

## The things that we can(not) exclaim!

Maria Esipova\*

**Abstract.** English famously has both *wh*- and nominal exclamatives (e.g., Portner & Zanuttini 2005). For instance, both *What (strange) stories Nina tells!* and *The (strange) stories that Nina tells!* are expressive speech acts about the very high degree that the stories that Nina tells have on some—explicit or implicit—scale. However, puzzlingly enough, Russian only has *wh*-, but not nominal exclamatives. I propose, partially following Esipova 2021, that both *wh*- and nominal exclamatives are instances of expressive intensification (akin to *She is damn smart*), with the expressive component of the expressive intensifier promoted to being the primary speech act (not unlike in *Damn {she is / is she} smart!*). However, while English can do direct intensification of NPs (e.g., *He's a damn coward*) and can, thus, have nominal exclamatives, Russian can only do expressive intensification by predicating a degree property of a free relative over degrees and can, thus, only have *wh*-exclamatives.

**Keywords.** semantics, syntax/semantics, exclamatives, *wh*-exclamatives, nominal exclamatives, expressive intensification, English, Russian

### 1. Introduction.

1.1. THE PUZZLE: NOMINAL EXCLAMATIVES IN ENGLISH, BUT NOT IN RUSSIAN. English famously has both *wh*- and nominal exclamatives (e.g., Portner & Zanuttini 2005; Rett 2011). For instance, the two sentences in (1) have a very similar interpretation, both being expressive speech acts about the very high degree that the stories that Nina tells have on some—explicit or implicit—scale.

- (1) a. What (strange) stories Nina tells! *wh-exclamative*  
b. The (strange) stories that Nina tells! *nominal exclamative*

In contrast, Russian only has *wh*-, but not nominal exclamatives (the absence/presence of an overt determiner—in this case, a demonstrative—does not make a difference):

- (2) a. Kakije (strannyje) istorii Nina rasskazyvajet! *wh-exclamative*  
what.ADJ (strange) stories Nina tells  
'What (strange) stories Nina tells!'  
b. #({Èti / te}) (strannyje) istorii, što *attempted nominal exclamative*  
({these / those}) (strange) stories what.REL  
Nina rasskazyvajet!  
Nina tells  
Intended: 'The (strange) stories that Nina tells!'

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Now, of course, one can produce speech acts in Russian that, on the surface, consist only of DPs and appear to express affect. Thus, two further notes are immediately in order. First, following Rett 2011, I will distinguish between *exclamatives* as a special sentence type, which have a specialized syntax and constitute expressive speech acts, and a broader descriptive category of *exclamations*, which are utterances of any type that appear to express affect, whether it is their primary purpose or not. Second, also following Rett 2011, I will maintain that true exclamatives are subject to the *degree constraint*, i.e., they are expressive speech acts specifically about (extreme) degrees—a point that I elaborate on a little further in section 2.

Thus, (2b) could serve, for instance, as an emotional fragment response to a question like ‘What do you like the most about your group therapy sessions?’, but it would presumably be an elliptical declarative, with some expression of affect happening on the side, rather than a standalone speech act, whose primary goal is to express the speaker’s feelings about the very high degree that the stories that Nina tells have on some scale. It is thus fundamentally different both from the English and Russian *wh*-exclamatives in (1a) and (2a) as well as from the English nominal exclamative in (1b).

1.2. THIS PAPER. In this paper, I propose, partially following some of my earlier work in Esipova 2021, that both *wh*- and nominal exclamatives are instances of expressive intensification (akin to *She is damn smart*), with the expressive component of the expressive intensifier promoted to being the primary speech act (not unlike in *Damn {she is / is she} smart!*). However, while English can do direct intensification of NPs (e.g., *He’s a damn coward*) and can, thus, have nominal exclamatives, Russian can only do expressive intensification by predicating a degree property of a free relative over degrees and can, thus, only have *wh*-exclamatives.

I should note from the get-go that I am not married to the specific implementation presented here. The main insight of this paper should be taken to be that the contrast between English and Russian with respect to the availability of nominal exclamatives is linked to the differences in how the two languages do expressive intensification—with the specifics being highly negotiable.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I recap the main insight from Esipova 2021, which focused on exclamations containing *wh*-items in English and Russian, that true *wh*-exclamatives are instances of expressive intensification. Then, in section 3, I demonstrate the differences in how English and Russian do expressive intensification, concluding that Russian doesn’t have English-style direct expressive intensification, with expressive intensifiers directly intensifying NPs, AdjPs, and AdvPs, but instead always involves predicating a degree property of a free relative over degrees (which itself denotes a definite description over degrees). I then present my analysis in section 4, where I first outline how I will depart from the analysis in Esipova 2021 and then propose a new account of English and Russian exclamatives. I provide sample derivations of English *wh*- and nominal exclamatives, as well as Russian sentences with segmental expressive intensification and *wh*-exclamatives, making it clear in the process why Russian cannot have nominal exclamatives. Section 5 concludes by briefly discussing some outstanding issues and the typological implications of this paper.

**2. Esipova 2021: exclamatives as expressive intensification.** As mentioned in the Introduction, true exclamatives (as opposed to exclamations of other sentence types) are subject to the *degree constraint*, i.e., they must be about degrees (Elliott 1974; Rett 2011, a.o.). Thus, in English, you can exclaim strings like (3a), but not like (3b).

