

Pseudo-relative clauses and “pseudo” pseudo-relative clauses

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses relative clauses in Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian and Bulgarian, with some comparisons to English and French. It adopts much of the terminology used in the book (Mel'čuk 2021), including *governor* and *image*, and discusses differences in relativizer that arise when the governor is a noun vs. when it is certain kinds of non-noun; it connects these differences with different behavior of anaphoric pronouns. The paper nevertheless argues for maintaining the term *pseudo-relative* in its older meaning (the French type *Le voilà qui arrive* 'Here he is arriving') rather than Mel'čuk's usage to mean a relative construction that seems to have no expressed governor/antecedent.

KEYWORDS

Relative clause · relativizer · pseudo-relative · Meaning-Text model · BCMS · Bulgarian

1 INTRODUCTION

I am grateful to the organizers of FASL 33 for asking me to be one of the invited speakers at this meeting. The genre of invited talk, in my view, has its own characteristics, distinguishing it from research papers. It is a looser genre, allowing for asides, historical reflections and personal comments, rather than requiring one strict line of argument leading from data to a single conclusion (cf. e.g. Browne 2001, 2009a,b, 2010, 2021).

The ex-USSR, now Montréal linguist Igor' Mel'čuk is celebrated, at least in a Canadian context, for his “Meaning $\rightleftharpoons$ Text” (MT) model of linguistics, a competitor to Chomskian generative linguistics and to such offshoots as relational grammar. To give other readers at least a brief introduction, as suggested by a reviewer: MT, rather than using phrase-structure trees where e.g. a NP contains a noun and various specifiers and complements to it, employs a dependency-grammar formalism in which the head of a construction sits at the top of the subtree and all external relationships go via this head. Rather than trying to semantically interpret syntactic structures, it seeks to describe how a given meaning (semantic structure) can be expressed in a language, going via several layers of syntactic and morphological structures on the way toward multiple expressions (multiple texts or phonological outputs) carrying this meaning. A notable recent work in the MT literature is Mel'čuk 2021. MT pays much more attention to the characteristics of individual items in the lexicon than generative grammar has. Whoever looks at e.g. Mel'čuk & Žolkovskij 1984 will find that each word requires several pages of description covering its meanings, combinability with other words, and interrelationships with other lexical items (e.g. a noun's favorite verb to be the object of: in English one *files* or *brings* a lawsuit, while in Russian there is a verb *včinit'* which is used only with the object *isk* 'lawsuit').

Mel'čuk attaches great importance to definitions of linguistic concepts. A previous version of this text, under the influence of some personal discussions with him, had suggested that his desire for precise definitions had led him to limit the notion “relative clause” only to those which tell about a noun: *the BOOK which I wrote*; clauses that tell about a pronoun or other sort of word, such as *ALL that you saw* or *HE who must*

die would get the inadvertently disparaging name “pseudo-relative”. Now, however, reading Mel’čuk 2021 has revealed to me that Mel’čuk accepts clauses telling about pronouns as relatives too. Hence my text will be much less polemic than was originally intended.

2 TERMINOLOGICAL CLARIFICATIONS

In fact, I will adopt Mel’čuk’s own terminology: the item in an upper clause that a subordinate relative clause tells about will be called its “governor” (rather than “antecedent” or “head”, both of which terms are needed for other concepts; as mentioned in §1, the head sits at the top of the dependency tree, and for a clause – relative or other – it is the clause’s finite verb), and we say that the relative clause “modifies” its governor and contains an “image” of the governor; the image repeats the governor either exactly or by using a pro-form (or even a synonym). Yet it is useful to study the difference between clauses having noun governors and those with non-noun governors. The relativizers of the two types often differ, as in (1). For clarity, I write governors in CAPITALS, relativizers and anaphoric pronouns in **boldface**. BCMS abbreviates ‘Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian’; the four standard forms differ but their differences are not significant in the examples given here.

