Paducheva 1979), so the difference could be due to this constraint on copulas;
- However, there's a difference, which is conceived by some speakers and confirmed by statistics:

Table 1. The use of case attraction in relative clauses with adjectival predicates (Yandex)<sup>3</sup>

	case attraction: <i>kotoruju</i> ( <i>pomen'she</i> )	light-headed, no case attraction: <i>tu,</i> <i>kotoraja</i> ( <i>pomen'she</i> )	the ratio of case attraction
<i>pomen'she</i> 'smaller'	6	94	0,1
<i>mal'en'kaja</i> 'small'	0	100	0,0

- For some reason the predicates with comparative forms of adjectives are a most common structure for this kind of case attraction:
  - Judged more grammatical by the speakers;
  - There are even some attestations in the literature, which are extremely rare or non-existent for other constructions:

(9) *Pozvali by kotoryx poumnee k sebe...*  
would call which.PL.ACC are.cleverer to oneself  
lit. 'You should have taken the cleverer ones to you'. [Maxim Gorky. Mat' (1906)] (RNC<sup>4</sup>)

- **The case restrictions:** CA is usually attested only if the relative clause case is nominative; see (10) below.

## 2.2. Free relatives and light-headed relatives

- Grosu (1994: 13): Russian does not allow non-matching;
- Spencer (1993): non-matching in Russian free relatives is only possible when the internal case of the relative clause is retained. Cf. also Ljutikova (2008) for some further constraints on these mismatches.
- Actually, mismatches with the external case retained do occur, see below.

### 2.2.1. With inanimate antecedents (with *čto* 'what')

- Case attraction in free relatives with inanimate antecedents is less restricted than attraction in noun modifying relative clauses:
  - more acceptable in non-nominative positions;

(10) *Lučše bylo vzjat' drugoj nož, no ja vospol'zovalsja kotorym našel.*  
better was to.take another knife but I used with.which found  
'It was better to take another knife, but I used the one I found'.

(11) *Lučše bylo vzjat' čto-nibud' drugoe, no ja vospol'zovalsja čem našel.*  
better was to.take something different but I used with.what found  
'It was better to take something different, but I used what I found'.

<sup>3</sup> Fisher's exact test, two-tailed,  $p < 0.05$ .

To extract the quantitative data in Table 1, two search queries (corresponding to the rows) were formed, the search results were sorted by date and then looked through to sort out the mistaken results and divide the first 100 examples which into two groups (corresponding to the columns).

<sup>4</sup> Russian National Corpus, ruscorpora.ru.

- more acceptable with agreeing predicates:

(12) *Ja ne našla polotenca i vyterla ruki čem bylo.*  
 I not found towel and wept hands with.what was  
 ‘I did not find a towel, and I wept my hands with what there was’.

- In headed relatives, case attraction is more acceptable if the noun is neuter (as is the relative pronoun *čto* ‘what’ in (12)), cf. (13)–(14). A kind of “matching” with the default verbal agreement form, which is neuter singular.

(13) <sup>?</sup>*Ja ne našla drugogo polotenca i vyterla ruki kotorym bylo.*  
 I not found other towel(N) and wept hands with.which was  
 ‘I did not find another towel, and I wept my hands with the one there was’.

(14) *Ja ne našla drugoj trjapki i vyterla ruki kotoroj <sup>??</sup>bylo / \*byla.*  
 I not found other piece.of.cloth(F) and wept hands with.which was.N was.F  
 ‘I did not find another towel, and I wept my hands with the one there was’.

- Still some restrictions:

- Probably, only possible when the relative clause case is the nominative or the accusative. The attraction of nominative to the accusative position is uncheckable, because the relevant cases of the pronoun *čto* ‘what’ coincide.
- The relatives which deviate from the behavior of relative clauses with nouns in the head seem to be always maximalizing.
  - While (13) with an external head and maximalizing semantics is more or less acceptable, the restrictive (14) is completely out.

(15) <sup>???</sup>*Nado rabotat’ s tem čem est’...*  
 it.is.necessary to.work with.that with.what is  
 ‘It is necessary to work with what there is’. (Yandex)

(16) *\*Nado rabotat’ s tem čem polučše...*  
 it.is.necessary to.work with.that with.what better  
 ‘It is necessary to work with what is better’.

