On a connection between comitative conjunction, *pro*-drop, and Person licensing

Irina Burukina

Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics ELKH & Eötvös Loránd University

1. Introduction

The paper discusses comitative conjunction constructions (CCs) focusing on the following puzzle from Slavic languages. In Russian, comitative conjunctions with a 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun are prohibited: as indicated in (1), such examples are ungrammatical if the with-PP forms a constituent with the pronominal host, triggering plural agreement on the verb (true conjunction), and are only allowed if the pronoun alone serves as the subject of the clause with the PP adjoining to the clausal spine (adjunction).

(1) a. Ja   s   Mašej *pojdëm / pojdu   v   kino.
       I   with Maša   go.1PL   go.1SG into   cinema
       Not available: 'Maša and I will go to the cinema.' (*conjunction*)
       Only: 'I will go to the cinema with Maša.' (*comitative adjunction*)
    b. Ty   s   Mašej *pojdëte / pojdëš   v   kino.
       you.SG with Maša   go.2PL   go.2SG into   cinema
       Not available: 'Maša and you will go to the cinema.' (*conjunction*)
       Only: 'You will go to the cinema with Maša.' (*comitative adjunction*)

The restriction does not extend to comitative conjunctions with a 1st or 2nd person plural pronoun: all sentences similar to (2) are accepted by native speakers.

(2) My   s   Mašej pojdëm   v   kino.
    we   with Maša   go.1PL   into   cinema
    Inclusive reading: 'Maša and I will go to the cinema.'
    Exclusive reading: 'Maša and we will go to the cinema.'

To explain the restriction, first, I present a uniform analysis that brings all CCs together,

whereby comitative conjunction is headed by a single functional head (D) that is realized either overtly as a personal pronoun, as in 'we, I with Petja', or as a silent *pro*. In this I am arguing against those approaches that group comitative conjunction that involve referential conjuncts with AND coordination and juxtapose them to the so-called inclusive plural pronoun constructions, exemplified in (2) (Dyła 1988, Vassilieva & Larson 2001, i.a.).

Second, I propose that the person restriction stems from a combination of the following two factors: (i) the mechanism of *pro*-drop and the inventory of silent pronouns available in a given language (in the spirit of Roberts 2019), and (ii) the general requirement on licensing of the Person feature of agreeing subjects (cf. Béjar & Rezac 2003).

   The analysis not only accounts for the behavior of CCs in Russian but further allows us to capture the difference between Russian, a language with no consistent *pro*-drop, and, for instance, Polish, a fully *pro*-drop language where no person restriction is imposed on CCs (3).

(3) (Ja) z   Maria̜ wyjechaliśmy.
   I   with Maria left.1PL
  'Maria and I left.'

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 summarizes the properties of comitative conjunctions comparing them to AND coordination and outlines a single analysis for all CCs. Section 3 focuses on the person restriction and demonstrates that it holds only for agreeing nominative subjects and appears to correlate with the (un)availability of *pro*-drop in the language. Section 4 discusses several predictions made correctly by the proposed analysis and Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Comitative conjunction and AND coordination

Before addressing the person restriction on comitative conjunction in Russian, let us discuss briefly properties of CCs in general. In the literature, a line is often drawn between CCs that contain only referential conjuncts and those with a plural pronominal host, i.e. the non-PP conjunct (Plural Pronoun Constructions, PPCs); see for instance Vassilieva & Larson (2001) on Russian and Dyła (1988) on Polish. The former are grouped together with AND coordination, while the latter receive a separate treatment due to their peculiar interpretational property. As shown in (2) in the previous section, PPCs allow inclusive readings, whereby the participant pointed to by the second conjunct is included in the reference of the plural pronoun: that is, 'we with John' means 'we, I and John'.

   However, upon closer examination, such a division does not match the actual data, as CCs and PPCs pattern together with respect to their semantic and syntactic distribution. The properties of various coordinate constructions are summarized in Table 1, contrasted to comitative adjunction for comparison. Some properties, including the semantic and syntactic plurality and the availability of both collective and distributive interpretations, are common for all coordinate structures. At the same time, AND coordination is more restricted when it comes to sub-extraction (a universal restriction

known as Coordinate Structure Constraint; see Ross 1967, Grosu 1973, i.a.) and more flexible when it comes to commutativity.

