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Embedded wh-Exclamatives? Evidence from Russian Quotation Particle *mol* and Complementizer *čto**

1. Introduction

The present paper investigates whether wh-exclamatives are grammatical in Russian embedded contexts. Consider the Russian matrix verb *voskliknut'* 'to exclaim' in (1) and (2). It is impossible to embed wh-exclamations under such verbs with the complementizer *čto* in (1), whereas the sentence (2), without the complementizer, is interpreted as direct discourse. Therefore, (2) is grammatical with a colon signalling direct discourse and is ungrammatical with a comma signalling an embedded clause / indirect discourse. In contrast, interrogatives are embeddable. Consider the Russian matrix verb *sprosit'* 'to ask' in (3).

- (1) **On voskliknul, čto kakaja byla včera zamečatel'naja pogoda!*
'He exclaimed that there was such nice weather yesterday!' (literal interpretation)
- (2) *On voskliknul {:/ * } kakaja byla včera zamečatel'naja pogoda!*
'He exclaimed: 'What nice weather there was yesterday!''
- (3) *On sprosil, kakaja byla včera pogoda.*
'He asked what the weather was like yesterday.'

The paper aims at showing that Russian wh-exclamatives with the quotation particle *mol* and/or with the complementizer *čto* are embeddable, that is, they can be used in indirect discourse, cfr. (4). Typically, the particle *mol* follows the complementizer *čto* and occupies the initial position of a quoted embedded clause; so, it scopes over the quotation portion of the structure^{1, 2}.

- (4) *On skazal, čto, mol, kakaja byla včera zamečatel'naja pogoda!*
'He said that [quoted] there was such nice weather yesterday!' (literal interpretation)

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¹ I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for drawing my attention to this issue.

² The particle *mol* can also be used in matrix clauses in free indirect discourse, but this issue goes beyond the scope of the present paper.

The paper investigates the embedded status of *wh*-exclamatives in comparison to embedded *wh*-interrogatives and semantic, lexical, grammatical features of Russian matrix predicates that embed *wh*-exclamatives in comparison to those that embed *wh*-interrogatives. The results of the study are integrated into broader theoretical and cross-linguistic perspectives.

The paper is structured in the following way. §2 demonstrates varieties of questions and (embedded) *wh*-interrogatives in a theoretical and cross-linguistic perspective and then focuses on Russian. Analogously, §3 discusses varieties of exclamations and (embedded) *wh*-exclamatives in a theoretical and cross-linguistic perspective and then concentrates on Russian. §4 points out *wh*-exclamatives under the particle *mol* and the complementizer *čto* in Russian. §5 concludes the paper.

2. *Varieties of Questions and (Embedded) Interrogatives*

Questions should be distinguished from interrogatives. Questions represent a pragmatic-semantic phenomenon, whereas interrogatives are a syntactic phenomenon. Questions are speech acts; they have biased or unbiased interpretations and might be emotionally charged. Interrogatives are clauses, have word order(s), have lexical, grammatical, and/or prosodic features, are (un)embeddable. Interrogatives are cross-linguistically categorized as a major sentence type, cfr. König, Siemund (2007). Russian follows this cross-linguistic tendency. It distinguishes between polar interrogatives vs. *wh*-interrogatives, see Vinogradov, Istrina 1960: 354-365, Peškovskij 2001: 393-395, Padučeva 2014 for a full list of lexical, grammatical, and prosodic features of interrogatives in Russian.

2.1. *Canonical vs. Non-canonical Questions*

Semantically, a question is a set of alternative propositions (cfr. Hamblin 1973; Krejdlin, Rachilina 1984; among many others). Pragmatically, the speaker does not know the answer to her question and, therefore, addresses the hearer to choose a true proposition from a given set of alternatives. Farkas (2024) establishes five pragmatic features of canonical questions, all of which have to be fulfilled in order for a sentence to be regarded as a canonical question. Rhetorical questions represent a variety of non-canonical questions, since, according to Farkas (2024), one of the five pragmatic features is not fulfilled. The feature that is not fulfilled in rhetorical questions is Open issue. In canonical questions, the speaker assumes that the issue *P* is open and that it is resolvable in some future. The answer to a rhetorical question is obvious to the speaker (not open) or is not resolvable, cfr. Rohde 2006 and examples (5)-(6). Example (5) illustrates that the answer to a rhetorical question is obvious to the speaker, whereas example (6) means that the answer to a rhetorical question is not resolvable.