- very close to what is called quasirelatives in (Testelec, Bylinina 2005), i.e. indefinite pronouns, based on former relative clauses

- NB: The term is not fixed; see, e.g., (de Vries 2012), where “quasi-relatives”/“quasi-relative clauses” are something completely different.
- The semantics of the predicate in quasirelatives is not always compositional; see (Testelec, Bylinina 2005) for some descriptions, e.g. *čto popalo* (what got.somewhere) means basically just ‘anything’ (depricatively);
- These constructions are compatible with different pronominal stems:
  - including adverbials, which is not quite expected for relatives;

(17) *kogda popalo*  
 when got.somewhere  
 ‘at all hours’

- the verb is always in the fixed form of singular and neuter, even with the animate pronoun in the nominative, which normally requires the masculine singular:

(18) *kto popalo / \*popal*  
 who(M) got.somewhere(N) got.somewhere(M)  
 ‘anyone’ (depricatively)

- However, it is impossible to consider all the constructions in question just indefinite pronouns, because:

- even the most fixed phrases occur with light external heads (though these constructions are probably slightly less standard), i.e. they seem to be not always so **quasirelative**:

(19) *Sidim, konstruiruem, zanimaemsja vsem, čem popalo.*  
 we.sit we.develop we.work.with with.everything with.what got.somewhere  
 ‘We just sit there developing and doing anything whatsoever’. (RNC)

- the semantics of some construction is compositional, the set of predicates is probably an open class;
- the verbs in some constructions (in the less fixed phrases) conjugate for tense regularly;
- some expressions do not freely combine with the animate pronoun; see 2.2.2. below.

### 2.2.2. With animate antecedents (with *kto* ‘who’ and *kotoryj* ‘which’)

- Case attraction with animate antecedents is more restricted;
- In the subject position, case attraction is impossible if the normal agreement of the relative pronoun, which is masculine singular, is retained. It is better if the verb is in the singular **neuter**, which is in many constructions the default agreement form in Russian (as in quisirelatives (18)):

(20) *Mne ne očen’ nraivilis’ moi kollegi, no ja rabotala s kem <sup>?</sup>bylo / \*byl.*  
 to.me not very pleased my colleagues but I worked with who.INS was.N.SG was.M.SG  
 ‘I did not quite like my colleagues, but I worked with who there was’.

- cf. a similar construction with inanimate antecedents:

(21) *Mne ne očen’ nraivilsja etot material, no ja rabotala s čem bylo.*  
 to.me not very pleased this material but I worked with what.INS was  
 ‘I did not quite like the material, but I worked with what there was’.

- According to the speakers’ judgements, the construction is less acceptable than the inanimate ones even when the predicate does not agree with the head, however, more acceptable than the clauses where agreement is required.

(22) *<sup>?</sup>Mne ne očen’ nraivjatsja moi kollegi, no ja rabotala s kem est’*  
 to.me not very please my colleagues but I worked with who.INS is  
 ‘I do not quite like my colleagues, but I worked with who there is’.

- i.e. inanimate with the expected neuter agreement > <sup>?</sup>animates with no agreement required > <sup>?</sup>animate with the unexpected neuter agreement > \*animates with the expected agreement.

## 3. Interim summary

Factors so far:

1. the relative pronoun in the nominative > accusative > other;
2. the relative pronoun does not control agreement > controls agreement;
3. maximalizing > restrictive > non-restrictive;
4. the relative pronoun is inanimate > animate;
5. no overt head > an overt “light” head > an overt head with a non-ellided noun;
6. for relatives with no overt nominal head: no ellided head > an ellided head.

## 4. Discussion

1) Preference for the expected **nominatives (and to a lesser degree for accusatives)** in the relative clause can easily be accounted for by the Case Markedness Hierarchy

(23) NOM < ACC < DAT < GEN < ... < P-Kase (Grosu 1994: 122)

## 2) No agreement with the predicate

- As pointed out in (Georgi, Salzman 2014), the agreement options for predicates in non-matching relatives can differ cross-linguistically. Agreement of (primary and secondary) predicates under attraction:
  - with the case expected in the relative clause in Swiss German and Modern Greek (Georgi, Salzman 2014; Spyropoulos 2015);
  - with the matrix case in Ancient Greek (Quicoli 1982; Georgi, Salzman 2014).
- There is independent evidence that Russian avoids structures where the nominal predicate would be expected to agree with a non-nominative subject (Kholodilova, in press):
  - nominal predicates can sometimes (albeit rather marginally) sometimes agree with the head of participial clauses in the nominative

(24) *moj sosed, byvsij ne durak / durakom vypit', často*  
my neighbour.NOM be.PTCP.ACT.PST.NOM not fool fool.INS to\_drink often  
*okazyvalsja v vytrezvitele.*  
appear in.sobering-up.station  
'My neighbour, who drank a lot, would often get into the sobering-up station'.