- (1) a. the BOOK **which/that** I wrote vs. ALL **that** I wrote (English)
 b. le LIVRE **que** j’ ai écrit vs. TOUT **ce que** j’ ai écrit
 the book that I have.1SG written vs. all this that I have.1SG written
 ‘the book that I wrote vs. all that I wrote’ (French)
 c. KNJIGA **koju** sam napisao vs. SVE **što** sam napisao
 book which.F.ACC.SG AUX.1SG written vs. all what AUX.1SG written
 ‘the book that I wrote vs. all that I wrote’ (BCMS)

Koji (*koju* F.ACC.SG), is a ‘which’ relativizer (similar to English interrogative *which*); it is often found modifying a noun the way an adjective would; see below in §3, while *što*₂ is a ‘what’ relativizer (like English *what*, it is a pronoun and not usually a modifier; cf. *što*₁ in §3). Compare the ungrammatical examples in (2) containing the “wrong” relativizers:

- (2) a. *ALL **which** I wrote (English)
 b. *TOUT **que** j’ ai écrit (French)
 all that I have.1SG written
 intended: ‘Everything that I wrote.’
 c. *SVE **koje** sam napisao (BCMS)
 all that AUX.1SG wrote
 intended: ‘Everything that I wrote.’

3 RELATIVIZATION IN BCMS

In BCMS there are two main methods of relativizing a noun governor (Browne 1981, 1986, 1987). Besides (3), there is a two-part construction, where the second part is a resumptive pronoun, as in (4). These methods cannot be mixed in the same clause, as shown in (5).¹

- (3) KNJIGA **koju** sam napisao [= (1-c)]
 book which AUX.1SG wrote
 ‘The book that I wrote.’

¹Unless marked otherwise, examples are in BCMS.

- (4) KNJIGA **što₁** sam **je** napisao
 book that AUX.1SG it.F.ACC.SG wrote
 'The book that I wrote.'
- (5) *KNJIGA **koju** sam **je** napisao
 book which AUX.1SG it.F.ACC.SG wrote
 intended: 'The book that I wrote.'

But there are reasons to believe that the *koi* construction also has in its deep structure a relativizer like *što₁* (an indeclinable word similar to the English complementizer and relativizer 'that', to be distinguished from the declinable wh-word *što₂* mentioned later) plus a personal pronoun like *je* 'it'. As a slogan: relative + pronoun = relative pronoun.

Conjunction reduction can strand a personal pronoun in the second of two relative clauses:

- (6) KNJIGA [**koju** sam napisao ali nitko **je** ne čita]
 book which AUX.1SG wrote but nobody it.F.ACC.SG not reads
 'a book which I wrote but nobody reads it'

Here the first of the two relative clauses is made with *koi*, but when the relative marker is dropped from the second clause, *je* surfaces there.

Non-nouns like *sve* 'all, everything', *ništa* 'nothing', *nešto* 'something', *ovo* 'this' (proximal demonstrative) cannot be referred to with a personal pronoun. These are neuter, so we might expect to refer to them with a neuter personal pronoun (*ga* 'it.N.ACC.SG'). But no; we see ungrammaticality in (7-a). The same holds for antecedents which are infinitives, sentences as in (7-b), or unexpressed ideas:

- (7) a. sve/ ništa/ nešto/ ovo... Napisao sam ***ga**.
 everything nothing something this wrote AUX.1SG it.N.ACC.SG
 'everything/nothing/something/this... I wrote it.'
- b. [_S Moja sestra je došla]. Ni-sam ***ga** očekivao.
 my sister AUX.3SG came. not-AUX.1SG it.N.ACC.SG expected
 'My sister came. I didn't expect it.'

These same items cannot be relativized with the relative pronoun *koje*:

- (8) SVE/ NIŠTA/ NEŠTO/ OVO ***koje** sam napisao
 everything nothing something this which AUX.1SG wrote
 'everything/nothing/something/this which I wrote'
- (9) [_S Moja sestra je došla], ***koje** ni-sam očekivao.
 my sister AUX.3SG came which not-AUX.1SG expected
 'My sister came, which I didn't expect.'