- (5) *Kto imeet pravo tebe prikazyvat'?* [Nikto]
 'Who has the right to give commands to you? [Nobody]'

- (6) *Kogda že ty naučiš'ja ubirat' za soboj?* [No answer]
 'When will you learn how to clean after yourself?'

2.2. Embedded Interrogatives

Padučeva (1988, 2004) argues, at least for Russian, that only those matrix verbs that have a knowledge component in the assertion of their semantic representations can embed *wh*-interrogatives that express canonical questions. If the matrix verb is under negation, the assertion is negated, that is, a knowledge component is negated. This indicates that a knowledge component is given in the semantics of such verbs, cfr. (7).

- (7) *Petja (ne) vspomnil, gde živet Maša.*
 'Petja recalled / didn't recall where Maša lived.'

Matrix verbs that embed *wh*-interrogatives demonstrate lexical and grammatical restrictions. Factive verbs, which presuppose the truth of their complement (Kiparsky, Kiparsky 1970), such as the Russian verbs of knowledge *znat'* 'to know', *vspomnit'* 'to recall', can embed *wh*-interrogatives. As was seen above, such verbs embed *wh*-interrogatives. According to Padučeva (2004), some other factive predicates can do so, as well (e.g., *soobščit'* 'to inform', *predupredit'* 'to warn'), since their semantic representations also include an assertion component of knowledge.

Emotive predicates, on the other hand, which are considered to be the primary representative of the factive class, cannot embed *wh*-interrogatives. Even though their semantics includes a knowledge component, it is presupposed rather than asserted. Non-factive predicates such as speech verb *skazat'* 'to say' also embed *wh*-interrogatives, cfr. (8), since *skazat'* is interpreted as 'know and, therefore, say' in such cases. According to Padučeva (2004), an aspectual pair of speech verbs (perfective *predskazat'* / imperfective *predskazyvat'*) embeds *wh*-interrogatives but the imperfective verb should have a habitual rather than a continuative meaning, cfr. (9) vs. (10).

- (8) *Petja skazal, gde živet Maša.*
 'Petja said where Maša lived.'
- (9) *Petja predskazal, kto budet korolēm.*
 'Petja predicted who will be the king.'
- (10) *Petja predskazyvaet, kto budet korolēm.*
 'Petja (regularly) predicts who will be the king.'

In light of Farkas's (2024) distinction between canonical vs. non-canonical questions, it is plausible to state that Padučeva's (1988, 2004) prediction formulated in the first sentence of this section is true of canonical questions. Non-canonical questions behave dif-

ferently. To illustrate, rhetorical questions, which are non-canonical questions, represent main clause phenomena and, therefore, they are unembeddable, cfr. Padučeva 2010a.

There is another issue of syntactic nature that exhibits a difference between embedded wh-exclamatives and embedded wh-interrogatives. Embedded wh-interrogatives can be elided, cfr. (11). This phenomenon is called sluicing. Embedded wh-interrogatives are a source of sluicing-based indefinites in Russian, cfr. Testelefs, Bylinina (2005): e.g., *neizvestno kuda* ‘it is unknown where’, *ne pomnju kogo* ‘I don’t remember whom / whose’, *ne znaju kto* ‘I don’t know who’, cfr. (12). The first clause of sentences with sluicing includes *-to* series of wh-words that represent indefinites in terms of Padučeva (2010b). However, not all embedded wh-interrogatives allow for such uses, cfr. (13). According to Testelefs, Bylinina (2005), such predicates must be predicates of knowing and understanding.

(11) *Segodnja kto-to prichodil, no ja ne znaju kto segodnja prichodil!*
 ‘Somebody came today, but I don’t know who.’

(12) *Segodnja prichodil neizvestno kto.*
 ‘It is not known who came today’ (literal interpretation).

(13) **Segodnja prichodil interesno kto.*
 ‘It is interesting who came today.’

