

Èto – èto predikativizator:
a ‘big DP’ analysis of Russian copular constructions

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Overview

- (1) a. ‘**Èto** (copula) **NOM₂**’ identificational

Èto \emptyset /byl *moj* *brat.*
this.N.SG is.M.SG/was.M.SG my brother.M.SG.NOM
‘This is/was my brother.’

- b. ‘**NOM₁** *èto* (copula) **NOM₂**’ equative/‘identity reading’

Moj *brat* – *èto* \emptyset /byl *Petja.*
my brother.M.SG.NOM this.N.SG is.M.SG/was.M.SG Petja.NOM
‘My brother is/was Petja.’

- c. *Petja* *èto* \emptyset /byl *moj* *brat.*

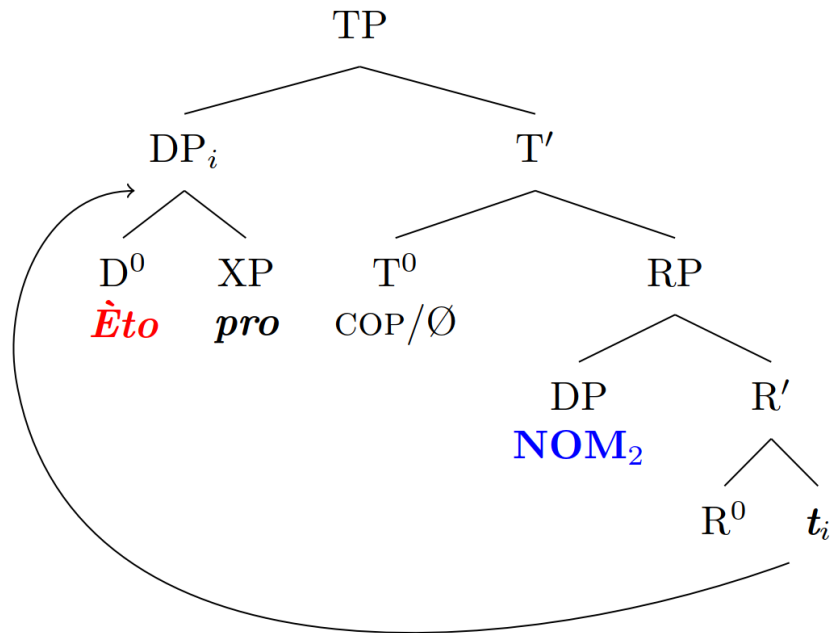
Petja.NOM this.N.SG is.M.SG/was.M.SG my brother.M.SG.NOM
‘Petja is/was my brother.’

Èto = an invariant proximal demonstrative, neuter singular form.

NOM₁, **NOM₂** = nominative DPs.

Èto NOM₂: proposal

- *Èto* is the predicate, NOM₂ is the subject of predication.
- *Èto* is in D⁰ that has a *pro* in its complement.
- The DP that contains *èto* + *pro* is moved to Spec,TP via **predicate inversion** (Moro 1997, Den Dikken 2006).
- *Èto* (a ‘predicativizer’) turns the inherently referential *pro* into a predicate.