(25) *\*moego sosedu, byvsogo ne durakom / \*duraku vypit', často*  
my neighbour.ACC be.PTCP.ACT.PST.ACC not fool.INS fool.ACC to\_drink often  
*sažali v vytrezvitel'.*  
put in.sobering-up.station  
'My neighbour, who drank a lot, was often placed into the sobering-up station'.

## 3) Semantics: maximalizing > restrictive > non-restrictive

- As originally stated by Grosu, Landman (1998: 126), the impact of material external to the relative clause declines along the following hierarchy:

(26) Simplex XPs – Appositives – Restrictives – Maximalizers – Simplex CPs

- The head under case attraction could be “more internal”, see Lander (2011) for related ideas.

## 4) Animacy (or, probably a kind of “matching”)

- Could be related to paradigm syncretism (*čto* ‘what’ is both nominative and accusative; *kto* ‘who’ is only nominative), though there doesn’t seem to exist an obvious connection;
- Could be rephrased as: the relative pronoun normally requires the “default” neuter singular agreement > the relative pronoun normally requires some other agreement. This guess allows some right predictions, see (20), (22);
- There still seems to be some difference even when no agreement is required by the predicate (21), (22).

## 5–6) No nominal head

5. no overt head > an overtly “light” head > an overt head with a non-ellided noun

6. for relatives with no overt nominal head: no ellided head > an ellided head

- This preference is expected for free relatives; see Riemsdijk (2006: 356);
- Probably, less so for
  - light-headed relative clauses;
  - relative clauses with an ellided nominal head.

## 5) Light-headed relative clauses

- One more piece of evidence to claim that Russian “light” heads are more integrated into the relative clause. Other evidence:
  - inverse attraction (see below);
  - transparent free relatives with a demonstrative in the head (Kholodilova 2015);

(27) *V každoj strane byli i est' to, čto nazyvaetsja «social'nye problemy».*  
in every country were and is/are that what is.called social problems  
'In every country, there are what is called social problems' (Russian National Corpus)

- It has also been claimed that demonstrative heads are integrated into **complement** clauses in Russian (Korotaev 2013).

## 6) Relative clauses with an ellided nominal head

- Generally **not** included into the class of free relatives if mentioned at all (even though it usually contradicts many definitions of free relatives, like the one in part 0).
  - Repeatedly claimed for Slavic languages; see, e.g., Zaliznjak, Paduceva (1975) and Spencer (1993) for Russian; Citko (2004) for Polish.
  - This generalization is based on relative pronoun choice, e.g. in Russian
    - relative clauses with nouns (whether ellided or not): *kotoryj* ‘which’, conjunction *čto* ‘that’, <sup>?</sup>*kto* ‘who’, \*pronoun *čto* ‘what’;
    - relative clauses without nouns: *kto* ‘who’, *čto* ‘what’, <sup>?</sup>*kotoryj* ‘which’, <sup>?</sup>conjunction *čto* ‘that’.
  - A more or less similar distribution of pronouns is found in most Slavic languages (Křížková 1970).
  - However, relative clauses with ellided head have some common properties with free relatives
    - case attraction (discussed above);
    - matching conditions (Spencer 1993);
    - occurrence in correlatives:
      - *kotoryj* ‘which’ (the relative pronoun normally used with nominal heads) is almost impossible in correlatives (Mitrenina 2010), unlike *kto* ‘who’ and *čto* ‘what’:

(28) <sup>?</sup>*Kotorye časy so strelkami, temi pol’zujus’.*  
 which watches with hands those I.use  
 {I don’t like watches with numbers.} lit. ‘Which watches are with hands, those I use’.

(29) <sup>?</sup>*Kotorye so strelkami, temi časami pol’zujus’.*  
 which with hands those watches I.use  
 {I don’t like watches with numbers.} lit. ‘Which watches are with hands, those I use’.

- However, this construction is more grammatical if the nominal head is ellided:

(30) *Kotorye so strelkami, temi pol’zujus’.*  
 which with hands those I.use  
 {I don’t like watches with numbers.} lit. ‘Which are with hands, those I use’.

