

RELATIVE CLAUSES IN NARRATIVE FICTION

FINDINGS FROM A PARALLEL TEXT IN SWEDISH,
GERMAN, LATVIAN, POLISH AND ENGLISH

NICOLE NAU

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the famous study by Keenan and Comrie (1977), relative clauses have been a classic topic for comparison of languages. However, the concept of relative clause (RC) used in linguistic typology covers only a subset of the constructions described as relative clauses in grammars of individual languages. Typologists usually focus on formal properties of these constructions and consider only one of their various functions: that of modifying a noun. The functions of relative clauses have been explored more broadly in studies of spoken discourse, which showed that there are significant differences concerning structure and use of relative clauses in spoken and in written language (Fox & Thompson 1990; Miller 2006b; Weinert 2004). Possibly the spoken/written distinction has sometimes been overemphasized, while other parameters that influence the choice of structures within a language and cut across this distinction, such as narrative/non-narrative, have received little attention.

The present paper investigates the functions of relative clauses in written narrative fiction. The material base for this study is chapter 7 of Henning Mankell's novel *Hundarna i Riga*. The length of the text is 5114 words (about 17 pages in the paperback edition). In addition to the Swedish original, translations in four languages were chosen: German, Polish, Latvian, and English. It goes without saying that the choice of material limits the possibilities of language comparison and the interpretation of its results: it will often be impossible to say

whether the choice of certain structures is mainly due to individual preferences of the author or translator, or reflects rules of use of the respective languages. Nevertheless, based on my experience with the languages investigated, I am confident that at least some of my observations are indeed characteristic for these languages and this genre. In European languages, finite relative clauses are an important means for developing text and signaling cohesion (cf. Maciejewski 1983). A comparative analysis of their use and their translation equivalents in parallel texts may help to discover more details of their functions.

FREQUENCY AND FORMS OF RELATIVE CLAUSES

Mankell's text makes ample use of relative clauses and the chapter chosen proved sufficient to draw an interesting sample. In all I found 93 relative clauses in the Swedish original. Their translation equivalents provided 68 German, 63 Latvian, 38 Polish, and 49 English RCs. There were also relative clauses in the translations which did not correspond to an RC in the original: 8 in the German, 4 in the Latvian, 10 in the Polish, and 15 in the English text. I hold that these figures indeed reflect characteristics of the languages (not solely of individual texts and arbitrary choices): German and Latvian are more similar to Swedish in their use of relative clauses than Polish.

Formal types of relative constructions can be distinguished by several criteria. The two I will use here are (a) the form of the relativized element (gap, subordinator, relative pronoun, relative adverb), (b) the type of antecedent (noun, pronoun, other, no antecedent (free RC)).

Ad (a). Cross-linguistic studies have shown that **gapping**, where the relativized element has no marking in the relative clause, is the most widely used relativization strategy in the languages of the world (Comrie & Kuteva 2005). In Europe, however, it is more restricted. Of the languages investigated here, only Swedish and English use gapping, while in German, Latvian, and Polish this technique is not available:

Example (1): Relativization strategies: gapping vs. relative pronoun

- SWE Långkalsonger, tänkte han. Det är det första [jag ska köpa i morgon]_{RC}.
 ENG Long johns, he thought. That's the first thing [I'll buy tomorrow morning]_{RC}.
 GER Lange Unterhosen, dachte er. Das ist das erste, [**was** ich morgen kaufen werde]_{RC}.
 LTV Garās apakšbikses, viņš nodomāja. Tas ir pirmais, [**ko** es rīt nopirkšu]_{RC}.
 POL Kalesony, pomyślał, to pierwsze, [**co** jutro kupię]_{RC}.

In this sentence German, Latvian, and Polish use a **relative pronoun**. This strategy has been found to be less popular worldwide, but to be characteristic for European languages (Comrie & Kuteva 2005:496; Nikolaeva 2006:504). Relative pronouns are typically cognate to either interrogative or demonstra-

tive pronouns, and they are usually inflected for nominal categories (case, gender, number). Their nominal nature distinguishes them from **relative adverbs** (English *where*, Swedish *där*, German *wo* etc.). In traditional grammars, English *that* and Swedish *som* were also regarded as relative pronouns, but modern approaches interpret these words as **subordinators** and the construction as gapping (CGEL:1056f.; SAG:485). The other three languages of my sample, where gapping is not found, do not have subordinators used in relative clauses.