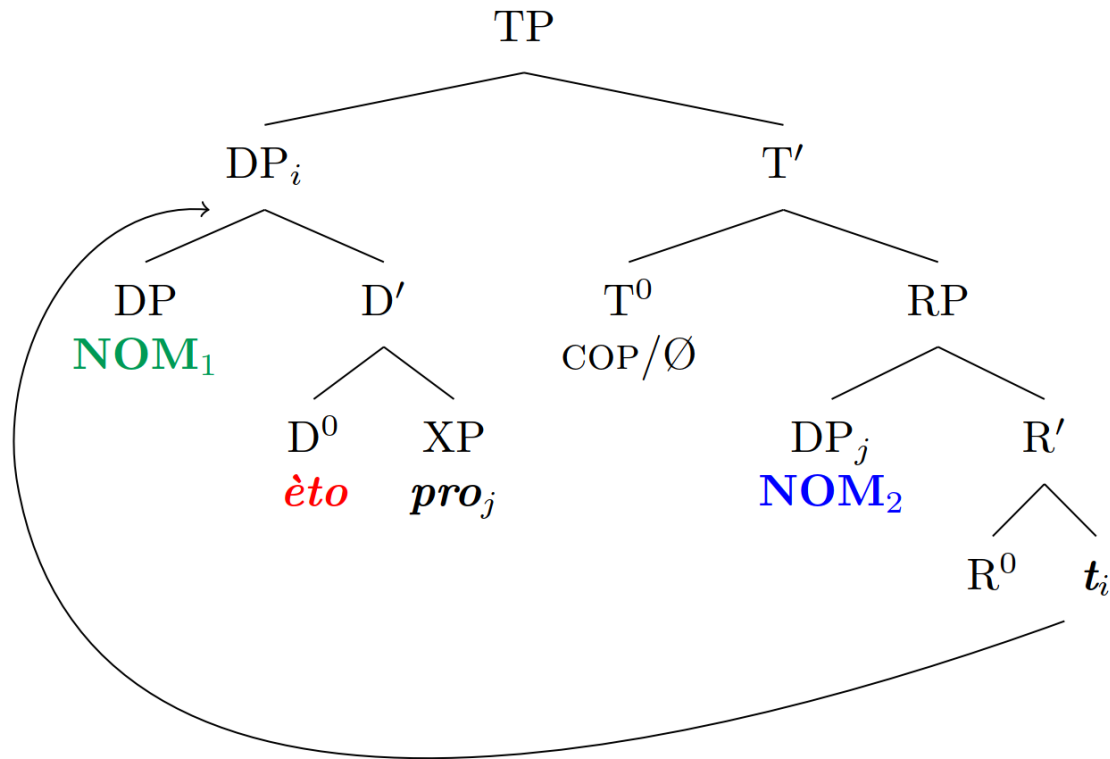


Èto **NOM₂**: argumentation

- **NOM₂** carries **nominative** and controls **agreement** ← **NOM₂** is probed by T⁰, downwards (cf. Pereltsvaig 2019 on OVS clauses).
- **NOM₂** must be **referential** and cannot refer to a property (Geist 2008) ← properties are predicates, and there cannot be more than one predicate per single clause.
- The DP projected by *èto* is a **predicate pro-form**.
- *Èto* corresponds to **given information** → moves to Spec,TP, which hosts topical/given material (Bailyn 2004, Titov 2018).
 - **NOM₂** occupies the clause-final position, associated with **new information** (Pereltsvaig 2004).

NOM₁ *èto* NOM₂: proposal

- NOM₁ forms a ‘big DP’ together with *èto* and *pro*.
- a predication relation between NOM₁ and *pro*: either one can be turned into a predicate for the other by *èto* (establishing reverse or direct predication).



NOM₁ *èto* NOM₂: predication relations

- In (2a), *èto* establishes NOM₁ as a predicate for the referential *pro*, with its content identified via co-indexation with NOM₂.
 - NOM₁ cannot be inherently predicative: predicate-forming *èto* would then be redundant.
- **BUT**: if turning NOM₁ into a predicate is impossible – e.g., if NOM₁ is a proper name, as in (2b), or a personal pronoun, – *èto* must instead predicativize the *pro* in the complement of the ‘big DP’.