	AND coordination	non-pronominal CCs	PPCs (inclusive)	comitative adjunction
sem/syn plural	✓	✓	✓	–
host binds into the 2nd conjunct	–	–	–	✓
distributive and collective readings	✓	✓	✓	collective only
discontinuity	–	✓/–	✓	✓
commutative	✓	–	–	NA
iterative	✓	–	–	NA
wh/focus extraction: host	–	–	–	✓
wh/focus extraction: 2nd conjunct	–	✓/–	✓	✓

Table 1. Properties of coordinate structures

Because of the limitations of space, below I only illustrate those cases where CCs and PPCs differ from AND coordination, and I refer the reader to Burukina (2022) for a full list of examples.

The first difference concerns discontinuity. The PP conjunct in a CC can undergo A-bar extraction but only if the whole CC remains preverbal.[1] In contrast, sub-extraction out of AND coordination is banned.

(4) a. *Maša   navernjaka   i   Petja   pojdut   v   kino.
          Maša   certainly   and   Petja   go.3PL   into   cinema
      Intended: 'Maša and Petja will certainly go to the cinema.'
     b. Maša   navernjaka   s   Petej   pojdut   v   kino.
         Maša   certainly   with   Petja   go.3PL   into   cinema
     'Maša and Petja will certainly go to the cinema.'
     c. My   navernjaka   s   Petej   pojděm   vdvoěm   v   kino.
         we   certainly   with   Petja   go.1PL   two.ADV   into   cinema

---

[1] The Russian examples presented in the paper were elicited with 19 native speakers, 23–33 y.o.

'I and Petja will certainly go to the cinema, the two of us.'

Similarly, A-bar movement out of the second conjunct (wh/focus extraction) is also allowed only in CCs and PPCs, when the whole CC is preverbal.

(5)　a.　$^?$S　　kem　　Maša　　pojdut　　v　　　kino?
　　　　　　with　whom　Maša　　go.3PL　　into　　cinema
　　　　　'Maša and who will go to the cinema?'
　　b.　$^{\%}$Eto　S　　　PETEJ　Maša　　　pojdut　v　　　kino.
　　　　　　this　with　Petja　Maša　　　go.3PL　into　　cinema
　　　　　'It is with Petja that Maša will go to the cinema.'
　　c.　S　　　kem　　my　　　pojdëm　vdvoëm　　v　　　　kino?
　　　　　with　whom　we　　　go.1PL　two.ADV　into　　cinema
　　　　　'I and who will go to the cinema, the two of us?'
　　d.　Eto　　S　　　PETEJ　my　　　pojdëm　　vdvoëm　　v　　　kino.
　　　　　this　with　Petja　we　　　go.1PL　　two.ADV　into　　cinema
　　　　　'It is with Petja that I will go to the cinema, the two of us together.'

Another difference is related to commutativity. The conjuncts in AND coordination can swap places, while CCs must comply with the Person hierarchy, that is the second conjunct cannot have a Person feature more prominent than that of the first one.

(6)　a.　Petja　　i　　　ja　　　pojdëm　　v　　　　kino.
　　　　　Petja　　and　I　　　go.1PL　　into　　cinema
　　　　　'Petja and I will go to the cinema.'
　　b.　Petja　　so　　　mnoj /　nami　　pojdët /　*pojdut /　*pojdëm　v　　kino.
　　　　　Petja　　with　me　　us　　　go.3SG　　go.3PL　　go.1PL　into　cinema
　　　　　Only: 'Petja will go to the cinema with me/us.' (*adjunction*)

Taking the properties presented above into account, I argue that there is no empirical support for proposing two different structures for CCs with non-pronominal conjuncts and PPCs. The two should be considered together and contrasted to AND coordination.[2]

---

[2] See McNally (1993), Feldman (2002), Dyła & Feldman (2003), Trawinski (2005) proposing different structures for CCs or PPCs and AND coordination, and Ionin & Matushanski (2002) and Vassilieva (2005) arguing that CCs and PPCs have parallel structures (the analyses proposed in the two papers differ).