In fact, these non-nouns can be anaphorically referred to with the unmarked demonstrative pronoun *t-* in the neuter: *to* 'this, that':

- (10) a. sve/ ništa/ nešto/ ovo Napisao sam **to**.
 everything nothing something this wrote AUX this
 'everything/nothing/something/this I wrote this/that.'
- b. [_S Moja sestra je došla]. Nisam **to** očekivao.
 my sister AUX came NEG-AUX this expect
 'My sister came. I didn't expect this.'

These items can also be relativized with the neuter pronoun *što₂* (declinable with case-forms GEN. *čega*, DAT. *čemu*, INS. *čim*, almost identical to the interrogative *što₃*? meaning 'what?'; I say "almost identical" because the interrogative has a frequent allomorph *šta* which is much rarer with the neuter-pronoun relativizer):

- (11) a. SVE/ NIŠTA/ NEŠTO/ OVO **što**₂ sam napisao
 everything nothing something this what AUX wrote
 ‘everything/nothing/something/this that I wrote’
 b. [_S Moja sestra je došla], **što**₂ nisam očekivao.
 my sister AUX came what NEG-AUX expect
 ‘My sister came, which (lit. what) I didn’t expect.’

4 THE WHICH RELATIVIZER AND THE IMAGE OF THE GOVERNOR

In English *which* can act as an adjective modifying a noun, both in interrogative sentences and in relatives. The noun need not be the same as the governor of the relative clause, but it can be, as in (13).

- (12) a. **Which book** did you read?
 b. ...“War and Peace” by LEO TOLSTOY, **which author** I appreciate.
 c. ...“WAR AND PEACE”, **which famous novel** I appreciate.
 (13) ...a NOVEL by Tolstoy, **which novel** I appreciate.

In Russian, relative clauses with *kotoryj* ‘which’ and a repeated noun evidently sound terrible. This led Dmitriev (1966) to criticize BCMS writers who use *koji* + *noun*, although in fact this construction is even more frequent than in English. Attested instances from Croatian legal style can be found in (15).

- (14) a. “RATI MIR” Lava Tolstoja, **koji roman** me interesira.
 war and peace Leo.GEN.SG Tolstoy.GEN.SG which novel me.ACC interests
 ‘War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy, which novel interests me.’
 b. “Rat i mir” LAVA TOLSTOJA, **koji romanopisac** me
 war and peace Leo.GEN.SG Tolstoy.GEN.SG which novelist me.ACC
 interesira.
 interests
 ‘War and Peace by Leo Tolstoy, which novelist interests me.’²
 (15) a. ...SVRHA izvlaštenja je ... izgradnja određenog objekta
 purpose confiscation.GEN.SG is ... construction particular.GEN.SG building.GEN.SG
 u interesu Republike Hrvatske, ... u **koju svrhu** su
 in interest republic.GEN.SG Croatia.GEN.SG ... in which purpose AUX.3PL
 i izvlaštene nekretnine u konkretnom slučaju.
 also confiscated real.estate.PL in concrete instance
 ‘...the purpose of the confiscation is construction of a particular building in
 the interests of the Republic of Croatia, for which purpose the lands were
 indeed confiscated in this particular case.’ (<https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/40028>)
 b. ...nakon eksproprijacije (izvlaštenja) [je] došlo do PROMJENE u
 after expropriation (confiscation) AUX.3SG came to change in
 površini i obliku, **koju promjenu** žalitelji niti ne osporavaju...
 area and form, which change plaintiffs not.even not dispute
 ‘...after expropriation (confiscation) there resulted a change in area and
 form, which change the plaintiffs do not even dispute...’ (ibid.)