Ad (b). As could be expected, most often the antecedent of a relative clause is a noun (73 of 93 in Swedish). Of the remaining Swedish RCs the majority (16 of 20) had a pronoun as antecedent (*allt, den, det, hän själv, ingen, ingenting, något, någon, vad, vem*), 2 are headed by what I classified as adjective (*den första* ‘the first’), 1 by an adverb (*senast*), and 1 was a free relative.

Table 1 below presents the formal types of relative clauses in the Swedish text and those in other languages that are translation equivalents of the Swedish RCs. The first figure gives the total occurrence, while the figures in brackets give the respective amount for RCs with a noun antecedent versus other types.

Table 1. Formal types of RCs in the Swedish text and their RC translation equivalents

| FORMAL TYPE OF RC | SWEDISH | GERMAN | LATVIAN | POLISH | ENGLISH |
|-------------------|-----------------------|--|---|--|--|
| GAPPING | +22 (15/7) | / | / | / | +17 (11/6) |
| SUBORDINATOR | <i>som</i> 63 (51/12) | / | / | / | <i>that</i> 14 (12/2) |
| PRONOUN | <i>vad</i> 1 (0/1) | <i>der</i> 59 (57/2) <i>was</i> 9 (0/9) | <i>kas</i> 45 (36/9) <i>kurš</i> 7 (7/0) | <i>który</i> 21 (21/0) <i>co</i> 9 (0/9) <i>kto</i> 2 (0/2) <i>jaki</i> 1 (1/0) | <i>which</i> 3 (3/0) <i>who</i> 7 (6/1) <i>whom</i> 1 (1/0) <i>whoever</i> 1 (0/1) <i>what</i> 3 (0/3) |
| LOCAL ADVERB | <i>där</i> 7 (7/0) | – | <i>kur</i> 7 (7/0) | <i>gdzie</i> 3 (3/0) | <i>where</i> 3 (3/0) |
| TEMPORAL ADVERB | – | – | <i>kad</i> 3 (3/0) <i>kamēr</i> 1 (1/0) | <i>gdy</i> 1 (1/0) <i>kiedy</i> 1 (1/0) | – |
| TOTAL | 93 (73/20) | 68 (57/11) | 63 (54/9) | 38 (27/11) | 49 (35/14) |

All of the investigated languages have several possibilities for forming an RC. German, Latvian and Polish, which use only the relative pronoun/adverb strategy, have several pronouns to choose from. Table 1 shows that also in the chosen text each language uses several means, though not all that are available in the language. I found no example for the Swedish relative pronouns *vilken* ‘which’ and *vars* ‘whose’, a fact that may be explained by the stylistic value of these words – they belong to formal registers (SAG:490). Stylistic reasons also account for the absence of the local relative adverb in German – *wo*, the semantic equivalent of Swe. *där*, Engl. *where* etc. is considered colloquial and rarely appears in written texts. The lack of temporal relative adverbs in Swedish, German, and English, on the other hand, rather reflects a tendency of use: when relativ-

izing a noun with temporal meaning, Swedish and English prefer gapping with or without subordinator, while in German other constructions are preferred.

Example (2): Relativization of temporal adverbials

SWE Samma dag [**som** han hade återvänt från Stockholm]_{RC}, avlade han sin rapport för överste Putnis och mig.

ENG The very day [Major Liepa returned from Stockholm]_{RC}, he gave his report to Colonel Putnis and me.

LTV Tai pašā dienā, [**kad** viņš atgriezās no Stokholmas]_{RC} [...].

POL Major tego samego dnia, [**kiedy** wrócił ze Sztokholmu]_{RC} [...].

GER Am Tag [seiner Rückkehr aus Stockholm]_{NOM} [...].
'The day of his return from Stockholm'.