- (3) a. {How smart she is! / What a terrible friend you are!}  
 ‘I am expressing feelings about the (very high) degree to which {she is smart / you are a terrible friend}’
- b. \*{Who came! / What I am about to tell you!}  
 Intended: ‘I am expressing feelings about {the person who came (or the fact that they came) / the thing I am about to tell you (or the fact that I am about to tell you this)}’

It has been claimed that in some languages, including Russian, one can exclaim strings like (3b) (Nouwen & Chernilovskaya 2015). However, in Esipova 2021, I showed that at least in Russian, there are two types of exclamations involving *wh*-items, with different prosody and semantics/pragmatics, and the first type, which I maintain to be true exclamatives, does, in fact, have to be about degrees. As for the second type, I proposed that these exclamations were, in fact, instances of interrogatives embedded under prosodically expounded attitude predicates, thus, being more akin to the English examples in (4).

- (4) {Look / I can’t believe / You won’t believe} who came!

Regardless of what exactly a “true exclamative” is and whether my analysis of exclamations of that second type in Esipova 2021 is correct, in this paper, I will specifically focus on exclamatives that do obey the degree constraint,<sup>1</sup> which includes English nominal exclamatives:

- (5) a. The audacity of this guy!  
 ‘I am expressing feelings about the (very high) degree of this guy’s audacity’
- b. #The guy who came!  
 Intended: ‘I am expressing feelings about the guy who came or the fact that they came’

In Esipova 2021, I proposed that in both English and Russian, true exclamatives are instances of *expressive degree intensification*—akin to (6a) and, perhaps even more obviously, (6b), where intensification is done prosodically and/or via facial expressions and potentially other types of gesture (see Esipova 2019a,b, 2022, a.o., on the latter). However, in exclamatives, the expressive intensifier has been “permanently promoted to the left periphery with its expressive component thus being the primary speech act”—not unlike (but not necessarily fully equivalent to) what we see in cases like (6c).

- (6) a. Anya is damn smart.  
 ≈‘Anya is very smart + I am expressing feelings on the side’
- b. Anya is [ssssmmaaart]<sup>prosody+face-intensification</sup>!  
 ≈‘Anya is very smart + I am expressing feelings on the side’
- c. Damn {Anya is / is Anya} smart!  
 ≈‘I am expressing feelings about the very high degree to which Anya is smart’

More specifically, I proposed that exclamatives like (7) have the semantics in (8), where the *wh*-constituent denotes a property of degrees *d*, and the E-FORCE operator (i) modifies this

<sup>1</sup> Although I do briefly come back to exclamations of this second type in section 5.

property saying that  $d$  is “extreme”, (ii) iota-binds the  $d$  variable, and (iii) outputs an expressive speech act about this  $d$ .

(7) How smart Anya is!

(8)  $E\text{-FORCE}(\lambda d.\text{smart}(\mathbf{a}) = d)$  expresses the speaker’s feelings about  $\iota d.\text{extreme}(d) \wedge \text{smart}(\mathbf{a}) = d$

The term *E-FORCE operator* was preserved from Rett 2011, but the semantics thereof was different. In Rett 2011, the *wh*-constituent in *wh*-exclamatives also denotes a property of degrees, but is then turned into a proposition  $p$  by existentially closing off the degree variable, and the E-FORCE operator then combines with that proposition  $p$ , yielding an expressive speech act expressing counter-expectation about  $p$ . The insight in Esipova 2021 that the E-FORCE operator is an expressive intensifier allowed me to (i) have an *explanatory* story about why exclamatives must be about degrees (unexplained in Rett 2011), (ii) additionally explain why these degrees must be very high (also unexplained in Rett 2011), and (iii) more accurately capture the more fine-grained aspects of the meaning of exclamatives with respect to the epistemic status of the prejacent and the nature of the affect expressed.

In this paper, I will preserve the main insight from Esipova 2021 that exclamatives involve expressive intensification. However, instead of having an E-FORCE operator that is an expressive intensifier that has been permanently promoted to the left periphery and does several diverse things in one step, I will propose a more nuanced analysis, as detailed in section 4. But to motivate this more nuanced analysis, let us first look at the differences in how English and Russian do expressive intensification.

### 3. Expressive intensification in English vs. Russian.

3.1. EXPRESSIVE INTENSIFICATION IN ENGLISH. In English, we can use select expressives to (seemingly) directly intensify AdjPs, as shown previously in (6a) and repeated below in (9a), as well as AdvPs and—crucially for our purposes—NPs, as shown in (9b) and (9c), respectively.

- (9) a. Anya is damn smart.  
 $\approx$  ‘Anya is very smart + I am expressing feelings on the side’
- b. I ran damn fast.  
 $\approx$  ‘I ran very fast + I am expressing feelings on the side’
- c. Vova is a damn {coward / fool}.  
 $\approx$  ‘Vova is a {coward / fool} to a very high degree + I am expressing feelings on the side’

In all the examples in (9), *damn* is intensifying the predicate it combines with (coerced into a degree interpretation, if necessary) at the truth-conditional level, while the act of producing this expressive still allows the speaker to performatively express some affect on the side.