Koji + *noun* relatives are most often non-restrictive, but in legal style they seem to be used as restrictive relatives too. E.g. in discussions of buying and selling pieces of land (with or without buildings being constructed on them), I find instances of *na kojoj*

²A reviewer points out that “these examples are distinctly Croatian”, presumably reacting to the verb form *interesira*, which would be *interesuje* in Serbian (from the infinitive *interesovati*). Both forms are found in Bosnian and Montenegrin but *interesuje* is more frequent. The other vocabulary items, the names, and the entire construction are found throughout BCMS.

parceli and *na kojoj čestici* (both meaning ‘on which lot, plot, piece of land’). Some of these seem to be restrictive. Here’s one very complicated one:

- (16) Naime, tužitelj bi mogao tražiti povrat čestice koja je
 namely plaintiff AUX.COND could demand return parcel.GEN which AUX.3SG
 bila ekspropirirana 1969 samo u slučaju da ishodi novi PARCELACIONI
 was expropriated 1969.GEN only in case COMP obtain new parcel.ADJ
 ELABORAT koji mora biti, sukladno odredbama Zakona o prostornom
 plan which must be according.to provisions Law.GEN on spatial
 uređenju, potvrđen da je izgrađen u skladu sa lokacijskom
 arrangement, confirmed COMP is built in accordance with locational
 dozvolom, prema **kojem parcelacionom elaboratu** bi bilo
 permit, according.to which parcel.ADJ plan AUX.COND be
 moguće tu česticu formirati kao posebnu parcelu.
 possible this piece to.form as separate parcel
 ‘Namely, the plaintiff could demand the return of a parcel which had been
 expropriated in 1969 only in case he requested and received a new general
 plan of parcels, which, according to the provisions of the Law on Land Use
 Planning, must be confirmed to have been constructed in agreement with the
 site development permit, according to which general plan of parcels it would
 be possible to make that piece of land into a separate parcel.’ (ibid.)

Here I think the clause beginning *prema kojem parcelacionom elaboratu* is restrictive, because the plaintiff could demand return of the parcel only if the general plan of parcels allowed the piece of land to be formed into a separate parcel. General claim: *koji* (and *which*) are not part of the image of the relative clause’s governor (i.e. of the part within the relative clause that repeats the governor). *Koji* (and *which*) are modifiers on the image.

5 KOJI AND THE IMAGE

As we saw, the image can contain a noun (the same noun as the governor, or a different noun anaphoric to it). But most frequently, when the governor is a noun, there is no noun in the image. We analyze such cases as containing a personal pronoun anaphoric to the governor, as in (17). Such a pronoun would also be there in the deeper structure of relative clauses that have *koji* in their surface structure, as in (18); it does not surface, hence the ~~strike-through~~ notation.

- (17) KNJIGA **što**₁ sam **je** napisao. [= (4)]
 book that AUX.1SG it wrote
 ‘The book that I wrote.’
- (18) KNJIGA **koju** sam **je** napisao.
 book which AUX.1SG it wrote
 ‘The book that I wrote.’

To give a further argument in favor of this analysis, we first need a lemma about the accusative singular of BCMS nouns and personal pronouns. The main declension of masculine nouns has ACC.SG like the nominative if they are inanimate: NOM *roman*-Ø ‘novel’ = ACC *roman*-Ø unlike genitive *roman-a*. Masculine nouns in this declension have ACC.SG like the genitive if they are animate: NOM *Lav Tolstoj* vs. ACC = GEN *Lav-a Tolstoj-a*; NOM *pas* ‘dog’ vs. ACC = GEN *psa*.

- (19) Vidim roman.
 I.see novel.ACC
 ‘I see a novel.’

- (20) Vidim Lava Tolstoja. Vidim psa.
 I.see Leo.ACC Tolstoy.ACC I.see dog.ACC
 ‘I see Leo Tolstoy. I see a dog.’

Some actants of a verb can have a complement, otherwise called a secondary predicate. The rule in BCMS is that the complement is in the same case as the actant (shows sameness-of-case). Examples of a complement on a direct object (Lalević 1936):

- (21) Videše izvrnut sto, pa sto ostaviše izvrnut.
 they.saw overturned table, so table they.left overturned.
 ‘They saw an overturned table, so they left the table overturned.’