Strategies may also depend on the type of antecedent. Swedish *vad* and English *what* are found only in free relative clauses. German *was* and Polish *co* and *kto* are used with antecedents other than nouns, including free relatives (there are no free relatives in these languages in my texts). Finally, semantic and grammatical factors may trigger the choice of a strategy or particular relativizer. The Latvian relative pronouns *kas* and *kurš* are mainly distributed according to morphological categories: following a strong tendency, *kas* is used in the nominative and accusative, and in the dative for masculine or genderless antecedents, while *kurš* is used in the genitive and locative as well as in the dative for feminine antecedents.

FUNCTIONS OF RELATIVE CLAUSES AND THEIR TRANSLATION EQUIVALENTS

Parallel texts offer the possibility of comparing a construction with formally different, but functionally equivalent, constructions in other languages. This way we may gain some important insights about the functions of the structure in question. Quite a large number of Swedish relative clauses in my sample do not have a relative clause as translation equivalent in all the other languages. Table 2 below presents an overview of the translation equivalents in my sample.

Table 2. Translation equivalents of 93 Swedish finite relative clauses

| LANGUAGE | FINITE RC | OTHER FINITE CLAUSE | PARTICIPLE CONSTRUCTION | OTHER TRANSLATION | NO TRANSLATION |
|----------|-----------|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| GERMAN | 68 | 2 | 1 | 12 | 10 |
| LATVIAN | 63 | 3 | 10 | 8 | 9 |
| POLISH | 38 | 8 | 23 | 10 | 14 |
| ENGLISH | 49 | 18 | 14 | 5 | 14 |

A short example will illustrate my classification and way of counting:

Example (3): Translation equivalents

SWE Wallander väntade på en fortsättning [som aldrig kom]_{RC}.

LTV Vallanders gaidīja turpinājumu, [kas nesekoja]_{RC}.

ENG Wallander waited for him to elaborate, but [he didn't]_S.

GER Wallander wartete [vergebens]_{ADV} auf eine Fortsetzung.

POL Wallander czekał na ciąg dalszy.

The Latvian sentence is an almost literal translation of the Swedish original and contains a corresponding relative clause. The English translation is free, using other words, but the clause *he didn't* is counted as the functional equivalent of the Swedish relative clause. In the German sentence, the adverb *vergebens* 'in vain' renders this content, while in Polish it is left out of the translation. Taking types of translation equivalents as a clue, I will now discuss the main functions of relative clauses in the text.

RELATIVE CLAUSES AND CLAUSE COMBINING

All of the languages under investigation use relative clauses as a means of combining two clauses expressing two propositions. This type of clause combining is possible when main clause and relative clause describe situations with a shared participant, which becomes the relativized element. In the following example the shared participant is the letter Wallander wrote and the receptionist promised to pass on¹.

Example (4): Relative clauses expressing independent propositions

SWE Han betalade hennes rum och skrev ett litet brev [som portieren lovade överlämna till henne]_{RC}.

GER Er bezahlte ihr Zimmer und schrieb einen kurzen Brief, [den der Portier ihr zu geben versprach]_{RC}.

LTV Vallanders samaksāja par viņas istabu un uzrakstīja īsu vēstuli, [ko portjē apsolījās viņai nodot]_{RC}.

ENG He paid for her room, and left her a note [that the receptionist promised to pass on]_{RC}.

¹ Some linguists would claim that this is a non-canonical use of a relative construction, as it does not contribute to the reference of a noun phrase (cf. definitions of relative clauses by Comrie & Kuteva 2005:494; Andrews 2007:206f.; Fabb 1994:3520). However, in written narrative texts such as the one under investigation such structures are easily found, and they are counted as relative clauses in all descriptive grammars that I consulted. Structures such as example (4) are called *continuative* relative clauses in English, but not all constructions where RCs are used for clause-combining are continuative in the strict sense. The Polish term *narracyjnie* seems to be more appropriate (see Tabakowska 1985:19ff. for an overview of functional types of RCs in English and Polish linguistic traditions).

The Polish translation is different, but it contains a relative clause of the same type:

- POL Zapłacił za jej pokój i zostawił krótki list u portiera, [który obiecał wręczyć go córce]_{RC}.
 ‘He paid for her room and left a short note with the receptionist, who promised to give it to his daughter’.