3. *Varieties of Exclamations and (Embedded) Exclamatives*

In parallel with the distinction between questions vs. interrogatives, the difference between exclamations vs. exclamatives should be acknowledged. Exclamations represent a pragma-semantic phenomenon and constitute expressive speech acts (Michaelis 2001; Castroviejo 2006, 2020, 2021; Rett 2011). Exclamatives are a set of sentences associated with the illocutionary force of exclamation. Therefore, exclamatives form an illocutionary sentence type distinct from other sentence types. Cross-linguistically, there is a large variety of exclamatives, according to König, Siemund (2007) and Zevakhina (2013). The diversity of syntactic exclamative constructions enabled König, Siemund (2007) to classify exclamatives as a minor sentence type in contrast to standard sentence types such as assertives, interrogatives, and imperatives. However, the diversity of exclamatives enabled recent studies (Trotzke 2023; Trotzke, Giannakidou 2025) to argue against exclamatives being a separate sentence type. As for Russian, there are two views on the status of exclamatives: (i) exclamatives are categorized as a separate sentence type (Peškovskij 2001; Padučeva 2010a); (ii) exclamatives are classified as instances of assertives (Vinogradov, Istrina 1960; Padučeva 2014; among others); see Zevachina 2015 for an overview of these approaches with respect to Russian data.

The most typical form of Russian exclamatives are wh-exclamatives, as in other Indo-European languages. The present paper further discusses Russian wh-exclamatives and their (non-)ability to embed.

3.1. *Exclamations and Exclamatives*

A declarative sentence such as *He won the prize!* is an exclamation since it conveys the speaker's emotion. However, it is not an exclamative since, as was said above, exclamatives represent a set of sentences that associate with the illocutionary force of exclamation. Traditionally, exclamations expressed with *wh*-exclamatives demonstrate the following semantic and pragmatic properties (Michaelis 2001; Rett 2011; among others). Consider the sentence *What a big hat you have!*. It presupposes that the hearer has a hat of a certain size and asserts that its size exceeds the speaker's expectations, giving rise to her emotional reaction (typically surprise). The *wh*-exclamatives that satisfy this semantic definition are called gradable, or scalar, exclamatives (e.g., *What a big hat you have!*, *How tall he is!*). They are used both as embedded and unembedded sentences in various languages. Other *wh*-exclamatives are non-gradable, or non-scalar (cfr. Chernilovskaya, Nouwen 2012; Nouwen, Chernilovskaya 2015). To illustrate, consider (14) and (15).

- (14) *O, kto prišël!*
 'Wow, (you won't believe) who has come!'
- (15) *Ogo, gde oni vstretilis'!*
 'Wow, (you won't believe) where they met each other!'

Languages differ with respect to non-gradable *wh*-exclamatives: (i) those that allow for embedded and unembedded non-gradable *wh*-exclamatives, and (ii) those that allow for embedded non-gradable *wh*-exclamatives only (cfr. also Zevakhina 2016). Russian belongs to group (i), whereas English belongs to group (ii) respectively.

3.2. *Embedded Exclamatives*

According to Elliott (1974) and Grimshaw (1979), only factive predicates and factive uses of non-factive predicates embed *wh*-exclamatives. Factivity is understood in terms of Kiparsky, Kiparsky (1970): a factive proposition is presupposed to be true. The proposition conveyed by the *wh*-exclamative is true and forms a presupposition, cfr. (16) with the factive verb *know* and (17) with a factive use of the non-factive verb *believe*. However, according to Elliott (1974), factive verbs in contexts of speaker ignorance are impossible with *wh*-exclamatives in contrast to *wh*-interrogatives, cfr. (18) vs. (19).

- (16) *I know how very tall he is* (Elliott 1974: 238).
- (17) *John couldn't believe what a height the building was* (Grimshaw 1979: 299).
- (18) **I don't know how very tall he is* (Elliott 1974: 238). exclamation
- (19) *I don't know how tall he is* (Elliott 1974: 238). question

Cross-linguistically, embedded wh-exclamatives are under-studied. To the best of my knowledge, the following lexico-semantic classes of matrix verbs select wh-exclamatives as their arguments in various languages (cfr. Zevakhina, Dainiak 2017). Ono (2006) discusses emotive (e.g., ‘be surprised’ and ‘be amazed’), mental (e.g., ‘think’) and speech (e.g., ‘say’) predicates in Japanese; Lipták (2006) points out Hungarian emotive predicates; Potsdam (2011) provides evidence for Malagasy emotive predicates; Visan (2000) reports on mental and perceptual predicates in Mandarin Chinese; Gutiérrez-Rexach, Andueza (2017) examines Spanish emotive and perceptual predicates; Hualde, de Urbana (2003) exemplifies the use of Basque emotive and perceptual predicates. The emotive class seems to be the most frequently mentioned. According to Michaelis (2001), emotive predicates which can select for wh-exclamatives are witnessed in Palestinian Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Croatian, French, Italian, Malay, Setswana, Turkish. The classes under consideration reveal lexical and grammatical idiosyncrasies. It means that only some lexical items take wh-exclamatives as their arguments and only some of their grammatical forms do so.