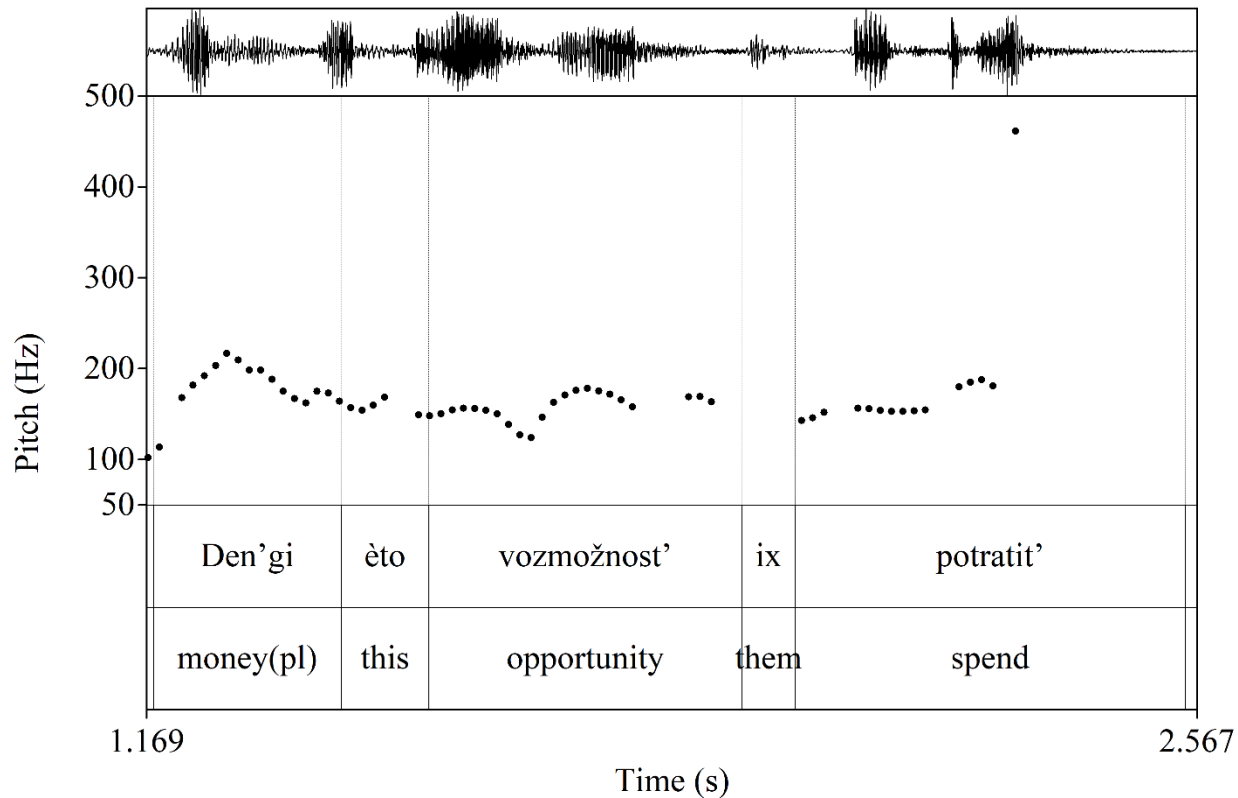
(2) a. *Moj brat* – *èto* Ø/byl *Petja.*
my brother.M.SG.NOM this.N.SG is.M.SG/was.M.SG Petja.NOM
‘My brother is/was Petja.’

b. *Petja* – *èto* Ø/byl *moj brat.*
Petja.NOM this.N.SG is.M.SG/was.M.SG my brother.M.SG.NOM
‘Petja is/was my brother.’

NOM₁ *èto* NOM₂: argumentation

- NOM₁ never controls agreement ← NOM₁ is not in a relationship with T⁰.
- ‘NOM₁ *èto* NOM₂’ can be embedded under non-bridge predicates (e.g. *udivitel’no* ‘surprising’) ← NOM₁ is not (necessarily) a hanging topic
- Prosody of ‘NOM₁ *èto* NOM₂’: no obligatory **intonational break/pause** between NOM₁ and *èto*.
 - a prominent pause is only necessary in **strongly emphatic/contrastive contexts** ← the pause/break is the product of **emphasis/contrast**, not of the syntax of the ‘(NOM₁) *èto* NOM₂’ construction itself.

- (3) *Den'gi* – *èto vozmožnost'* *ix* *potratit'*.
 money.PL this opportunity they.ACC spend
 'Money is the opportunity to spend it.' (*miloserdov_037*)



Taking stock

What we are NOT proposing:

- ✘ analyzing *èto* in ‘(NOM₁) *èto* NOM₂’ constructions as the **subject** of predication; cf. Junghanns (1997).
- ✘ analyzing *èto* as a dedicated **functional head** on the clausal spine; cf. Bowers (1993), Geist & Błaszczak (2000), Markman (2008).
- ✘ analyzing NOM₁ in **all** ‘(NOM₁) *èto* NOM₂’ constructions as a hanging topic/dislocated element.

Welcome implications (to be discussed in the break-out room):

- the parallel between ‘(NOM₁) *èto* NOM₂’ and **clausal prolepsis**
- the parallel between ‘(NOM₁) *èto* NOM₂’ and ***èto*-focus constructions**
- the parallel between ‘(NOM₁) *èto* NOM₂’ and the Top⁰-analysis of *èto* in topic-comment constructions (Markman 2008).
 - *èto* = functional X⁰ mediating between two terms that are in a semantic co-construal relationship (NOM₁ & *pro*, or topic & comment)