In what follows, I confine myself to discussing only comitative conjunction, since it is the focus of the paper. I propose that all CCs have the structure as outlined in (7): a combination of the two conjuncts (tentatively labeled here as FP) is headed by a single functional head (D) that c-commands XP and YP and establishes a multiple Agree relation with both of them. As a result, the acquired features on D are spelled out as a personal pronoun, as in 'we, I with Petja'. The D head can also be realized as *pro,* as in '*pro* I with Petja', if a silent item with an appropriate set of features is available in a given language. A similar idea – that there is a summarizing D head on top of the coordinate structure – was advocated by Progovac (1997) for AND coordination in English (we, I and Tom) and Cable (2017) for PPCs in Russian (*my* [*<ja> s Petej*]), however, to the best of my knowledge, these analyses were not explicitly extended to CCs with non-pronominal conjuncts.

(7)   [$_{DP}$ D [$_{FP}$ XP [$_{PP}$ *s* YP]]

In the remaining part of the paper I elaborate this proposal and show how it captures the distribution of CCs in Russian and some other Slavic languages and accounts for the person restriction.

3. Comitative conjunction and personal pronouns

The structure in (7) predicts several patterns of comitative conjunction to be available. Those are listed in (8); I provided the translation equivalents instead of the Russian words and put the parts that remain silent in < >. Curiously, as indicated by the ungrammaticality marks, CCs with a 1st or 2nd person pronominal conjunct are ruled out and not attested. Thus, the CCs in the language appear to be affected by the Person hierarchy: [1 > 2] > 3 > Animate > Inanimate.

(8)   a.   [<they> [Maša/she/he [with Petja]]
        b.   [they [<she/he> [with Petja]]] – *inclusive PPCs*
        c.   [we/you.PL [<I/you.sg> [with Petja]]] – *inclusive PPCs*
        d.   *[<we/you.PL> [I/you.sg [with Petja]]]

Upon closer examination, the person restriction turns out to be more limited. First, it holds only for CCs in the subject position, while CCs used, for example, as direct objects are exempt and can include a 1st or 2nd person pronoun as a host. To show that the with-PPs in (9) and (10) indeed form a constituent with the personal pronoun and thus cannot be analyzed as stand-alone comitative adjuncts I use plural depictive secondary predicates (9) and reciprocal pronouns (10), which require a syntactically and semantically plural antecedent; parallel examples with AND coordination are provided for comparison.

(9)   a. Ty   obnjal   [menja   [s   Petej]]   pjanymi.

		you	hugged	me.ACC	with	Petja	drunk.PL.INST

'You hugged me and Petja when we were drunk.'

b.	Ty	obnjal	[menja	i	Petju]	pjanymi.
	you	hugged	me.ACC	and	Petja.ACC	drunk.PL.INST

'You hugged me and Petja when we were drunk.'

(10) a.	Ty	pokazal	[menja	i	Petju]	drug drugu.
	you	showed	me.ACC	and	Petja.ACC	each other.DAT

'You showed me and Petja to each other.'

b.	Ty	pokazal	[menja	[s	Petej]]	drug drugu.
	you	showed	me.ACC	with	Petja	each other.DAT

'You showed me and Petja to each other.'

Second, the person restriction on CCs appears to correlate with the (un)availability of full *pro*-drop. Russian shall be categorized as a partially *pro*-drop language in which only indefinite 3SG/3PL *pro*-s are available, as exemplified in (11). Occasional definite implicit subjects in matrix clauses result from topic drop or ellipsis, and occasional definite implicit subjects in embedded clauses shall be analyzed as nominative chains; see Tsedryk (2015) for a detailed discussion.

(11) a.	Mne	zavtra	__	pozvonjat /	*pozvonite.
	me	tomorrow	*pro*3PL/*pro*2PL	call.3PL	call.2PL

'Someone will call me tomorrow.'

b.	Dorogu	__	zametët /	*zametu.
	road.ACC	*pro*3SG/*pro*1SG	block.up.3SG	block.up.1SG

'The road will get blocked up by something.'