Only a subset of Russian matrix verbs selects wh-exclamatives. It means they have considerable morphological / grammatical and lexical restrictions. According to Zevakhina (2018), embedded wh-exclamatives are possible with perceptual, emotive, mental, and speech matrix verbs. That study, which is based on RNC (Russian National Corpus), identified the following most frequent morphological forms for each verb type: (a) perceptual verbs are second person imperatives (*smotri* / *smotrite* ‘look.IMP.2SG/2PL’) and question forms of the second person (*vidiš’?* / *vidite?* ‘do you see.PRS.2SG/2PL’); (b) for mental verbs are optatives of the second person (*esli by ty znal* / *esli by vy znali* ‘if you.SG/PL knew’), assertives of the second person under negation or without it (*ty ne predstavljajes’* / *vy ne predstavljaete* ‘you don’t imagine.PRS.2SG/2PL’, *sam znaes’* / *sami znaete* ‘you know.PRS.2SG/2PL by yourself.SG/PL’), and question forms of the second person (*predstavljajes’?* / *predstavljaete?* ‘do you imagine.PRS.2SG/2PL?’, *znaes’?* / *znaete?* ‘do you know.PRS.2SG/2PL?’); (c) the most frequent lexical item for emotive predicates is the predicative *udivitel’no* ‘it is surprising’; (d) speech verbs are quite rare. All such contexts are factive, that is, wh-exclamatives are true propositions, cfr. examples in (20)-(23).

- (20) *Smotri, kakoj snegopad!* (RNC; Poljakov 2015).
‘Look what a snowfall!’
- (21) *Esli by vy znali, kakoj éto čudesnyj roman!* (RNC; Bragin 1962).
‘If you only knew how wonderful this novel is!’
- (22) *Ty ne predstavljajes’, kakoj razgovor u menja byl s roditeljami!* (RNC; Šachnazarov 1986).
‘You won’t believe what a conversation I had with my parents!’
- (23) *Udivitel’no, kakoj éto udobnyj sosud!* (RNC; Sannikov 2000-2002).
‘It is surprising what a practical vessel this is!’

So, as can be seen from the data, Russian conforms to the theoretical and cross-linguistic tendencies discussed above.

In parallel with embedded *wh*-interrogatives, embedded *wh*-exclamatives are also a source of ellipsis-based structures. However, there are two main differences between such structures and sluicing-based indefinites discussed in §2.2. First, although the mechanism of ellipsis is quite similar to sluicing, it does not seem to be identical to sluicing, since the latter typically involves embedded *wh*-interrogatives, and the ellipsis under consideration involves embedded *wh*-exclamatives. Second, new ellipsis-based structures are known to the speaker and unknown to the hearer, whereas sluicing-based structures are indefinites, so they are unknown (at least) to the speaker, cfr. §2.2. Russian has *koe*-series of *wh*-words that represent weak definites according to Padučeva (2010b), cfr. (24). Semantically, weak definites are *wh*-words such that they are known to the speaker and unknown to the hearer. Therefore, sentences such as (25) are ellipsis-based weak definites. However, not all embedded *wh*-exclamatives allow for such uses, cfr. the contrast between (25), where one of the most frequent grammatical forms embedding *wh*-exclamatives *ne predstavljajes'* 'you can't imagine' is used, and (26), where the non-frequent grammatical form *ne ponimajes'* 'you can't understand' is used (the frequent forms were listed above on the basis of the RNC data). So, it seems that only frequent grammatical forms enable ellipsis-based structures of weak definites.

- (24) *Segodnja koe-kto prichodil, ty ne predstavljajes' kto segodnja prichodil!*
 'Somebody has come today; you won't believe who (has come)!' (literal interpretation).
- (25) *Segodnja prichodil ty ne predstavljajes' kto!*
 'You can't imagine who has come today!'
- (26) **Segodnja prichodil ty ne ponimajes' kto.*
 'You can't understand who has come today!'