I provide a more detailed discussion of different cases of expressive intensification in Esipova 2019b,a, 2022, which I will not rehash here. However, I will adopt a more nuanced and intuitive semantics for expressive intensifiers from Esipova 2022, where (i) expressive degree intensifiers carry compositionally independent degree intensification and expressive speech act

components, and (ii) the intensification component of expressive intensifiers is demonstration-based. Point (i) relies on a version of expressive semantics from Potts 2007, and point (ii) relies on the notion of *demonstrations* from Davidson 2015. The main relevant insight here is that when we say *She is damn smart*, at the truth-conditional level, we’re essentially asserting that an instantiation of the degree to which she is smart would warrant a “damn!”-like reaction—this is the demonstration-based treatment of degree intensification. At the same time, we’re still performatively expressing some affect by virtue of producing the word *damn*—this is the expressive speech act component.

Now, note that in all the cases illustrated in (9), we can also promote the expressive intensifier (with optional auxiliary inversion, which may be yielding a stronger expressive effect), thus, making its expressive component the primary speech act (from now on I will be using paraphrases that align with the analysis of expressive intensification described in the previous paragraph):

- (10) a. Damn {Anya is / is Anya} smart!  
 ≈ ‘Damn! at the “damn!”-worthy degree to which Anya is smart!’
- b. Damn {I ran / did I run} fast!  
 ≈ ‘Damn! at the “damn!”-worthy degree of how fast I ran!’
- c. Damn {Vova is / is Vova} a {coward / fool}!  
 ≈ ‘Damn! at the “damn!”-worthy degree to which Vova is a {coward / fool}’

3.2. EXPRESSIVE INTENSIFICATION IN RUSSIAN. Russian doesn’t seem to have English-style direct expressive intensification, with expressive intensifiers directly intensifying NPs, AdjPs, and AdvPs. Instead, instances of what appears to be expressive intensification in Russian seem to involve predicating an expressive demonstration-based property of a free relative over degrees:

- (11) a. Vova {pizdec / oxuet’ / s uma sojti / ...} kakoj trus(livyj).  
 Vova EXPR what.ADJ coward(ly)  
 ≈ ‘The degree to which Vova is {a coward / cowardly} is “EXPR!”-worthy + EXPR! on the side’
- b. Ja {pizdec / oxuet’ / s uma sojti / ...} kak bystro bežala.  
 I EXPR how fast ran  
 ≈ ‘The degree of how fast I ran is “EXPR!”-worthy + EXPR! on the side’

Now, why do I assume that the *wh*-constituents in (11) are relative clauses over degrees, to begin with? The argument here is the same as in Esipova 2021, where I already showed that the *wh*-items we see in (11), *kakoj* (‘what.ADJ’) and *kak* (‘how’), can be used in *wh*-exclamatives, as shown in (12), and as relativizers in what appear to be definite descriptions of degrees, as shown in (13), but not to ask questions about degrees, as shown in (14).<sup>2</sup> Thus, it stands to reason that in both *wh*-exclamatives (the “true” ones, i.e., those that do obey the degree constraint) and in cases

<sup>2</sup> This applies to cases with adjectives and nominals; *kak* can be used with adverbs to ask questions about degrees, e.g., *Kak bystro?* (‘How fast?’). And, of course, some *wh*-items, such as *naskol’ko* (‘to.how.much’) can be used across all these cases, i.e., in expressive intensification, in *wh*-exclamatives, in definite descriptions of degrees, and in questions about degrees.

of expressive intensification like (11) in Russian, the *wh*-constituents are relative clauses over degrees.

- (12) a. Kakaja ona umnaja!  
 what.ADJ she smart  
 ‘How smart she is!’
- b. Kakoj on trus!  
 what.ADJ he coward  
 ‘What a coward he is!’
- c. Kak on talantliv!  
 how he talented  
 ‘How talented he is!’
- (13) Menja {vpečatljaet / besit} to...  
 me.ACC {impresses / peeves} that.DEM...  
 ≈ ‘I am {impressed / peeved} by...’
- a. ...kakaja ona umnaja  
 ...what.ADJ she smart  
 ...how smart she is.’
- b. ...kakoj on trus  
 ...what.ADJ he coward  
 ...how much of a coward he is.’
- c. ...kak on talantliv  
 ...how he talented  
 ...how talented he is.’
- (14) a. {\*Kakaja / naskol’ko / do kakoj stepeni} ona umnaja?  
 {\*what.ADJ / to.how.much / to what degree} she smart  
 ‘How smart is she?’
- b. {\*Kakoj / naskol’ko / do kakoj stepeni} on trus?  
 {\*what.ADJ / to.how.much / to what degree} he coward  
 ‘How much of a coward is he?’
- c. {\*Kak / naskol’ko / do kakoj stepeni} on talantliv?  
 {\*how / to.how.much / to what degree} he talented  
 ‘How talented is he?’

Like in English, Russian expressive intensifiers can also be promoted, making their expressive component the primary speech act:

- (15) a. {Pizdec / Oxuet' / S uma sojti / ...} kakoj Vova trus(livyj)!  
 EXPR what.ADJ Vova coward(ly)  
 ≈‘EXPR! at the “EXPR!”-worthy degree to which Vova is {a coward / cowardly}!’
- b. {Pizdec / Oxuet' / S uma sojti / ...} kak bystro ja bežala!  
 EXPR how fast I ran  
 ≈‘EXPR! at the “EXPR!”-worthy degree of how fast I ran!’