In this respect Russian can be compared to a Slavic language with full *pro*-drop, such as Polish (McShane 2009; Roberts 2019). Crucially for the present discussion, CCs are allowed in Polish and they are not restricted in terms of the person specification of the host.[3]

(12) a.	(Ja)	z	bratem	poszliśmy	do	kina.
	I	with	brother	went.1PL	into	cinema

'My brother and I went into cinema.'

b.	(Ty)	z	bratem	poszliście	do	kina.
	you.SG	with	brother	went.2PL	into	cinema

---

[3] I am grateful to Paulina Lyskawa for the help with the Polish examples.

'Your brother and you went to the cinema.'

c.	(On)	z	bratem	poszli	do	kina.
	he	with	brother	went.3PL	into	cinema

'He and his brother went to the cinema.'

To summarize, the restriction on CCs in Russian 1) complies with the Person hierarchy, 2) holds only for subject CCs, and 3) correlates with the unavailability of full *pro*-drop in the language. The combination of these factors points towards an account in terms of agreement, [Person] match, and null pronouns, as I show in the next section.

4. Proposal

The analysis that I propose to account for the person restriction is two-fold. The first part – that is, the basic structure of CCs – has already been outlined in Section 2. In a nutshell, I argue that all CCs involve a D head that is manifested as a plural personal pronoun (either overt or *pro*): [$_{DP}$ D [$_{FP}$ XP [$_{PP}$ *s* YP]]]. D probes both conjuncts, which results in its acquiring two sets of phi-features. The combination is resolved with the person hierarchy effect (first person wins over second, second over third) and the corresponding plural personal pronoun is inserted.

I assume that when the first conjunct is a personal pronoun it can incorporate into the main D head, because all its phi-features are a sub-set of those of D, and thus become phonologically null (Roberts 2019). The second conjunct cannot do that, since the PP is opaque for head movement; thus, 'we, __ with Petja' is grammatical but 'we, I with __' is not. This is schematized in (13).

(13) a.   [$_{DP}$ D$_{[\_,\_]}$ [XP$_{[3SG]}$ [s YP$_{[3SG]}$]]]

→ [$_{DP}$ D$_{[3SG, 3SG]}$ [XP$_{[3SG]}$ [s YP$_{[3SG]}$]]] →'they s/he with Petja'

b.   [$_{DP}$ D$_{[\_,\_]}$ [XP$_{[1SG]}$ [s YP$_{[3SG]}$]]]

→ [$_{DP}$ D$_{[1SG, 3SG]}$ [XP$_{[1SG]}$ [s YP$_{[3SG]}$]]] →'we I with Petja'

Second, I propose that the same mechanism that allows for full or partial subject *pro*-drop in a given language is involved in licensing the silent D head in CCs. For the former, I adopt an analysis in terms of feature matching with T and insertion of a silent pronoun, inspired by Roberts (2019), i.a.: the subject in a clause can be realized as null iff its features are copied onto the T head and there is a corresponding *pro* item in the language.

In partially *pro*-drop languages, such as Russian, only third person silent pronouns are available, that is, *pro* is always third person. Therefore, a 1st or 2nd person D head has to be spelled-out (14). In fully *pro*-drop languages, such as Polish, a complete set of person-marked *pro*-s is available and any of those can be used as an exponent of the matching D head.

(14) a. T [$_{DP}$ D$_{[1SG, 3SG]}$ [XP$_{[1SG]}$ [s YP$_{[3SG]}$]]]

    Russian: D cannot be a *pro* → must be overt: 'we (I) with Petja'

    Polish: D can be a *pro*: '*pro* I with Petja'

  b. T [$_{DP}$ D$_{[3SG, 3SG]}$ [XP$_{[3SG]}$ [s YP$_{[3SG]}$]]]

    D can be a *pro*: '*pro* s/he with Petja'

Person mismatch between the D head and a conjunct within a CC is ruled out by the requirement that the Person feature on nominative subjects must be matched under agreement with T (cf. Bejar & Rezac 2003, i.a.). In CCs this can only be done via the D head, since T does not probe the conjuncts directly.