Here the masculine noun *stol* ‘table’ (in Lalević’s example seen in its alternative allomorph *sto*) in each clause, its modifier *izvrnut* ‘turned-over’ in the first clause, and its complement *izvrnut* in the second clause all have the shape of ACC = NOM. On the other hand, if the object is a dog or a writer, we have the forms in (22). Here *izvrnutog* is the ACC = GEN of the participle ‘overturned’; Lalević’s examples have a more archaic form of the ACC = GEN, *izvrnuta*, but the conclusion is the same. The masculine singular personal pronoun has ACC.SG like the genitive: NOM *on* vs. ACC = GEN *ga*. This is true whether it refers to an animate or an inanimate, as can be seen in (23).

- (22) Videše izvrnutog psa, pa psa ostaviše izvrnutog.
 see.PST overturned dog so dog left overturned
 ‘They saw an overturned dog, so they left the dog overturned.’
- (23) Lav Tolstoj... Vidim **ga**. Pas... Vidim **ga**. Roman... Vidim **ga**. (*Vidim **on**.)
 Leo Tolstoy see him dog see him novel see it
 ‘Leo Tolstoy... I see him. A dog... I see him. A novel... I see it.’

Shall we say that this is only a matter of morphology? No; it affects the agreement features of the pronoun too:

- (24) Videše izvrnut sto, pa **ga** ostaviše izvrnutog/izvrnuta/*izvrnut.
 they.saw overturned table, so it they.left overturned
 ‘They saw an overturned table, so they left the table overturned.’
 (ACC = GEN/ACC = GEN/*ACC = NOM)

6 KOJI MODIFYING THE IMAGE

When the governor of a relative clause is a masculine singular animate noun, and the image inside the relative clause is in the accusative, the *koji* has the ACC = GEN form, which is *kojeg(a)* [alternatively, *kōg(a)*]. We can’t have the ACC = NOM form *koji*: **koji vidim*. When the governor is an inanimate masculine singular, one might expect *koji* to have the ACC = NOM form *koji*, as this is part of the BCMS standard forms. However, for more than a century the form *kojeg(a)* [alternatively, *kōg(a)*] has been widely used in all parts of the BCMS area, despite the constant condemnations of language standardizers and advisers on proper usage.

- (25) LAV TOLSTOJ, **kojeg(a)** vidim. PAS, **kojeg(a)** vidi.
 Leo Tolstoy, which.ACC I.see dog, which.ACC I.see
 ‘Leo Tolstoy, whom I see.’ ‘A dog, which I see.’
- (26) ROMAN, **koji** vidim.
 novel which I.see
 ‘A novel, which I see.’

- (27) ROMAN, **kojeg(a)** vidim.
 novel which.ACC I.see
 ‘A novel, which I see.’

I suggest that the examples above demonstrate multiple stages of a historical change in progress.

1. **still seen in Russian:** the accusative pronoun is animate-seeming *ego* regardless of animacy of its antecedent, but this does not show up in its agreement features.
2. **older BCMS:** the accusative pronoun is *ga* regardless of the animacy of its antecedent, but it itself has begun to carry a [+ANIMATE] feature, and this shows up in the agreement of complements.
3. **recent BCMS:** the accusative pronoun is *ga* regardless of the animacy of its antecedent, but *ga* itself carries a [+ANIMATE] feature even deeper in the derivation, and this shows up in the agreement of *koi* as well as in the agreement of complements.

7 RELATIVIZATION IN BULGARIAN

Bulgarian differs from BCMS and other Slavic languages: its personal pronouns like the clitic *go* ‘it.M/N.ACC’ have become able to refer to the group of non-nouns in (28) below (Browne 2018). Additionally, the relative pronoun *koi-* plus agreement endings plus the additionally relativizing suffix *-to* ‘which, who, what’ can relativize them. Its stem *koi-* loses *j* before the neuter singular ending *-e* and the plural ending *-i*, as in (29-a) below. The older use of Bulgarian *što* as a relativizer has dropped out. So when *go* changes its behavior, *koi-to* changes its behavior too. A reviewer points out that there is a (newer) indeclinable relativizer in Bulgarian, *deto*, that is used together with clitics, like BCMS *što_I*, and offers the examples (29-b)–(29-c). From these we see that the clitic personal pronoun is able to refer to nouns and non-nouns alike as part of this relative construction. We know that *deto* is newer in Bulgarian because it is etymologically derived from *kŕde* ‘where’ plus the relativizing suffix *-to* mentioned above, through the stages *kŕde-to* → *gdeto*, both of which indeed mean ‘where’ in relative clauses of place.

