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Semantic and discourse properties of colloquial Russian construction of the form "X-*to* X, *a*…"[*]

The subject of this paper is a colloquial Russian construction of the form *X-to X, a…* where *X* can be practically any kind of phrase (NP, VP, PP, etc.). For example, in (1) *X* is a verbal form, while in (2) it is an adjective:

(1) (A) *Priezžaj k nam na Novyj god.* [adapted from Vasilyeva (1972:66)]

  'Come and spend the New Year with us.'

 (B) *Priexat'-to ja ne priedu, a napisat'(-to) napišu…*

  'Come(*infin.*)-*to* I *neg.* come(*fut/1ˢᵗper/sg*), but write(*infin.*)(*-to*) write(*fut/1ˢᵗper/sg*)'

  'I can't come, but I'll make a point of writing, though.' *Or:*

  'As for coming in particular, I won't come, however, as for writing, I will write.'

(2) (A) *- Začem vy ee-to obvinjaete? – skazala Ol'ga Ivanovna. – Ona bol'noj čelovek, ee privezli, i vse.*

  'Why do you accuse HER? – said Ol'ga Ivanovna. – She is a sickly person, she was brought [here], and that's it.'

(B) -*Bol'noj-**to** bol'noj, a*   vse   ž   *ponimat'*   *nado, – skazala Pan'ka.* [I.

Grekova, 390]

'Sickly-***to***   sickly,   but *part part* understand(*infin*) should   said   Pan'ka'

'Even though she IS sickly, she should still understand, - said Pan'ka.'

'As for being sickly, she IS sickly, but she should nevertheless understand…'

Previous accounts of this (and similar) constructions can be found in Gvozdev 1955, Švedova 1958, Švedova 1960, Vasilyeva 1972, Nikolina 1993, Paillard and Plungjan 1993, Bulygina and Šmelev 1997, and Abels 2001. Instead of providing a full review of this literature, I will concentrate on the issues raised by these authors that will be relevant to the present analysis.

Of earlier studies, notable is Vasilyeva's (1972:66-67) analysis of the particle *-to* as "an element (mostly obligatory) of special concessive-adversative constructions containing a repetition, in which it stands between the repeated parts". She points out that *–to* stands mostly in the first (concessive) part of this concessive-adversative construction, the second (adversative) part may be "emphasized" by some other particles, such as *ved', že, vot, tak, už,* etc. Similarly to Vasilyeva (1972), I will analyze the semantic contribution of the particle *-to* to the overall meaning of the *X-to X, a* construction; however, I will specify exactly which properties of *-to* are relevant to this construction.

Among more recent studies is Bulygina and Šmelev (1997) which discusses various linguistic means (constructions, lexemes, etc.) expressing "disagreement disguised as agreement" — i.e., semantic equivalents of 'yes, but…' With respect to concessive-adversative constructions, the authors' primary concern is which part of the construction expresses (dis)agreement.

Of a particular interest here is Paillard and Plungjan (1993). This paper concentrates on the role of the infinitive in a group of constructions, which the authors label "constructions with the infinitival echo" and classify into Types A (1-2) and B (1-4):[1]

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[1] Types B (1-2), corresponding to the boxed portion of the diagram in (3), are equivalent to the construction labeled here as "X-*to* X, *a*…" and, thus, of primary interest to us. However, in section 1 I will briefly comment on the other subtypes as well.

(3)   **Paillard and Plungjan (1993): "Constructions with the Infinitival Echo"**

A.   (1) V_0 <*no* 'but'> $V_{1\text{-Inf}}$ $V_{1\text{-Fin}}$

      (2) V_0 <a/*no* 'but'> $V_{1\text{-Inf}}$ *ne* 'not' $V_{1\text{-Fin}}$

B.	(1)	V_1//	$V_{1\text{-Inf}}$-***to***	$V_{1\text{-Fin}}$	<a/*no/da* 'but'>	V_2
	(2)	V_1//	$V_{1\text{-Fin}}$-***to***	$V_{1\text{-Fin}}$	<a/*no/da* 'but'>	V_2
	(3)	V_1//	$V_{1\text{-Inf}}$	$V_{1\text{-Fin}}$	<a/*no/da* 'but'>	V_2
	(4)	V_1//	$V_{1\text{-Inf}}$ *ne* 'not'$V_{1\text{-Fin}}$		<a/*no/da* 'but'>	V_2

Paillard and Plungjan analyze the semantic contribution of the infinitive in these constructions in the following way: the infinitive introduces some under-specified situation, while the rest of the construction provides the specifics (confirmation, negation). Thus, the semantic contribution of Type A construction is confirmation/negation of the fact that situation V_1 took place, their example (slightly modified; with glosses and translation added) is given in (4):

(4)   *Ja, rebjata, obeščanija ne   daju,   no   popytat'sja popytajus'.* [cf. Paillard & Plungjan,   267]

      'I   guys   promise   NEG   give   *but*   try(*infin*)   try(*fut*)'

      'I don't give my promise, guys, but as for trying, I WILL try.'

Their Type B is characterized by the introduction of an alternative point of view: while speaker A utters/believes/assumes some situation V_1, speaker B either confirms or denies V_1 and contrasts it with some V_2 (importantly, the authors point out that V_1 is not necessarily a verb: it can denote any situation). According to Paillard and Plungjan, situtations V_1 and V_2 should be viewed with respect to some third situation P in the following way: speaker A assumes/believes/etc. that "V_1 leads to P; <that's why V_1 is necessary>"; while speaker B asserts: "You are wrong: V_1 does take place, but V_1 does not lead to P, because there exists an obstacle – V_2".