In this use, constructions with RCs are functionally equivalent to other forms of clause combining: coordination and adverbial subordination. The Polish and the English text in my sample show a slight preference for these concurrent structures. In the following example, Polish renders the main clause and relative clause of the Swedish original as two independent clauses linked *asyndetically*, while English distributes the content over three clauses, and the Swedish RC becomes a complement clause (the German and Latvian equivalents of (5) and (6) have the same structure as the Swedish original):

Example (5): Other finite clause as equivalent of an RC

- SWE Han kände på ett element [som knappt var mer än ljummet]_{RC}.
 POL Dotknął kaloryfera – [był zaledwie letni]_S.
 ENG and when he felt the radiator he found [that it was barely lukewarm]_{CC}.

Despite the syntactic differences, what these sentences have in common is the order of the clauses – the second clause contains the piece of information that is more important at this point of the story. The order is also iconic from the point of view of the hero (first Wallander reached for the radiator, than he recognized its temperature). Constructions with relative clauses also allow the narration of events in a non-iconic order. This is probably less acceptable in Polish and English than in the other three languages of my sample. In example (6) both Polish and English restore the natural order of events, which demands a translation of the Swedish RC as an independent clause²:

Example (6): Different order of clauses

- SWE Han steg in i baksätet på en svart bil [som Zids höll upp dörren till]_{RC}.
 POL [Zids przytrzymał drzwiczki czarnego samochodu]_S, Wallander usiadł na tylnym siedzeniu.
 ENG [Zids opened the back door of a black car for him]_S, and Wallander clambered in.

Besides finite clauses, also adverbial participle clauses may be equivalent to a relative clause. In my sample this occurs only three times, once each in Polish, Latvian, and English (in three different sentences). Here is the Polish case:

² Or the other way around: the use of a coordinative structure demands the iconic order (*Wallander clambered in and Zids opened the door for him).

Example (7): Adverbial participle clause as equivalent of an RC

SWE Flickan, [som aldrig sa vad hon hette]_{RC}, kom fram ur skuggorna och satte sig på stolen intill honom.

POL Z ciemności wyłoniła się dziewczyna, i [nie przedstawiając się]_{PTC}, usiadła obok niego.

RELATIVE CLAUSES AS MODIFIERS

Most relative clauses are syntactically related to a noun. The information given in the RC may be more or less important for the meaning of the noun phrase. Compare the following examples:

Examples (8) and (9):

SWE Han hade kommit till ett land [där det var lika kallt inne som ute]_{RC}.

SWE Wallander skymtade en staty [som han insåg föreställde Lenin]_{RC}.

In the first example, the RC is essential to the meaning of the noun phrase and the whole sentence. Without it the sentence would not be sufficiently informative (*?Han hade kommit till ett land.*). In the second example the information given in the RC is not essential in this way, the construction *Wallander skymtade en staty* conveys enough information to qualify as a sentence. The distinction I make here is reminiscent of the well-known and much discussed distinction between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses, but (i) it is gradual and not binary, and (ii) it is broader – restricting the reference of a noun is only one of several possible ways in which a relative clause may provide essential information³.

The distinction of restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses has been of great importance in theoretical approaches, but has been found to be notoriously difficult in empirical studies⁴. A very insightful treatment of the problem is given in SAG, where special attention is paid to the interplay of restrictiveness and definiteness. In Swedish (but probably in other languages, too), only definite noun phrases show a clear difference between restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses (SAG:499). This may be illustrated with the following sentences from my sample:

Example (10): Non-restrictive RC linked to a definite noun phrase

SWE **De två högröstade danskarna** [som uppenbarligen var i Riga för att göra affärer i jordbruksmaskiner]_{RC} hade kommit fram till passkontrollen.

³ Note that in CGEL the distinction restrictive/non-restrictive has been replaced by the broader (but still binary) notion integrated/supplementary.

⁴ The problem of distinguishing restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses in spoken English and German is addressed, for example, by Tao & McCarthy (2001) and Brinker (2008:426). Other researchers have found that non-restrictive relative clauses in both these languages are (very) rare in spontaneous speech (Miller 2006b:511; Weinert 2004:37).