Note also that the expressives that can be used in Russian expressive intensification are, on the face of it, morphosyntactically diverse. For instance, *pizdec* is originally a noun (≈‘bad situation’); *oxuet'* is an infinitival form of a verb (≈‘get surprised’); *s uma sojti* is an idiomatic collocation expressing surprise (lit.: ≈‘to lose one’s mind’)—but they all can be used as standalone expressive utterances. This was one of the original motivations for a demonstration-based approach to expressive intensification in Esipova 2022.

Finally, I should note that the *wh*-items in (11) and (15) are not always obligatory and can be dropped in many cases (with some apparent variation across specific expressives, contexts, speakers, etc.), but I take this to be precisely that, i.e., relativizer drop, and maintain that even when the overt relativizer is dropped in these cases, we still have a full free relative structure. Although, in general, unlike English, Russian doesn’t allow relativizer drop with regular relative clauses, I take these expressive demonstration cases to be highly idiosyncratic. Another example of such idiosyncrasy would be the degree-based ‘so *X* that *Y*’ construction in Russian, where *Y* can be an expressive,<sup>3</sup> as illustrated in (16a). In this case, *takoj* ‘such’ can also be dropped—even though it normally cannot be, as shown in (16b).

- (16) a. Ona (takaja) sil'naja šo pizdec.  
 she (such) strong that EXPR  
 ≈‘She’s so strong that “pizdec!” [would be an appropriate reaction].’
- b. Ona \*(takaja) sil'naja, čto ja ej vosxišajus'.  
 she \*(such) strong that I she.INSTR admire  
 ‘She’s so strong that I admire her.’

What is important for our purposes is that it is always *possible* to have those *wh*-items in cases like (11) and (15), which clearly sets Russian expressive intensification apart from English expressive intensification, where this would be ungrammatical:

- (17) a. She is damn (\*how) smart.  
 b. I ran damn (\*how) fast.  
 c. He is a damn (\*what) coward.

<sup>3</sup> I myself can only think of a properly conventionalized version of this construction with *pizdec* and its euphemistic versions *pipec* and *kapec*—in contrast to the constructions in (11) and (15), which appear to be more productive with respect to which expressives they allow. Note also that in my Russian, I strongly prefer (16a) produced with the colloquial version of ‘that’, *šo*, not the neutral *čto*.

Thus, the bottom line is that Russian doesn't have English-style direct expressive intensification, where AdjPs, AdvPs, and NPs are directly intensified by items like *damn*. Instead, I will maintain that in Russian, we do expressive intensification by predicating demonstration-based degree properties (such as “‘pizdec!’-worthy”) of free relatives over degrees (which denote definite descriptions of degrees). In the next section, I will provide sample formalizations of this and other insights from this section. But before I do, let me emphasize that I am specifically talking about the availability of direct *expressive* intensification here, not any kind of intensification, because adjectives, adverbs, and nominals can all be directly intensified in Russian in a non-expressive manner, for instance:

- (18) a. Vova takoj trus(livyj).  
 Vova such coward(ly)  
 ‘Vova is {such a coward / so cowardly}.’
- b. Ja tak bystro bežala.  
 I so fast ran  
 ‘I ran so fast.’

#### 4. Analysis.

4.1. UPDATING THE STORY FROM ESİPOVA 2021. In this paper, I preserve the main insight from Esipova 2021 that exclamatives involve degree intensification. However, as noted above in section 2, in Esipova 2021, the E-FORCE operator in *wh*-exclamatives was doing a lot of diverse things in one step (intensifying the degree property denoted by the *wh*-constituent, iota-binding the degree variable *d*, and outputting an expressive speech act about that *d*). Furthermore, the assumption there was that English and Russian *wh*-exclamatives have more or less the same compositional structure.