- occurrence in free relatives (the distinction is much the same as in correlatives);

(31) {*Zdes’ mnogo kresel.*}  
 here much armchairs  
*Beri kotoroe bol’she nraivitsja.*  
 take.SG which more pleases  
 ‘There’re many armchairs here. Take the one you like more’.

- occurrence in free relatives with multiple relativization:
  - fine with *čto* ‘what’;

(32) {*Zdes’ mnogo vsego.*}  
 here much of.everything  
<sup>OK</sup>*Voz’mite komu čto nraivitsja.*  
 take.PL whom what pleases  
 ‘There’s a lot of different stuff here. Take what you like, all of you’.

- worse for *kotoryj* ‘which’ with an ellided head;

(33) {*Zdes’ mnogo kresel.*}  
 here much armchairs  
<sup>?</sup>*Voz’mite komu kotoroe nraivitsja.*  
 take whom which pleases  
 ‘There’re many armchairs here. Take those you like, all of you’.

- even worse for *kotoryj* ‘which’ with an explicit head;

(34) {*Prisjad’te vse, požalujsta.*}  
 sit much armchairs  
 ??*Voz’mite komu kotoroe kreslo nravitsja.*  
 take whom which armchair pleases  
 ‘Sit down, please, all of you. Take those armchairs you like’.

## 5. Related phenomena

- Phenomena in Russian relative clauses, which in one or another way cross the relative clause boundaries:
  - case attraction
  - **inverse attraction** (very restricted, considered ungrammatical altogether by some speakers);

(35) ??*Vsem, komu eto nado, sami razberutsja.*  
 everybody.DAT who.DAT this is.necessary themselves will.figure.out  
 ‘Everybody who needs it (lit. whom it is necessary) will figure it out himself’. (Yandex)

- a probably related phenomenon is predicative agreement with the head of the relative clause: preferably when the head of the relative clause is in the nominative (Kholodilova, in print)

- Attraction phenomena in Russian have some common properties:
  - Inverse attraction also seems to favour maximalizing semantics, cf. (35)(36).

(36) ??*Nikomu, komu etogo ne nado, sam ne razberetsja.*  
 nobody whom this not is.necessary himself not will.figure.out  
 ‘Noone who needs it himself will figure it out himself’.

- Inverse attraction is preferred for relative clauses without a noun in the head
  - speakers’ judgements: (35) is (slightly) better than (37).

(37) ??*Vsem učenikam, komu eto nado, sami razberutsja.*  
 all.DAT schoolchil.PL.DAT who.DAT this is.necessary themselves will.figure.out  
 ‘All schoolchildren who need it (lit. whom it is necessary) will figure it out himself’.

- “corpus” data from the Internet:

Table 2. The frequency of nouns in the heads  
*Te ..., kogo / kotoryx ... znajut* ‘Those (noun) whom ... (they) know’<sup>5</sup>

	with a noun in the head	without a noun in the head
Inverse attraction (the first 100 examples)	0	100
No inverse attraction (the first 100 examples)	9	91

- To summ up:

Table 3. Some common tendencies of attraction phenomena in Russian

	Case attraction	Inverse attraction
non-standardness	+ (mostly non-standard)	+ (only non-standard)
maximalizing > restrictive > non-restrictive	+	+
a noun in the head > a light head > no head	+	+

<sup>5</sup> Fisher’s exact test, two-tailed:  $p < 0.01$ .

- Some non-Russian evidence in favour of these tendencies:

Table 4. Common tendencies of attraction phenomena: non-Russian data

	Case attraction	Inverse attraction
non-standardness	?	some Finno-Ugric: Kholodilova, Privizentseva (2015); Icelandic: Wood & al. (2015)
maximalizing > restrictive > non-restrictive	Ancient Greek (Föster 1866: 45) as cited in (Probert 2015) <sup>6</sup>	Persian: Aghaei (2003), as cited in Cinque (2015)
a noun in the head > a light head > no head	typologically: Riemsdijk (2006: 356)	some Finno-Ugric: Kholodilova, Privizentseva (2015)

At least partly **not** rules, but tendencies. Some **counterexamples**:

Table X. Relative clauses need not...

	Case attraction	Inverse attraction
...be less standard	? (could be universal)	? (could be universal)
...be restrictive or maximalizing	? (could be universal)	Ingrian Finnish, Moksha, Besermyan Udmurt: Kholodilova, Privizentseva (2015)
...lack a noun in the head	e.g., Ancient Greek	e.g., Latin

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<sup>6</sup> See also some related data for Adygh in Lander (2011).

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