4. Embedded Exclamatives with Quotation Semantics

4.1. Particle *mol*

Plungjan (2008) argues against the view that the particle *mol* is a marker of indirect evidentiality. Rather, according to this author, *mol* is a marker of approximate quotation. It conveys an approximate reproduction of the content of some utterance previously produced by a different speaker. To illustrate, in (27), the speaker (approximately) quotes Petja's words.

- (27) *Petja skazal, čto, mol, kakaja zavtra chorošaja pogoda.*
 'Peter said that [quoted] how good the weather will be tomorrow' (literal interpretation).

Padučeva (2011) demonstrates that the speaker reports the words of some person but is not committed to the truthfulness of that person's utterance. Levontina (2020) considers the particle *mol* as a marker of non-speaker's / reported speech ('kseno-marker') and presents a set of Russian 'kseno-markers'.

Maier (2015) introduces the phenomenon of mixed quotation to capture the semantics of sentences such as (28).

- (28) *Romney said that Newt Gingrich is an 'influence peddler'* (Maier 2015: 362).

That paper distinguishes between the use-component and the mention-component of an utterance. The former one comprises truth-conditional semantics, whereas the mention-component is a metalinguistic reference to some person's words quoted in the utterance. To illustrate, the original proposition (e.g., *You're just an influence peddler, Newt!*) is the use-component of (28), whereas the quotation (that is, a specific phrase *influence peddler*) is the mention-component of (28).

The particle *mol* can be accounted as an instance of the same phenomenon. Indeed, the use-component of (27) is the content of Petja's utterance, whereas the mention-component of (27) is that Petja's words are quoted.

4.2. *Embedded Exclamatives, Particle mol and Complementizer čto*

Letučij (2023) shows that the particle *mol* can be omitted in embedded contexts in Russian colloquial speech and that the complementizer *čto* is reinterpreted as a marker of quotation much like *mol*, cfr. (29). It is possible to suggest an alternative analysis: even though the particle *mol* is omitted, its semantics is preserved, therefore, it is covertly present in the sentence. This suggests that the particle contributes to the mixed quotation interpretation even when absent.

- (29) *...A kogda ja napomnil o dogovore, načal orat', čto – ja že tebe den'gi plaču* (Internet; cited by Letučij 2023: 32)
 '...And when I reminded him of the agreement, he started shouting that [quoted] – I pay you money...'

However, standard Russian also allows for the complementizer *čto* without the particle *mol*. It is important to emphasize that such sentences occur not only in contemporary standard Russian but also in 19th century Russian (and even earlier), cfr. (30) and (31) respectively.

- (30) *Vot smotru i udivljajus' tomu, čto kakie oni vse zdes' molodye, énergičnyje, charizmatičnyje* (RNC; Forum 2009-2011).
 'I am looking and being surprised that [quoted] how young, active, charismatic they all are here' (literal interpretation).

- (31) *A vam vsě-taki skažu, čtoby vy znali, čto kakoj on dobryj* (RNC; Černyševskij 1863).
 ‘Still, I will tell you that [quoted] how kind he is’ (literal interpretation).

Therefore, the quotation particle *mol* is not necessary: when it is absent, a sentence still expresses quotation semantics, cfr. (32) vs. (33). The opposite is also true: if a sentence lacks the complementizer *čto* but includes the particle *mol*, it still conveys quotation, cfr. (34).

- (32) *Petja skazal, čto, mol, kakaja zavtra chorošaja pogoda.*
 (33) *Petja skazal, čto, kakaja zavtra chorošaja pogoda.*
 (34) *Petja skazal, mol, kakaja zavtra chorošaja pogoda.*
 ‘Peter said that [quoted] what good weather will be tomorrow’ (literal interpretation for [32]-[34]).

Typically, matrix verbs that combine with embedded *mol* are speech and mental verbs used in past or present tense; cfr. also (30) for an emotive verb. Remarkably, speech verbs are the most frequent in contrast to matrix predicates embedding exclamatives, cfr. §3.2. A plausible explanation is that speech verbs introduce some person’s direct discourse. It is important to point out that speech verbs are not factive, in contrast to matrix verbs that embed *wh*-exclamatives and that are factive (or have factive uses).