- GER Die zwei lautstarken Dänen, [die sich offenbar in Riga aufhielten, um Geschäfte mit landwirtschaftlichen Maschinen zu machen]_{RC}, waren bis zur Paßkontrolle vorgeückt.
- LTV Skaļie dāņi, [kas acīmredzot bija ieradušies Rīgā, lai tirgotu lauksaimniecības mašīnas]_{RC}, bija tikuši līdz pasu kontrolei.
- POL Hałaśliwi Duńczycy, [którzy przyjechali tu, by robić interesy na handlu maszynami rolniczymi]_{RC}, doszli do okienka kontroli paszportowej.
- ENG The two loud-mouthed Danes, [who were in Riga to deal in agricultural machinery]_{RC}, had just reached the passport control window.

Example (11): Restrictive RC as part of a definite noun phrase

- SWE Nere i receptionen upptäckte han till sin förvåning **de två danska affärsmän** [han hade irriterat sig över på flygplatsen]_{RC}.
- GER Unten in der Halle entdeckte er zu seinem Erstaunen die beiden dänischen Geschäftsleute, [die ihm auf dem Flughafen so unangenehm aufgefallen waren]_{RC}.
- LTV Sev par brīnumu, viesnīcas foajē viņš pamanīja abus dāņus, [kas lidostā bija aizdevuši viņam dusmas]_{RC}.
- POL W recepcji zobaczył duńskich biznesmenów, [którzy zirytowali go na lotnisku]_{RC}.
- ENG When he got to reception he was surprised to see the two Danish businessmen [he'd been annoyed by at the airport]_{RC}.

In these examples, the same relative pronoun is used for restrictive and non-restrictive relative clauses in German, Latvian and Polish. This is typical for these languages, where it is hard to find formal differences even in cases where the semantic distinction is clear. Swedish and English use gapping without subordinator for the restrictive clause, but another technique for the non-restrictive clause. This reflects a tendency: in the text under investigation all relative clauses with a noun as antecedent and formed by gapping without the subordinator *som* are restrictive relative clauses within definite noun phrases. The rule does not work the other way around – restrictive relative clauses in definite noun phrases are not always formed in this way. In English the use of the subordinator *that* is rare in non-restrictive RCs (but not impossible, see example (4)), while the Swedish subordinator *som* is not affected by restrictiveness.

With indefinite **non-specific** noun phrases a relative clause is usually restrictive (SAG:502). This case is rare in my sample, but the following is a good example. Here, the relative clause provides information necessary to determine the class of restaurants Wallander is interested in:

Example (12): Restrictive relative clause with indefinite non-specific NP

- SWE Visa mig **en bra restaurang** [som inte är för dyr]_{RC}.

With indefinite **specific** NPs on the other hand the restrictiveness of a relative clause is often difficult to determine, and it may be irrelevant (SAG:502f.).

Indeed, several Swedish relative clauses where I found it difficult to tell whether they were restrictive or not were related to an indefinite specific NP, as in the following examples:

Examples (13) – (15): Relative clauses with indefinite specific NPs

SWE **Ett ovalt sammanträdesbord** [som var täckt av grön filt]_{RC} var den dominerande möbeln.

SWE Han följde Putnis mot **en dörr** [där en soldat stod på vakt]_{RC}.

SWE Wallander blev irriterad över de högljudda danskarna. Det var som om han hade önskat att de hade visat mer respekt för **en närsynt lettisk major** [som hade blivit mördad några dagar tidigare]_{RC}.

For the question of translation equivalents the distinctions discussed above seem to be of little importance. Translation equivalents of a Swedish relative clause that primarily modifies a noun, regardless of the importance of the information they carry, most often are relative clauses, followed by participles/participle clauses and, more rarely, other types of modifier: adjectives, prepositional phrases, nouns and noun phrases. The occurrence of participles as translation equivalents is language-specific (see Table 2 above). In the German text only one such case is found, which is easily explained by the fact that participle constructions are generally rare in German. Polish uses participle constructions most frequently – as translations of Swedish relative clauses modifying a noun, Polish participle constructions are almost as frequent in my text as finite relative clauses. In general, Swedish restrictive relative clauses are probably more readily translated by a Polish premodifying participle clause than non-restrictive RCs (cf. Maciejewski 1983:219), but this is not reflected in my sample.