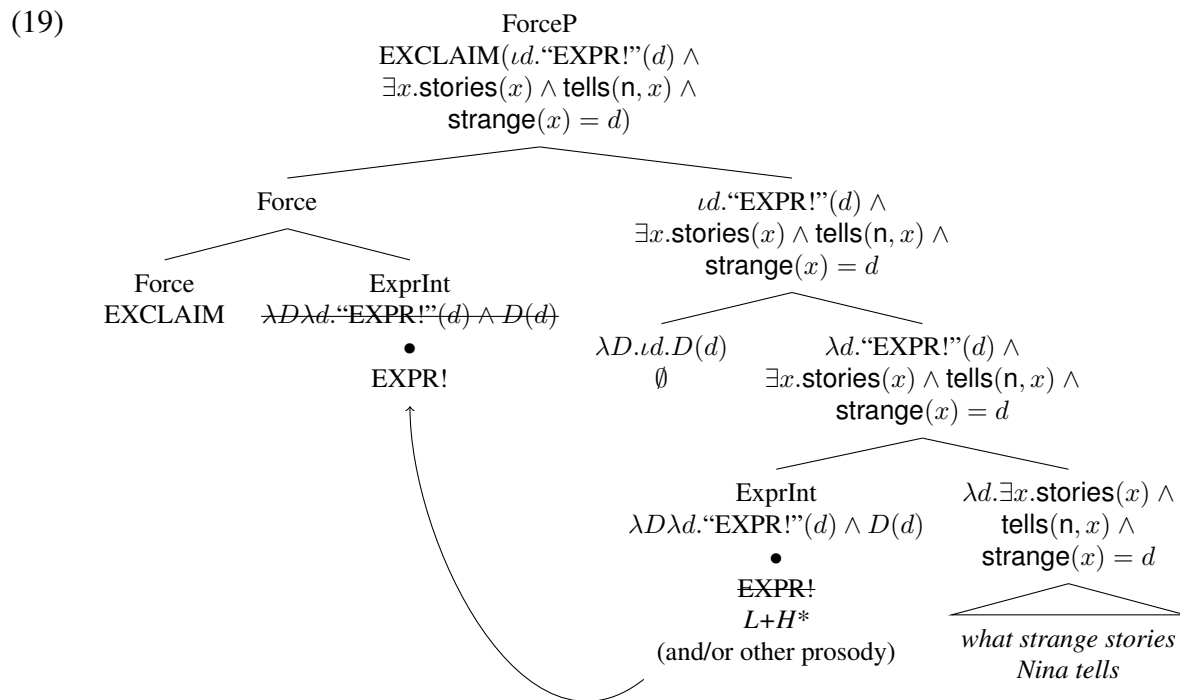
Here I will propose a more nuanced analysis. First, as already noted in the previous section, I will assume a view of expressive intensification from Esipova 2022, where, crucially for the present purposes, expressive degree intensifiers carry compositionally independent degree intensification and expressive speech act components (I am also keeping the demonstration-based semantics of the intensification component as a more intuitive one). The intensification component will furthermore be just a regular property of degrees, without additional functions, such as iota-binding the degree variable. Next, I will maintain that in non-exclamatives that contain expressive intensification (such as *She is damn smart*), the expressive speech act component of the expressive intensifier remains a secondary speech act on the side. And finally, I will propose that exclamatives are formed by moving an expressive intensifier into the left periphery Force projection so that its expressive speech act component becomes the primary speech act while its intensification component remains interpreted in its original position (I assume the copy theory of movement).

That is the case for both English and Russian exclamatives, but I will further propose that English has a DP-internal (also, presumably, AdjP- and AdvP-internal) ExprInt projection, allowing it to have both direct expressive intensification of NPs and nominal exclamatives. In contrast, since, as we established in the previous section, Russian expressive intensification can only be done by predicating a degree property of a free relative over degrees, Russian can only have *wh*-exclamatives.



## 4.2. EXCLAMATIVES IN ENGLISH: ANALYSIS.

4.2.1. *Wh*-EXCLAMATIVES IN ENGLISH: ANALYSIS. In (19), I provide a sample derivation of an English *wh*-exclamative, specifically *What strange stories Nina tells!* from (1a). I remain agnostic about many syntactic details of this derivation, as they don't matter for the gist of the proposed analysis, so I omit most of the syntactic labels there and focus on the compositional structure. As in Esipova 2021, the *wh*-constituent denotes a property of degrees (here, it's degrees to which some stories that Nina tells are strange). But then it combines with an ExprInt projection, which hosts a prosodically expounded expressive intensifier that has both a truth-conditional intensification component, as well as an expressive speech act component. The iota-binding of the *d* variable then happens as a separate step after that. Eventually, the ExprInt head moves into the Force projection on the left periphery to make the expressive component of the expressive intensifier the primary speech act, while the intensification component remains interpreted low. The final result is thus an expressive speech act about the “EXPR!”-worthy degree to which some stories that Nina tells are strange. Note that the final result is essentially the same as in Esipova 2021 (given previously for *How smart Anya is!* in (8)), but the compositional path to it is different.