The diachronic path of *wh*-exclamatives has traditionally been assumed to be from subordinate to main clause *wh*-exclamatives (Evans 2007; König, Siemund 2007, 2013; Mithun 2016). This diachronic path is called *insubordination*, and the view is referred to as *insubordination hypothesis*. If we accept this view, the fact that lexical and grammatical features of matrix verbs presented in §3.2 are idiosyncratic might serve as evidence for the diachronic path of *wh*-exclamatives. The idea is that if *wh*-exclamatives were initially matrix clauses that can embed, they did not show such a strong idiosyncrasy; the latter suggests that they emerge as embedded, that is, under certain grammatical circumstances. From the standard point of view, *mol*-clauses express direct discourse, and exclamatives are main clause phenomena, that is, they typically occur in direct (but not in indirect) discourse. However, one can assume that sentences with the particle *mol* and/or the complementizer *čto* discussed in this section represent embedded *wh*-exclamatives, so such *wh*-exclamatives can be used in indirect discourse.

It is possible to apply standard subordination diagnostics to *wh*-exclamatives with the particle *mol*. Some of the tests described below were borrowed from Pekelis (2015). First, *mol*-clauses pass Širjaev’s (1986) subordination test. The test demonstrates that clauses with complementizers can be coordinated, with the complementizers being repeated, cfr. (35).

- (35) *Petja skazal, {čto / mol / čto mol} kakaja zavtra chorošaja pogoda i {čto / mol / čto mol} kak budet zdorovo pojtj na lyžach.*
 ‘Petja said that [quoted] what good weather there will be tomorrow and that [quoted] how nice it will be to go skiing’ (literal interpretation).

Second, Zwicky's (1985) test also works for *mol*-clauses. An external context changes only the head of a syntactic phrase, whereas its complement (subordinate clause in our case) should be left unchanged, cfr. (36) and (37). It is interesting to note that (37) is a non-veridical context since the most deeply embedded clause does not encode the subject's actual speech content, but rather a speaker-constructed stance which, in the presence of *mol*, is reprojected as the subject's perspective, the sentence conveys the speaker's wish about that³. The present paper does not study the particle *mol* in non-veridical contexts, e.g., under *čtoby* complementizer. Example (38) from RNC provides an illustration of this usage.

- (36) *Petja govorit, {čto / mol / čto mol} kak budet zdorovo poiti na lyžach.*
 'Petja says that [quoted] how nice it will be to go skiing' (literal interpretation).
- (37) *Ja choču, čtoby Petja skazal, {čto / mol / čto mol} kak budet zdorovo poiti na lyžach.*
 'I want Petja to say that [quoted] how nice it will be to go skiing' (literal interpretation).
- (38) [...] *Djad'ka stupal besšumno i vsë vremja vzmachival rukoj pozadi sebja, čtoby, mol, Miša ne topal nogami* (RNC; D. Rubina 1980-2006).
 'The man was moving without making any noise and was waving behind himself all the time, so that [quoted] Miša wouldn't stomp.'

Third, the *mol*-clause can be substituted with the pronoun *eto* 'this' or with the wh-word *čto* 'what', cfr. (39) and (40) as substitution sentences for the embedded clauses of (32)-(34).

- (39) *Petja skazal eto.*
 'Peter said this.'
- (40) *Čto Petja skazal?*
 'What did Peter say?'

Fourth, a test using a referential expression in the main clause and an anaphoric pronoun in the subordinate clause can also be applied to *mol*-clauses. To illustrate, the NP *Petja* in the first clause and the pronoun *on* 'he' in the *mol*-clause refer to the same individual in (41). This is indicated with the index *i* after both noun phrases. In contrast, the pronoun in the first clause and the NP *Petja* in the *mol*-clause, if referring to one individual, make the sentence ungrammatical, cfr. (42). This indicates that the *mol*-clause is subordinate.

- (41) *Petja_i skazal, {čto / mol / čto mol} on_i stanet vračom.*
 'Petja said that [quoted] he will become a doctor.'

³ I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for drawing my attention to this fact.

- (42) * *On_i skazal, {što / mol / što mol} Petja, stanet vračom.*
 ‘He said that [quoted] Petja will become a doctor.’

However, not all subordination tests work well. The center embedding test (i.e., the embedded clause is located within the main clause) does not yield desirable results, cfr. an ungrammatical sentence in (43), which is a modified version of (32)-(34).

- (43) * *Petja, {što / mol / što mol} kakaja zavtra chorošaja pogoda, skazal.*

Finally, Potts (2007) proposes a syntactic structure for quotation phenomena (e.g., *Lisa uttered ‘Homer is bald’*), in which a matrix verb is a head of a syntactic phrase and a quoted clause is its complement (syntactic argument). Since *mol*-clauses behave quite similarly to Potts (2007)’s quotation / direct discourse phenomena, this provides another piece of evidence for *mol*-clauses to be accounted for as subordinate / embedded clauses.