The Latvian system provides many possibilities for participle constructions, but in attributive use these are stylistically marked. Participle phrases with several or larger constituents are mostly found in formal written language; they are typical of news, academic and legal texts, but much rarer in fiction. Participle phrases as modifiers usually precede the noun in Latvian, and this makes the NP more difficult to process, especially when there are other premodifiers. In Polish, in contrast, participle phrases are more readily used as postmodifiers, so that the NP is more balanced. Consider the following translations of the RC from example (15):

SWE [...] en närsynt lettisk major [som hade blivit mördad några dagar tidigare]_{RC}.

LTV [...] tuvredzīgajam latviešu majoram, [kas pirms dažām dienām noslepkavots]_{RC}.

POL [...] krótkowzrocznemu majorowi, [zamordowanemu parę dni temu]_{PTC}.

If a participle clause were used in Latvian, the noun phrase would contain three premodifiers, which makes it rather ‘heavy’ for Latvian standards:

[pirms dažām dienām noslepkavotajam]_{PTC} tuvredzīgajam latviešu majoram.

Adjectives, nouns or noun phrases, and prepositional phrases differ from relative clauses and participle constructions in that they lack a verb. They are found as translation equivalents if the verb used in the RC is semantically less important, and their use sometimes renders the whole sentence considerably shorter than the original.

Example (16) and (17): Adjectives, prepositional phrases and nouns as translation equivalents

SWE Det måste finnas mer än en bra restaurang i en stad [som har en miljon invånare]_{RC}.

POL W [milionowym]_{ADJ} mieście musi być więcej niż jedna dobra restauracja.

ENG There must be more than one good restaurant in a city [with a million inhabitants]_{PP}.

SWE Sen upptäckte han en skylt [som berättade att han var välkommen att växla pengar]_{RC}.

GER Dann entdeckte er das [Exchange]_N-Schild.

POL Znalazł tabliczkę [z napisem change money]_{PP}.

RELATIVE CLAUSES AS NOMINALIZATIONS

Relative clauses without an antecedent (free relatives) evidently do not modify anything, but contain all the information given about the entity they refer to. The same is true in cases where the antecedent is a definite or indefinite pronoun. Free relatives are most common in English, while the other languages of my sample prefer a pronoun as antecedent⁵. Regarding the translation equivalents of relative clauses with a naming rather than a modifying function, two things may be observed. First, the translation may contain a noun instead of the pronoun as antecedent, as in the German and Polish translations of the following example⁶:

Example (18): Pronoun vs. noun as antecedent

SWE De körde in genom en överbyggd port och stannade på **något** [som liknade en omgärdad borggård]_{RC}.

LTV [...] viņi apstājās pie **kaut kā tāda**, [kas atgādināja iežogotu pils pagalmu]_{RC}.

ENG [...] and drew up in _ [what looked like a walled courtyard]_{RC}.

GER [...] und hielten auf **einem Platz**, [der einem Burghof glich]_{RC}.

POL [...] i zatrzymali się na **podwórzu**, [przypominającym zamkowy dziedziniec]_{PTC}.

⁵ In general, free relatives are more restricted in Latvian and Polish than in German and Swedish, but this is not reflected in my sample.

⁶ According to my intuition, a literal translation in German ([...] *hielten auf etwas, das einem Burghof glich*) would sound very odd.

Second, the content of the relative clause may be rendered by a deverbal noun. In the following example German and Latvian translate *den som ringde* ‘the one who called’ by a noun phrase, literally ‘the caller’.

Example (19): RC and deverbal nouns

- SWE Eller så måste den [som ringde]_{RC} ha uttryckt sig på ett sånt sätt att han inte blev misstänksam.
- POL Lub też ten, [kto dzwonił]_{RC}, wyrażał się w taki sposób, że nie wzbudził podejrzeń majora.
- ENG Either that, or _ [whoever rang]_{RC} expressed himself in a way that didn't arouse suspicion.
- GER Oder [der Anrufer]_{NOM} hat so überzeugend geklungen, daß er nicht mißtrauisch wurde.
- LTV Vai arī [zvanītājam]_{NOM} vajadzēja runāt tā, lai viņu neturētu aizdomās.

Nominalizations are also found in the translations of two relative clauses with a noun with temporal meaning as antecedent, for example:

- SWE den tid ni befinner er i Riga.
- GER während ihres Aufenthaltes in Riga.
- POL na czas pobytu w Rydze.