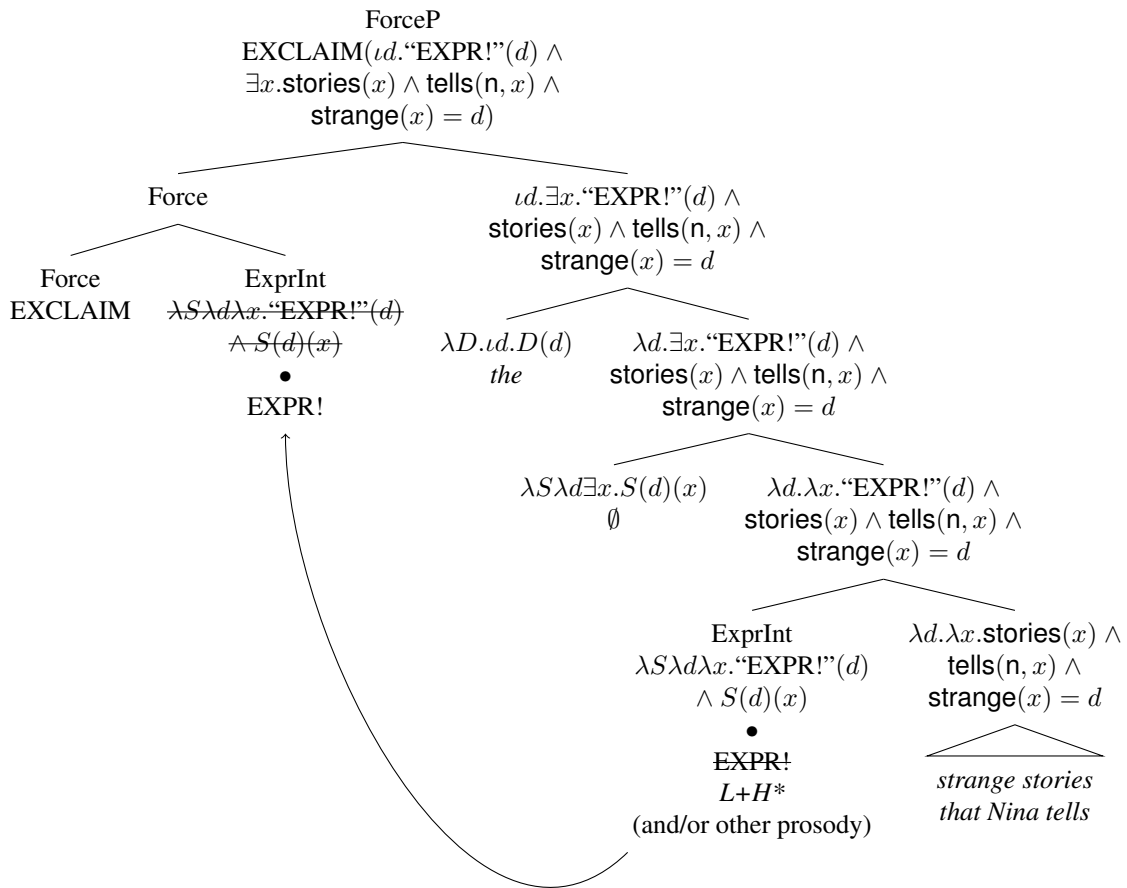


(An exclamative speech act about the “EXPR!”-worthy degree to which some stories that Nina tells are strange. ExprInt moves into the Force projection, and the act of producing its prosodic exponent performatively realizes the EXCLAIM force. EXPR! = “expressive speech act”; “EXPR!”( $d$ ) means that an instantiation of  $d$  warrants an “EXPR!” reaction.)

4.2.2. NOMINAL EXCLAMATIVES IN ENGLISH: ANALYSIS. In (20), I provide a sample derivation of an English nominal exclamative, specifically *The strange stories that Nina tells!* from (1b). I assume that the NP *strange stories that Nina tells*, originally denoting a property of individuals, gets coerced into a degree interpretation, with a degree layer added to this property. (I

assume the same happens in cases of regular expressive intensification such as *He is a damn coward*.) We then add a DP-internal ExprInt projection (I remain agnostic with respect to whether the ExprInt layer is always present in English DPs syntactically or only shows up when needed), carrying a (type-adjusted) expressive intensifier, which intensifies the degree of the property it combines with at the truth-conditional level. After that, the individual variable of our property gets existentially closed off. (In contrast, I assume that in cases of regular expressive intensification such as *He is a damn coward*, it is the degree variable that gets existentially closed off, and we continue the derivation with a property of individuals:  $\lambda x.\exists d.\text{“damn!”}(d) \wedge \text{coward}(x) = d$ .) Then, the definite article *the* iota-binds the degree—not the individual!—variable, with the rest of the derivation proceeding similarly to the *wh*-exclamative in (19), with the same final result.

(20)

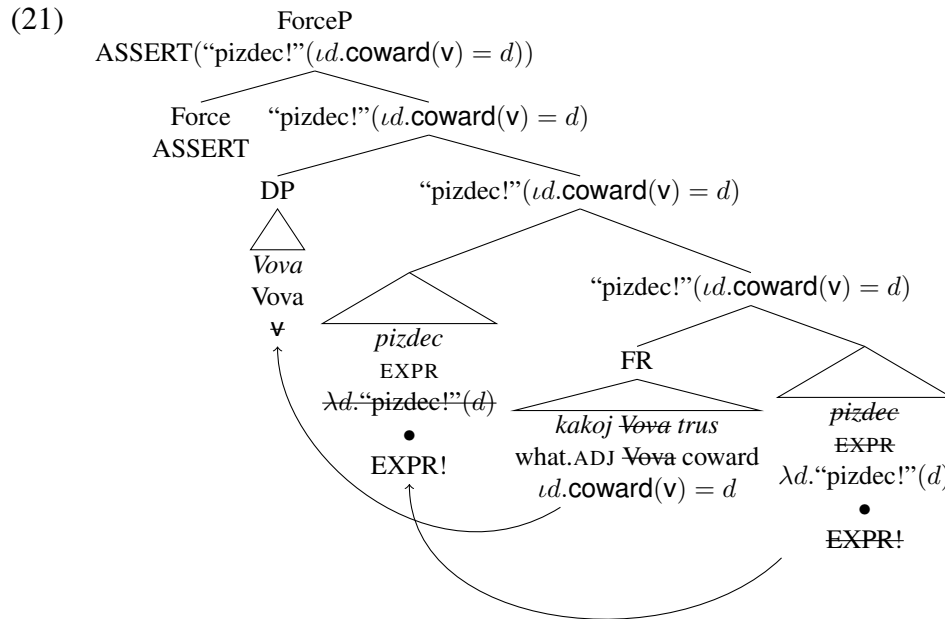


(An exclamative speech act about the “EXPR!”-worthy degree to which some stories that Nina tells are strange. ExprInt moves into the Force projection, and the act of producing its prosodic exponent performatively realizes the EXCLAIM force.)