It is interesting to note that *što*+*mol*-clauses, *što*-clauses, and *mol*-clauses are grammatical when functioning as answers to the question (40) repeated below as (40’), cfr. (44)-(46). The clauses are insubordinate in such cases.

- (40’) *Što Petja skazal?*
 ‘What did Peter say?’

(44) *Što, mol, kakaja zavtra chorošaja pogoda.*

(45) *Što kakaja zavtra chorošaja pogoda.*

(46) *Mol, kakaja zavtra chorošaja pogoda.*

‘That [quoted] what good weather will be tomorrow.’ (literal interpretation for (44)-(46))

One can conclude that if we accept the insubordination hypothesis, *wh*-exclamatives seem to be initially subordinate (see §3.2) and then started functioning as insubordinate. After that, another cycle occurred: *wh*-exclamatives became subordinate again in *mol*-clauses and it is even possible to make them insubordinate again (as answers to questions).

5. Conclusion

Comparing subordinate / embedded *wh*-interrogatives and *wh*-exclamatives, the present paper demonstrates that both phenomena are parallel to each other. First, matrix verbs embedding *wh*-interrogatives must include a semantic component of knowledge in their assertions (cfr. Padučeva 2004), whereas matrix verbs embedding *wh*-exclamatives must include factivity (true propositions) in their presuppositions. Second, both types of verbs reveal lexical and grammatical idiosyncrasy. Third, embedded *wh*-interrogatives are a source of sluicing-based indefinites (cfr. Testelefs, Bylinina 2005), whereas embedded *wh*-exclamatives are a source of ellipsis-based weak definites in terms of Padučeva (2010b).

Furthermore, the paper demonstrates that wh-exclamatives are embeddable in contexts of approximate / mixed quotation with the particle *mol* and/or the complementizer *čto*. The paper also has implications for rhetorical questions, which are unembeddable (or main clause) phenomena on a par with wh-exclamatives, as traditionally assumed. Both phenomena transmit direct discourse. Wh-interrogatives that convey rhetorical questions can be embedded, cfr. (47) without the particle *mol* and (48) with the particle *mol*.

- (47) *I togda podumal, čto kak že on tak otvlekaetsja...* (RNC; A. Bitov 1960-1963).
 ‘And I thought that [quoted] how it is possible to be so distracted...’ (literal interpretation).
- (48) *I tut ugrjumyj [...] nedovol’no zavorčal, čto: gde, mol, kajf? Ne čuvstvuju <...>* (RNC; S. Osipov 1998)
 ‘And the gloomy one was disappointed and started grumbling: [quoted] where is the buzz? I don’t feel [it].’

The paper contributes to the ongoing debate on embeddability (vs. insubordination) of wh-exclamatives in Russian and cross-linguistically and opens a new perspective of studying wh-exclamatives under quotation operators in embedded contexts. A further research question is whether a similar phenomenon is observed in other genealogically related and unrelated languages.

Abbreviations

2	2 nd person
IMP	Imperative
PL	Plural
PRS	Present tense
SG	Singular

Resources

RNC	<i>Russian National Corpus</i> , < https://ruscorpora.ru/en > (last access: 24.05.26).
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Abstract

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Embedded wh-Exclamatives? Evidence from Russian Quotation Particle mol and complementizer čto

Using syntactic embeddability diagnostics, the paper demonstrates that Russian wh-exclamatives with the quotation particle *mol* and/or with the complementizer *čto* are embeddable and thus contributes to the ongoing theoretical and cross-linguistic discussion of embedded wh-exclamatives and their (in)subordination status. This analysis is applicable to rhetorical questions (with the quotation particle *mol* and/or with the complementizer *čto*), which are traditionally viewed as unembeddable / main clause phenomena. Moreover, the paper discusses semantic features (factivity and knowledge) as well as (idiosyncratic) lexical and grammatical features of Russian matrix predicates embedding wh-exclamatives and wh-interrogatives in a cross-linguistic perspective. Taking into consideration the features of Russian matrix predicates, the paper argues for elliptical structures based on embedded wh-exclamatives, which are viewed parallel to wh-interrogatives.

Keywords

Exclamatives; Exclamations; Particle *mol*; Embedded Clauses.