(15) *T [$_{DP}$ D$_{[3SG, 3SG]}$ [XP$_{[1SG]}$ [s YP$_{[3SG]}$]]]

   D can be a *pro* but the Person mismatch is not allowed

5. Predictions

The analysis sketched in the previous section allows us to make the following prediction. CCs with a 1st or 2nd person pronoun used as non-nominative subjects are expected to be acceptable, under the assumption that only nominative subjects must be probed by the T head, requiring the Person feature to be matched and making spell-out of the D head obligatory. The prediction appears to be borne out. First, CCs used as dative experiencers that are argued to be in Spec,TP but do not control agreement do not fall under the person restriction, as shown in (16). In these examples I use again the reciprocal pronoun *drug druga* 'each other' to ensure that the combinations of a pronoun and a with-PP should be analyzed as conjunction and not adjunction.

(16) a. $^{%}$Mne   s   Petej žalko   drug druga.

    me.DAT with Petja feel.sorry.3SG each other.ACC

    'Petja and I feel sorry for each other.'

  b. Nam   s   Petej žalko   drug druga.

    us.DAT   with Petja feel.sorry.3SG each other.ACC

    'We – Petja and I – feel sorry for each other.' (*inclusive*)

Second, there are several predicates in Russian that require a preverbal dative experience and also take a nominative agreeing object; those include *nravits'ja* 'be liked', (*byt'*) *nužnym,* 'be necessary', etc. Similarly to the examples in (16), we expect dative CCs with a 1st or 2nd person pronoun to be allowed in such sentences, while nominative object CCs a 1st or 2nd person pronoun should be banned. This is corroborated by the data given in (17).

(17) a. [My / *ja [s toboj / Petej]] ponravimsja mal'čikam.

        we   I   with you   Petja be.liked.1PL   boys.DAT

        'The boys will like me and you/Petja.'

    b. Mal'čikam ponravimsja [my / *ja [s toboj / Petej]].

        boys.DAT   be.liked.1PL   we   I   with   you   Petja

        'The boys will like me and you/Petja.'

In addition to this, my proposal relies heavily on the assumption that there is a direct link between the availability of full *pro*-drop in a language and grammaticality of CCs with a 1st or 2nd person pronoun, which I justify by contrasting Russian with Polish. Interestingly, the correlation appears to be noticeable even within a single language. Stepping outside of the Indo-European family, comitative conjunction is also allowed in many Uralic languages, including Meadow Mari. An example of a CC from Mari is given in (18):[4] the host forms a constituent with the PP headed by the postposition *dene* 'with', as indicated by the plural agreement on the verb.

(18) [Petja [Maša dene]] kinoško kajat.

     Petja   Maša with   cinema.ILL   go.3PL

     'Petja and Maša (will) go to the cinema.'

Examining conjunction in Mari, I consulted two native speakers and observed the following pattern of interspeaker variation. Speaker A allows all PPCs (with an inclusive or exclusive reading (20)) but only CCs with a 3rd person singular pronoun, while Speaker B is much more permissive and not bound by the person constraint (19).

(19) a. %[Təj [Petja dene]] kinoško kajeda.   – A: *, B: OK

       you.SG Petja with   cinema.ILL   go.2PL

       'Petja and you go to the cinema.'

    b. %[Məj [Petja dene]] kinoško kajena.   – A: *, B: OK

       I   Petja with   cinema.ILL   go.1PL

       'Petja and I go to the cinema.'

(20) [Me [Petja dene]] kinoško kajena.

     we   Petja with   cinema.ILL   go.1PL

    (i) 'We – Petja and I – go to the cinema.' (*inclusive*)

    (ii) 'We – Petja, I, and someone else – go to the cinema.' (*exclusive*)

---

[4] I am grateful to Elena Vedernikova and Tatiana Jefremova for the help with the Meadow Mari examples.

Interestingly, Speaker A turns out to also be restrictive when it comes to *pro*-drop and mostly accepts only sentences that can be analyzed as contextually conditioned topic drop. In contrast, Speaker B suggested that any pronominal subject could be dropped as long as it was cross-referenced by the corresponding agreement suffix on the verb. While more speakers need to be consulted to confirm the correlation, I believe that this preliminary observation shall already be taken into account, as it is of high interest for the present study mirroring the interlanguage variation between Russian and Polish.