### 4.3. EXCLAMATIVES IN RUSSIAN: ANALYSIS.

4.3.1. EXPRESSIVE INTENSIFICATION IN RUSSIAN: ANALYSIS. As I concluded in section 3, Russian doesn’t have English-style direct expressive intensification, with DP/AdjP/AdvP-internal expressive intensifiers. Instead, Russian expressive intensification necessarily involves predicating a demonstration-based degree property of a free relative over degrees (which itself denotes a

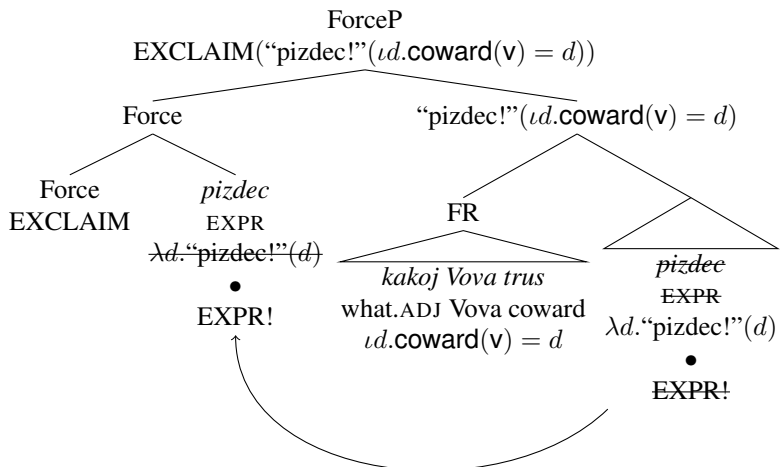
definite description of degrees). The fine-grained specifics of how exactly this predication works syntactically are irrelevant for the purposes of this paper, so in (21), I provide a sample derivation for one of the examples from (11), *Vova pizdec kakoj trus* (Vova EXPR what.ADJ coward), omitting many of the syntactic labels, as the internal structure of the free relative *kakoj Vova trus* (what.ADJ Vova coward) or the predication relation between this free relative and the degree property *pizdec* (EXPR) doesn't matter. Nor does it matter which positions *Vova* and *pizdec* scramble to. In fact, it is entirely possible that *Vova* is generated outside of *pizdec kakoj trus*, which would then be a VP denoting predicate of individuals (with the semantic types adjusted accordingly).



(A speech act asserting the proposition that the degree to which Vova is a coward warrants a “pizdec!” reaction + an expressive speech act on the side, whose effects obtain performatively when *pizdec* is uttered.)

A sample tree for the corresponding example with the expressive promoted from (15a) is given in (22). Here, like in English, the head of whatever phrase the degree property *pizdec* is moves to Force, making its expressive speech act component a performative realization of the EXCLAIM force. Note that while I also treat this movement as head movement here, nothing important hinges on this choice, and we could instead treat it as phrasal movement to Spec, ForceP.

(22)

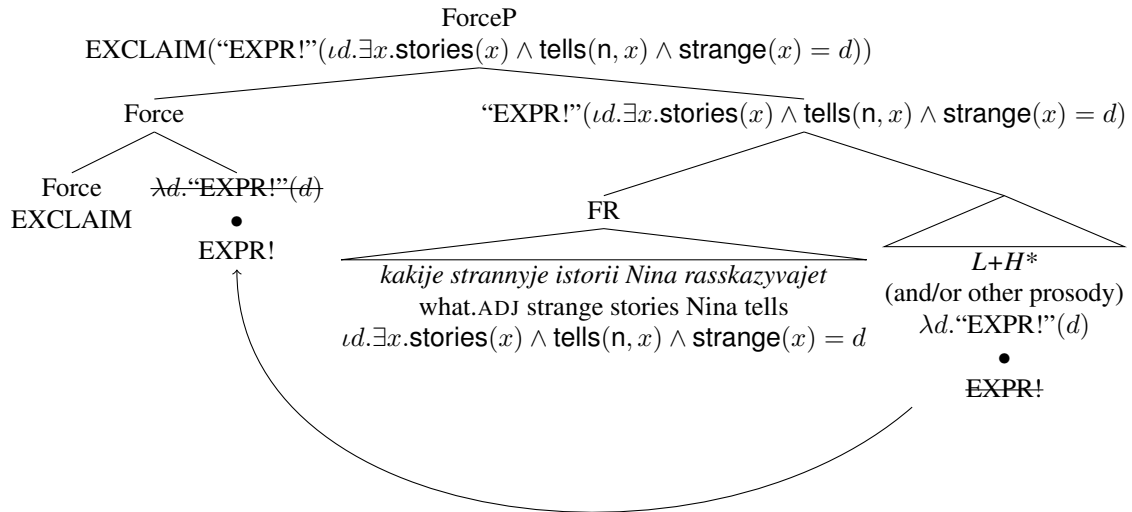


(An exclamative speech act about the proposition that the degree to which Vova is a coward warrants a “pizdec!” reaction. The head of the degree property moves into the Force projection, and the act of producing its exponent *pizdec* performatively realizes the EXCLAIM force.)

4.3.2. *Wh*-EXCLAMATIVES IN RUSSIAN: ANALYSIS. I propose that Russian *wh*-exclamatives have the same structure as (22), except the expressive intensifier is not expounded segmentally, but only prosodically (and potentially via gesture).<sup>4</sup> In (23), I give a sample derivation of a Russian *wh*-exclamative, specifically *Kakije strannyje istorii Nina rasskazyvajet!* (what.ADJ strange stories Nina tells) from (2a).