RELATIVE CLAUSES AS FOCUSING DEVICES

A special type of relative constructions is cleft relatives (Swedish *relativ bisats som utbrytningskomplement*, see SAG:514ff.). It has been stated that the frequency of cleft constructions in European languages declines from west to east (Miller 2006a:121), and my sample supports this finding: there are several cleft relatives in the Swedish text, a few in the German translation, but no such constructions are found in the Latvian and the Polish texts. While English is generally known to make ample use of cleft constructions, there are only a few in the investigated text, and none corresponding exactly to the Swedish model.

The matrix clause of a cleft construction is an existential clause; in Swedish it most often has the form *det är/det var NP*. The function of a cleft relative is to highlight the antecedent:

Example (20): Cleft relatives in Swedish and German⁷

- SWE Det var Murniers [som förde ordet]_{RC}.
- GER Es war Murniers, [der das Wort ergriff]_{RC}.

⁷ This is the only example in my sample where a Swedish cleft relative is translated by a finite cleft relative in any other language.

In Polish and Latvian (and sometimes in German) the same effect can be produced by word order, putting the subject at the end of the sentence (this was counted as ‘no translation equivalent’):

- LTV Sarunu vadīja Mūrnieks.
 POL Głos zabrał Murniers.

However, more often the translations do not contain any focusing device. Maybe the highlighting effect of the Swedish construction is weaker than that of corresponding constructions in other languages, and a faithful translation would seem unnecessarily elaborate or clumsy, especially when the antecedent is a pronoun. The actual translations of Swedish sentences with a cleft relative are much simpler.

Examples (21) and (22): Swedish cleft relatives without translation equivalents

- SWE Vad är det egentligen [som har hänt]_{RC}?
 GER Was ist eigentlich passiert?
 LTV Kas īsti ir noticis?
 POL Co się właściwie stało?
 ENG What actually happened?
 SWE Det var ingenting [som hon hade haft anledning att förvåna sig över]_{RC}.
 GER Daran war nichts Sonderbares.
 POL Nie było w tym dla niej nic dziwnego.
 ENG There was nothing unusual about that.
 LTV Par to sieva nebrīnījās. ‘His wife didn’t wonder about it.’

Not only cleft relatives, but also common relative clauses can have a focusing effect, in addition to modifying a noun or naming an entity. This is most clearly seen in cases where the relative clause contains known information. The following sentence appears at a point in the story where Colonel Putnis is the only colonel known to Wallander (and to the reader). Thus the relative clause does not add information about Putnis, but rather marks the referent as known and salient. In the German and English translation the deictic pronoun *dies-er/this* has the same effect, while in Polish salience is marked by word order:

Example (23): Non-cleft relative as focusing device

- SWE Men framförallt vet jag inte vad **den överste [som heter Putnis]**_{RC} förväntar sig att jag ska kunna åstadkomma.
 GER Vor allem aber weiß ich nicht, was [**dieser**]_{PRO} **Oberst Putnis** sich von meinem Aufenthalt hier eigentlich erhofft.
 ENG Most importantly of all, I don’t know what [**this**]_{PRO} **Colonel Putnis** expects me to be able to do.
 POL Ale przede wszystkim nie wiem, czego spodziewa się po mnie **pulkownik Putnis**.

CONCLUSIONS

The finite relative clause typically found in European languages has several important functions in narrative texts. These functions are linked to structural and semantic properties of the construction, which are also reflected by different translation equivalents:

- RCs are subordinate clauses and as such may be used as a means of combining clauses with a shared participant. Semantically, the combination may be coordinative rather than subordinative. Alternatives to a relative clause in this function are other finite clauses and adverbial participle clauses.
- RCs are most often modifiers of a noun (either as part of the noun phrase headed by that noun or forming an independent adjoined NP). The information they provide may be more or less important for understanding the situation in which the antecedent participates. In this function RCs compete with other modifiers: attributive participle phrases, adjectives, prepositional phrases, nouns (in compounding) and noun phrases (appositions).
- RCs are nominalizations – they present an event or a state as an entity. The naming function of an RC is most evident in cases where there is no antecedent, or where the antecedent is a definite or indefinite pronoun. The most important alternative to an RC in this function is nominalizations.
- RCs may be focusing devices. By using a relative clause it is possible to distribute a single event or state over two clauses, thereby highlighting a participant. A special construction for this function is cleft relatives. Similar effects can sometimes be attained by word order and certain pronouns.