6. Concluding remarks

The present paper discussed comitative conjunction constructions in Russian and introduced the following person restriction: comitative conjunctions with a 1st or 2nd person singular pronoun are prohibited. I showed that the restriction does not extend to CCs with plural pronouns and AND coordination and holds only for agreeing nominative subjects. I proceeded by suggesting that the restriction correlates with the unavailability of full *pro*-drop in the language and argued that the same mechanisms are involved in *pro*-drop licensing and licensing of silent D that heads all CCs. Since person appears to play a crucial role in both cases, I outlined an account for both phenomena in terms of feature-matching and the inventory of *pro* items specified for a [Person] feature that are available in a given language. The paper leaves open several questions for future research, including comparison of the Russian data to those from other Slavic languages and closer examination of the differences between CCs and AND coordination.

References

Béjar, Susana, and Milan Rezac. 2003. Person licensing and the derivation of PCC effects. In *Romance linguistics: Theory and acquisition*, ed. by Ana Teresa Pérez-Leroux and Yves Roberge, 49–62. John Benjamins.

Burukina, Irina. 2022. Comitative conjunction, Person, and pro. Ms., Hungarian Research Centre for Linguistics/Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary.

Cable, Seth. 2017. Some observations on the Plural Pronoun Construction of Tlingit, Polish, and Russian. In *A Pesky Set: Papers for David Pesetsky*, ed. by Claire Halpert, Hadas Kotek, and

Coppe van Urk. Cambridge, MA: MIT Working Papers in Linguistics.

Dyła, Stefan. 1988. Quasi-comitative coordination in Polish. *Linguistics* 26: 383–414.

Dyła, Stefan, and Anna Feldman. 2003. On Comitative constructions in Polish and Russian. In *Proceedings of the Fifth European Conference on Formal Description of Slavic Languages*, ed. by Gerhild Zybatow. Leipzig, Germany: Peter Lang.

Feldman, Anna. 2002. On NP-Coordination. In *Yearbook 2002*, ed. by Sergio Baauw, Mike Huiskes, and Maaike Schoorlemmer, 39–67. Utrecht, Netherlands: Utrecht Institute of Linguistics OTS.

Grosu, Alexander. 1973. On the nonunitary nature of the coordinate structure constraint. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 4: 88–92.

Ionin, Tania, and Ora Matushansky. 2002. DPs with a twist: A unified analysis of Russian comitatives. In *Formal Approaches to Slavic Linguistics 11*, ed. by Wayles Browne, Ji-Yung Kim, Barbara H. Partee, and Robert Rothstein, 255–274. Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Slavic Publications.

McNally, Louise. 1993. Comitative coordination: A case study in group formation. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 11(2): 347–379.

McShane, Marjorie J. 2009. Subject ellipsis in Russian and Polish. *Studia Linguistica* 63: 98–132.

Progovac, Ljiljana. 1997. Slavic and the structure for coordination. In *Formal Approaches to Slavic Linguistics: The Indiana meeting 1996*, ed. by Martina Lindseth and Steven Franks, 207-224. Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Slavic Publications.

Roberts, Ian. 2019. *Parameter hierarchies and universal grammar*. Oxford University Press.

Ross, John Robert. 1967. Constraints on variables in syntax. Doctoral dissertation, MIT.

Trawinski, Beata. 2005. Plural comitative constructions in Polish. In *The Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on HPSG*, 375–395. Stanford: CSLI Publications.

Tsedryk, Egor. 2015. Deriving null pronouns: A unified analysis of subject drop in Russian. In *Formal Approaches to Slavic Linguistics 23: The first Berkeley meeting*, ed. by Małgorzata Szajbel-Keck, Roslyn Burns, and Darya Kavitskaya, 342–361. Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan Slavic Publications.

Vassilieva, Maria. 2005. Associative and pronominal plurality. Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Vassilieva, Masha, and Richard K. Larson. 2001. The semantics of the plural pronoun construction. In *Proceedings of Semantics and Linguistic Theory (SALT) XI*, ed. by Rachel Hastings, Brendan Jackson and Zsofia Zvolensky. Ithaca: CLC Publications, Department of Linguistics, Cornell University.