<sup>4</sup> Note the word *only* here, as instances of expressive intensification involving segmental intensifiers also involve prosodic and/or gestural realization of the expressive intensifier—a fact omitted from the derivations in (21) and (22) for simplicity. As is hopefully clear, I make the standard architectural assumptions in this paper, whereby syntax operates on abstract objects, which are interpreted by compositional semantics, on the one hand, and get expounded on the surface, on the other hand. One and the same syntactic object can, thus, have multiple surface realizations (potentially via different channels), while still being interpreted only once by semantics. That said, the performative nature of expressive speech acts complicates this architectural picture, as performative effects obtain via producing a given form. For a more in-depth architectural discussion of expressivity, see Esipova 2022. These complications, while important in their own right, are immaterial for the purposes of this paper, however.

(23)



(An exclamative speech act about the proposition that the degree to which some stories that Nina tells warrant an “EXPR!” reaction. The head of the degree property moves into the Force projection, and the act of producing its prosodic exponent performatively realizes the EXCLAIM force.)

4.3.3. LACK OF NOMINAL EXCLAMATIVES IN RUSSIAN: ANALYSIS. To reiterate the point made throughout this paper: Russian doesn’t have nominal exclamatives, because exclamatives are instances of expressive intensification, and the only way to do expressive intensification in Russian is to predicate a demonstration-based degree property of a free relative over degrees (which itself denotes a definite description of degrees). This is presumably because Russian lacks English-style DP-internal (as well as AdjP- and AdvP-internal) ExprInt projections. Thus, Russian can only have *wh*-exclamatives.

**5. Conclusion.** Before I wrap up, let me briefly discuss some outstanding issues and the typological implications of this paper.

First, let me point out the immediate consequences of the new analysis of Russian *wh*-exclamatives proposed here for the ‘Who came!’-type exclamations in Russian, discussed in Esipova 2021. It is plausible that those exclamations, too, involve some predication of demonstration-based properties of free relatives, say, over individuals, obviating the need for an embedding-based analysis. Indeed, such predication seems to be at least sometimes possible in Russian, as shown in (24a), although the distinction between such predication and embedding becomes blurry, as illustrated by (24b).

- (24) a. K nam pizdec kto prišël.  
to us EXPR who came  
≈ ‘The person who came to us warrants a “pizdec!” reaction.’
- b. K nam ne poveriš’ kto prišël.  
to us not believe.FUT.2SG who came  
≈ ‘You will not believe who came to us.’

If we were to pursue this route, the prosodic differences between the two types of exclamations in Russian observed in Esipova 2021 would then just be differences between the prosodic demonstrations involved in the two cases. The unavailability of ‘Who came!’-type exclamations in English could then be attributed to the unavailability of Russian-style ‘who came’-type free relatives in English, rather than the speculation that English lacks the prosodically expounded attitude predicates hypothesized for Russian in Esipova 2021. It is unclear, however, to what extent this story could be generalized to the other languages that have ‘Who came!’-type exclamations discussed in Nouwen & Chernilovskaya 2015. I thus leave the exploration of this possibility for future research.

Next, if English also has AdjP- and AdvP-internal ExprInt projections, as suggested by its apparent ability to do direct expressive intensification of adjectives and adverbs, why doesn’t it have some sort of adjectival and adverbial exclamatives? I imagine there are further syntactic constraints responsible for this, such as constraints on the minimal size of a well-formed standalone utterance.

Note also that while I claimed that Russian *wh*-exclamatives have the same structure as instances of segmental expressive intensification with a promoted expressive intensifier (see the trees in (22) and (23), respectively), I made no such claim about English. I remain agnostic about the extent to which the structure of English *wh*-exclamatives is similar to cases like *Damn {she is / is she} smart!*, including the exact nature and role of the optional auxiliary inversion in the latter.

Finally, it is well-known that English nominal exclamatives appear to typically require some kind of relative clause or PP modifying the NP, as shown in (25a) vs. (25b). Now, that is not always the case, as one can felicitously exclaim (25c) when it is contextually clear which audacity one is exclaiming about, but it is still puzzling why similar contextual salience does not help in (25b), as (25b) is infelicitous even if the relevant building is highly salient in the context. This contrast between (25b) and (25c) might or might not have something to do with the more event-y nature of *audacity*, or it might even be purely idiosyncratic. Be that as it may, this paper offers no novel insights into this puzzle.

- (25) a. The height of this building!  
b. #The height!  
c. The audacity!

Now, as for the typological implications of this paper, let me emphasize once again that its main insight is that the fact that English has nominal exclamatives, but Russian doesn’t is linked to the differences in how the two languages do expressive intensification (once again, the specific implementation doesn’t matter as much). Moving forward, it would, therefore, be nice to have more cross-linguistic data on (i) the presence vs. absence of English-style nominal exclamatives in a given language, on the one hand, and (ii) the availability of English-style direct expressive intensification of nominals, on the other. It might also be worth thinking about whether the apparent absence of a DP-internal ExprInt projection is linked to the absence of articles in Russian—with more cross-linguistic data being, once again, potentially illuminating.

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