The first three of these functions are found in all five investigated languages, while cleft relatives were common only in the Swedish text. It should be noted that in many instances a relative clause has more than one function. For example, the typical non-restrictive relative clause with a noun as antecedent serves for both modification and clause-combining. This may be a reason why finite relative clauses are so frequent in certain languages, for example Swedish. A question worth further investigation is the contribution of relative clauses with a primarily clause-combining function to information structure: does the RC present primarily backgrounded or foregrounded information, or is the construction neutral in this respect? It is possible that languages differ in this respect, but many more texts have to be compared to prove this.

ABBREVIATIONS

- ADJ – adjective
 ADV – adverb
 CC – complement clause
 NOM – nominalization
 NP – noun phrase
 PP – prepositional phrase
 PTC – participle phrase
 RC – relative clause (in this study: finite relative clause)
 S – finite clause (neither RC nor CC)

SOURCES

- Henning Mankell: *Hundarna i Riga*. Stockholm: Ordfront Förlag 1992 (Paperback edition 1998).
 English translation by Laurie Thompson: *The Dogs of Riga*. London: Vintage Books 2004.
 German translation by Barbara Sirges and Paul Berf: *Hunde von Riga*. Überarbeitete Neuauflage.
 München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag 2000.
 Latvian translation by Mudīte Treimane: *Suņi Rīgā*. Rīga: Atēna 2001.
 Polish translation by Grażyna Ludvigsson: *Psy z Rygi*. Warszawa: W.A.B. 2007.

REFERENCES

- Andrews, Avery D. 2007. Relative clauses. In: Shopen, Timothy (ed.). *Language typology and syntactic description. Second edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Vol. II, 206–236.
- Brinker, Karin. 2008. *Relativ(satz)konstruktionen im gesprochenen Deutsch*. (Linguistik – Impluse & Tendenzen 28) Berlin, New York: de Gruyter.
- CGEL = Huddleston, Ronald / Pullum, Geoffrey K. et al. 2002. *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Comrie, Bernard & Kuteva, Tania. 2005. Relativization strategies. In: M. Haspelmath et al. (eds.). *The World Atlas of Language Structures*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Fabb, N. 1994. Relative clauses. In: R. E. Asher (ed. in chief). *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. Oxford: Pergamon. Vol. 7, 3520–3524.
- Fox, B. A. & Thompson, S. A. 1990. A discourse explanation of the grammar of relative clauses in English conversation. *Language* 66 (2), 297–319.
- Keenan, Edward & Comrie, Bernard. 1977. Noun phrase accessibility and Universal Grammar. *Linguistic Inquiry* 8, 63–99.
- Maciejewski, Witold. 1983. *Podstawy polsko-szwedzkiej kontrastywnej lingwistyki tekstu*. (Uppsala Slavic Papers 7) Uppsala: Slaviska institutionen vid Uppsala universitet.
- Miller, Jim. 2006a. Focus in the languages of Europe. In: G. Bernini & M. L. Schwartz (eds.). *Pragmatic organization of the discourse in the languages of Europe*. Berlin – New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 121–214.
- 2006b. Relative clauses in spoken discourse. In: K. Brown (ed.). *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd ed., vol. 10, 508–511.
- Nikolaeva, I. 2006. Relative clauses. In: K. Brown (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, 2nd ed., vol. 10, 501–508.
- SAG = Teleman, Ulf / Hellberg, Staffan / Andersson, Erik 1999: *Svenska Akademiens grammatik*. Stockholm: Nordstedts Ordbok.
- Tabakowska, Elżbieta. 1985. *Restrictiveness as a semantic and pragmatic property of English and Polish relative clauses*. Kraków: Uniwersytet Jagielloński.

-
- Tao, Hongyin & McCarthy, Michael J. 2001. Understanding non-restrictive *which*-clauses, which is not an easy thing. *Language Sciences* 23 (6), 651–677.
- Weinert, Renate. 2004. Relative clauses in spoken English and German: their structure and function. *Linguistische Berichte* 197, 3–51.