# A Quantification-Based Approach to Plural Pronoun Comitatives

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Comitative constructions which are headed by a plural pronoun as in (1) – dubbed 'Plural Pronoun Constructions/Comitatives' (henceforth: PPCs) in the literature (cf. Feldman 2003, Vassilieva & Larson 2005, Trawinski 2005, Dyła & Feldman 2008, among others) – can give rise to two different readings (1a) and (1b). The apparent singular ('I') interpretation of the pronoun under (1a) is unexpected given that its surface form is plural and it suggests that the instance of *mi* ('we') is composed of its singular counterpart and the referent of the comitative phrase (that is, Maria in (1)) altogether. This reading (henceforth: 2p) contrasts with the default 'we'-interpretation (henceforth: 3p) of the plural pronoun that we get under reading (1b).

(1)   Mi s   Mariju smo   popravljali krov.                    (B/C/S)
       we with Maria  AUX.1PL repaired     roof

   a.   'Maria and I repaired the roof.'
   b.   'We repaired the roof (together) with Maria.'

Based on data from B/C/S and Bulgarian, I argue that the ambiguity of (1) can be accounted for by assuming that plural pronouns behave much like quantifiers. In particular, I claim that the difference between (1a) and (1b) can be derived in terms of whether the comitative phrase appears inside of the restrictor of the pronoun (similar to a quantifier's restrictor) or not.

**Restrictor sets for plural pronouns.** Vassilieva & Larson (2005) analyze (Russian) plural pronouns as 'incomplete' terms comprising a singular nucleus and an unsaturated element $\triangle$ in their meaning. They claim that the $\triangle$-slot can be filled via syntactic means such that if the comitative phrase (hencforth: comP) occurs in the complement position of the pronoun, the reference of comP completes the pronoun's meaning (schematically illustrated in (2)) and hence,

(2)       (slightly modified from Vassilieva & Larson (2005): 116)



a 2p-reading arises. While my proposal is pretty much in line with these assumptions in principle, it takes one step further by analyzing the above-mentioned compounds of a plural pronoun as instances of a restrictor set which is (just as with quantifiers) presupposed to be non-empty.
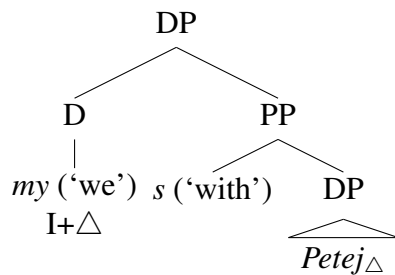
But the presupposition concerning the restrictor set has to be more specific in the case of plural pronouns since non-emptiness alone does not account for referential properties related to a pronoun's person feature – i.e. for a felicitous use of, say, *we*, it is not sufficient that the pronoun just refers to whatever entities, but to a plurality that obligatorily (figurative uses excluded)

(3)       $[\![with]\!] = \lambda x_e.\lambda y_e.\lambda z.z \leq x \vee z \leq y$       s.t. $x \neq y$

$$\lambda Q.[\lambda z.z \leq \text{SPKR}(c) \vee z \leq p] \subseteq Q$$



contains the speaker. Hence, what is presupposed to hold of a plural pronoun's restrictor set is that it contains (in the case of *we*) an instance of reference to the speaker as well as reference to 'other(s)'.
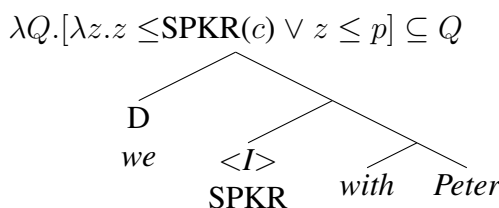
**Predictions and evidence.** If comP occurs in a syntactic position within the plural pronoun DP and thus resides within the restrictor of the pronoun as in (3), the 2p-reading arises. If, on the other hand, comP occupies a syntactic position outside this DP, only the 3p-interpretation is predicted to be available. Evidence for the correlation between (non-)membership of the restrictor set and the availability of interpretations comes from Bulgarian; where a structure like (4a) gives rise to the 2p-reading only (and the plural pronoun and comP are 'tied together'), while (4b) just has a 3p-reading (and the plural pronoun and comP occur separately or 'split').

(4)　a.　Nie/*pro* s　　Peter otidohme v  muzeja.　　　(Bulgarian)　　2p/*3p
　　　　　 we/*pro*　with Peter went.1PL  in museum.DEF

　　　b.　Nie/*pro* otidohme v  muzeja　　　s　　Peter.　　(Bulgarian)　　*2p/3p
　　　　　 we/*pro*　went.1PL  in museum.DEF with Peter

But not all Slavic languages in which 2p-readings arise for PPCs behave like Bulgarian in this respect. In B/C/S (Torlakian), both constructions in (5) are ambiguous between 2p and 3p.

(5)　a.　Mi/*pro* s　　Mariju smo　　otišli u  muzej.　　　(B/C/S, Torlakian)　　2p/3p
　　　　　 we/*pro* with Maria  AUX.1PL went in museum

　　　b.　Mi/*pro* smo　　otišli u muzej　s　　Mariju.　　(B/C/S, Torlakian)　　2p/3p
　　　　　 we/*pro* AUX.1PL went in museum with Maria

The major question is how to account for the 2p-reading of (5b) under the proposed analysis.

**Split PPCs and Quantifier-floating.** If PPCs are similar to QNPs as assumed here, we should expect that the former shares some syntactic properties with the latter – such as detaching the complement from its head: Quantifier-floating. I argue that an alike detachment takes place under the 2p-reading of (5b); i.e. that the plural pronoun and the comitative phrase get torn apart, but were base-generated within the same DP. That does not apply to (4b), because Bulgarian does not have (true, in the sense of: without a resumptive pronoun) Quantifier-floating, but B/C/S does. So, there is a notable correlation between the availability of 2p-interpretations for 'split' PPC constructions and whether the prevailing language permits Quantifier-floating.

**Subject control.** SC constructions such as (6) further support the view that in the 2p-case, the comitative resides inside the restrictor of the pronoun: The comP cannot occur inside of a PRO and can thus only be part of the scope argument whenever it syntactically appears after *da*.

(6)　a.　Pokušali smo　　juče　　s　　Mariju da　　PRO popravljamo krov.　　2p/3p
　　　　　 tried　　　AUX.1PL yesterday with Maria  COMP PRO repair　　　　roof

　　　b.　Pokušali smo　　juče　　da　　PRO popravljamo krov s　　Mariju.　　*2p/3p
　　　　　 tried　　　AUX.1PL yesterday COMP PRO repair　　　　roof with Maria

**References:** Dyła, Stefan & Anna Feldman (2008): On Comitative Constructions in Polish and Russian. In Gerhild Zybatow et al. (eds.) *Formal Description of Slavic Languages. The Fifth Conference.* Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main – Feldman, Anna (2003): Comitative and Plural Pronoun Constructions. In Yehuda N. Falk (ed.) *Proceedings of the 17th Annual Meeting of the Israel Association of Theoretical Linguistics* – Trawinski, Beata (2005): Plural Comitative Constructions in Polish. In Stefan Müller (ed.): 375-395. *Proceedings of the 12th International Conference on Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar.* Stanford, CA: CSLI Publications – Vassilieva, Masha & Richard K. Larson (2005): The Semantics of the Plural Pronoun Construction. In *Natural Language Semantics* 13: 101-124