

1.

Daniel Altshuler - Rutgers University

Relative head surgery

daltshul@rci.rutgers.edu daltshul@ucla.edu

It is generally held in the literature that Present tense in Russian relative clauses is like its English (and unlike its Japanese) counterpart insofar as it only provides indexical readings when the matrix is Past. In this snippet, I point out a fact that has not received attention: temporal interpretive possibilities vary with a restrictive/non restrictive meaning of the Russian relative clause. Along with the indexical reading, the relative Present in Russian provides simultaneous readings when embedded under Past.

Excluding the habitual reading of the embedded predicate in (1), Kondrashova (1998), Kusumoto (1999), Schlenker (2003) and many others hold that the indexical reading is the only one available in such constructions. In other words, the relative Present is only evaluated relative to the utterance time (i.e. the “now” of the speaker) and not the matrix tense. What these authors fail to consider, however, is that the temporal interpretive possibilities in constructions like (1) are affected by the restrictive/non-restrictive meaning of the relative clause.

- (1) Ja zametil rebenka (,) kotoryj sidit na skamejke.
I notice-past child who sit-present on bench
“I noticed a child who is/was sitting on the bench.”

Yokoyama (2001) argues that the restrictive or nonrestrictive meaning of a relative clause in Russian is correlated with the intonation of the matrix clause. For example, if the contour on the head of the relative clause in (1) is falling, then the relative clause has a non-restrictive interpretation; (1) can be paraphrased as: *At some point in the past, I noticed a child who is (now) sitting on the bench.* This is the aforementioned indexical reading and its availability is not surprising: when one assumes in the spirit of Emonds (1979) that the non-restrictive relative clause is scoped out such that the embedded Present is outside the c-command domain of the matrix PAST, then the indexical reading is expected given Stowell (1995) and other accounts of embedded tense, e.g. Ogihara (1995).

If the contour on the head of the relative clause in (1) is rising, then the relative clause has a restrictive interpretation; (1) can be paraphrased as: *At some point in the past, I noticed a child who was sitting on the bench (at the time of my noticing him/her).* This is a simultaneous reading. When one assumes that the restrictive relative clause remains *in situ* such that the embedded Present is within the c-command domain of the matrix PAST, then the simultaneous reading is expected

on the aforementioned accounts of embedded tense.

Consider also (2). Here the head of the relative clause is the quantifier phrase “vsex detej”. This construal forces a restrictive meaning of the relative clause and, as expected, (2) can be paraphrased as: *At some point in the past, I noticed all the children who were sitting on the bench (at the time of my noticing them)*. This is a simultaneous reading and its availability is not surprising given the rough syntactic explanation for (1).

- (2) Ja zametil vsex detej kotorye sidjat na skamejke.
I notice-past all children who sit-present on bench
“I noticed all the children who were sitting on the bench.”

I conclude that the relative Present in Russian is unlike its English (and like its Japanese) counterpart insofar as it provides both indexical and simultaneous readings when embedded under Past.

Reference

- Emonds, Joseph (1979) “Appositive Relatives Have No Properties”, *Linguistic Inquiry* 10, 211-243.
- Kondrashova, Natalia (1998) “Embedded Tenses in English and Russian”, ms., Cornell University.
- Kusumoto, Kiyomi (1999) *Tense in Embedded Contexts*, Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts.
- Ogihara, Toshiyuki (1995) “The Semantics of Tense in Embedded Clauses”, *Linguistic Inquiry* 26, 663-679.
- Schlenker, Philippe (2003) “A Plea for Monsters”, *Linguistics and Philosophy* 26: 29-120.
- Stowell, Tim (1995) “What do the present and past tenses mean?”, in P. Bertinetto, V. Bianchi, J. Higginbotham, and M. Squartini, eds., *Temporal Reference, Aspect, and Actionality, Vol. 1: Semantic and Syntactic Perspectives*, Rosenberg and Sellier, Torino, 381-396.
- Yokoyama, Olga (2001) “Neutral and Non-Neutral Intonation in Russian: A Reinterpretation of the IK System”, *Die Welt der Slaven* XLVI, 1-26.