- (28) VSIČKO/ NIŠTO/ NEŠTO/ TOVA ... Napisax **go**. (Bulgarian)
 everything nothing something this I.wrote it.
 ‘Everything/nothing/something/this ... I wrote it.’
- (29) a. VSIČKO/ NIŠTO/ NEŠTO/ TOVA **ko-e-to** napisax
 everything nothing something this which-N.SG-REL I.wrote
 ‘Everything/nothing/something/this that I wrote’
- b. KNIGA-TA **deto ja** napisax
 book-the that it.FEM.ACC I.wrote
 ‘the book that I wrote’
- c. NEŠTO **deto go** napisax
 something that it I.wrote
 ‘something that I wrote’

8 “PSEUDO-RELATIVE” VS. “FREE RELATIVE”

I will, nevertheless, state my regret that Mel’čuk introduces the term “pseudo-relative” to mean a clause that is like a relative but without an expressed governor: the *what I write/što ja pišem* type. I would rather set up a $\emptyset$ governor. In order not to collide with previous terminology (used since the 1970s), I think we should save the term “pseudo-relative” for the French (also Italian) construction in (30) (Barron 2000, Singer 2007),

and use the term “free relative” for relatives without expressed governor (Bergsma 2019b,a, van Riemsdijk 2006).

- (30) a. Je vois MICHEL **qui** arrive. (French)
 I see Michael who arrives
 ‘I see Michael arriving.’
 b. Je LE vois **qui** arrive.
 I him see who arrives
 ‘I see him arriving.’
 c. voilà MICHEL **qui** arrive.
 behold Michael who arrives
 ‘Here’s Michael arriving.’
 d. LE voilà **qui** arrive.
 him behold who arrives
 ‘Here he is arriving.’

True relative clauses should be able to be added to a governor (noun or equivalent), without regard to the role that this governor has in the clause to which it belongs. The French pseudo-relative type, on the other hand, is one of a family of constructions which add a complement to an entire construction consisting of a particular verb (or lexically-limited set of verbs) and its subject or direct object. Other members of the family are, for example the following:

- (31) a. J’ ai trouvé l’ eau belle. (French)
 I AUX found the water beautiful
 ‘I found the water beautiful.’
 b. Tu as le cœur bon.
 you have the heart good
 ‘You have a good heart.’
 c. Tu as le cœur à rire.
 you have the heart for laughing
 ‘You have a heart for laughter.’
 d. Moi, je l’ ai à pleurer.
 me, I it have for crying
 ‘I have it [a heart] for crying.’

(Note that in (31-b) *bon* ‘good’ is not in the same phrase with *cœur* ‘heart’; if it were, the order would usually be *bon cœur*).

Both in the “heart” example and in the “behold” example, the governor can be a clitic preceding the verb or quasi-verb, and thus can be separated from the complement; this differs from the behavior of normal governors and their relative clauses.³ A reviewer makes the point that the relative clauses in (30) are shaped just like normal relative clauses, so that “pseudo” would not properly apply to them, but I would still apply “pseudo” to the construction within which they occur.

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³Readers/listeners will note that part of my French corpus is a bit of Canadian content, the song “À la claire fontaine.” For further information about the French and other Romance perception-verb and relative constructions, see Auwera (1985), Burzio (1986), Cinque (1995), Dik & Hengeveld (1991), Kayne (1975).

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ABBREVIATIONS

1	first person	F	feminine
3	third person	GEN	genitive
ACC	accusative	INS	instrumental
ADJ	adjective	N	neuter
AUX	auxiliary	NOM	nominative
BCMS	Bosnian/Croatian/ Montenegrin/Serbian	PL	plural
COMP	complementizer	REL	relative
COND	conditional	SG	singular

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