There is a somewhat similar — at least in form — construction in Yiddish and in Romance languages, where a copy of the verb (often nonfinite) is "topicalized" and is

resumed by the finite form of the verb (see Davis and Prince 1986, Vallduví 1998). This literature will be reviewed in section 1 below.

Even though I agree with basic intuitions and conclusions offered in the literature (Vasilyeva 1972, Nikolina 1993, Paillard and Plungjan 1993, Bulygina and Šmelev 1997, etc.), I still see the need to approach the *X-to X, a* construction in a less descriptive and more formal way. Specifically, in my opinion, the following properties of this construction have not been described in detail or formalized: a) the precise relationship of the conjuncts (i.e., where exactly the source of disagreement comes from, in Bulygina and Šmelev's terms, or how exactly situations V_1 and V_2 are related to each other, in Paillard and Plungjan's approach) and 2) the contribution to the overall meaning of the construction that comes from its components: the repeated element, the particle *-to*, and the conjunction *a*.

Thus, my goal here is to provide a semantic and pragmatic analysis of the *X-to X, a* construction within the so-called QUD – "Question Under Discussion" – framework of discourse (Ginzburg 1996, van Kuppevelt 1995, 1996, Büring 2000, etc.) and relate it to research on: "verum focus" constructions (Vallduví 1998, etc.), set-evoking/ "kontrastive" particles like *–to* (McCoy 2001, etc.), contrastive discourse markers like the Russian *a* and the English *but* (Umbach 2001, etc). The data come from a variety of colloquial Russian texts, including the CHILDES database (MacWhinney 2000: Protassova's corpus) and certain literary works whose authors imitate colloquial style in their character's speech: Vasilij Šukšin and I. Grekova.

I propose to analyze the semantic/pragmatic meaning of the *X-to X, a* construction as re-directing the hearer's attention from one sub-question (viewed by the speaker as uninformative/non-relevant) to another one (viewed by the speaker as informative/ relevant).

The paper is organized in the following way: in sections 1-3, I discuss the elements contributing to the *X-to X, a* construction. Thus, section 1 sketches the contribution of *X*, i.e., "repeated element;" here I draw insights primarily from literature on verb dislocation and verum focus constructions (Yiddish/Romance). Section 2 is devoted to a rather detailed analysis of the set-evoking particle *–to* in colloquial Russian since this particular element is analyzed as the crucial part of the construction. Section 3 outlines the

contribution of the conjunction/discourse marker *a* to the meaning of the construction. Then, in section 4, I provide additional examples of the *X-to X, a* construction and discuss them in detail. The conclusion is given in section 5.

1   "Repeated Element:" Verum Focus Constructions

In this section I will discuss the semantic contribution of the repeated element *X* to the meaning of the *X-to X, a* construction. In order to do that, I will look at related constructions in a variety of languages which have been discussed in the literature under the labels of "verb topicalization," "verb dislocation/ left dislocation," "verum focus" construction, "predicate cleft" construction (see Davis and Prince 1986, Vallduví 1998, Abels 2001 and references therein). The common property of such constructions is that they contain two copies of the same verb in one clause: one copy (usually non-finite) is fronted and followed by the other, finite, copy.

For example, Davis and Prince (1986) analyze such constructions in Yiddish as "verb topicalization;" morphologically, the fronted copy is the stem of the verb plus suffix "-n," shown in (5a-b), which are adapted from theirs (2b) and (3b):

(5a)   *redn   red   ikh mame-loshn.*
          'speak(*stem+'n'*) speak I   mama-language'
          'As for speaking, I speak Yiddish.'

(5b)   *veysn   veyst er gornit.*
          'know(*stem+'n'*) knows he nothing'
          'As for knowing, he knows nothing.'

A similar construction in Romance languages is analyzed in detail for Catalan in Vallduví (1998) where it is labeled "verb dislocation/ left dislocation". Illustrations are provided in (6a-b) (which are Vallduví's (1a) and (1c); glosses and translation added), where the infinitive is preceded by the optional preposition/particle *de* and resumed by the finite form of the verb later in the clause:

(6a)   (De)   riure   riurem.

      Prep/Particle laugh(*infin.*) laugh(*fut/1stper/pl*)

      'As for laughing, we will laugh.'

(6b)   (De)   treballar   no   treballa   gaire.

      Prep/Particle work(*infin.*) *neg* work(*pres/3^{d}per/sg*) very-much

      'As for working, he does not work very much.'

Vallduví (1998, p.c.) points out that the ostensible function of such constructions is to express unambiguously that it is not the lexical verb that constitutes the rheme (i.e., information which is new to the hearer) but rather polarity, tense, aspect or some other semantic category associated with inflection (i.e., "verum focus"). The fact that a copy of the verb is fronted (or topicalized, or dislocated) indicates that the lexical verb itself cannot be interpreted as rhematic: this information is already in the hearer's knowledge store.[2] Thus, the speaker's use of the verum focus construction is geared towards supplying the piece of information that the hearer currently lacks – i.e., assertion vs. negation, future vs. past tense, etc.

For example, in (6a) above, the hearer is already aware of some relation between 'laughing' and 'us'; what the verum focus construction supplies is the missing part of the puzzle, i.e., that this relation will hold in the future – *As for laughing, we WILL laugh*. Similarly, the hearer's state of knowledge immediately before (6b) is uttered contains some relation between 'he' and 'working' (or, possibly, 'working very much'); the goal of the verum focus construction there is to specify that this relationship does not presently hold – *As for working, he DOES NOT work very much* (as one of the possible readings).

Indeed, this "verum focus" reading seems to be inherent in the constructions with the repeated element cross-linguistically. Thus, I will alternatively refer to these as "verum focus" constructions.

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[2] Cf. Nikolina's (1993) observation on several types of colloquial Russian constructions which contain the repetition of a lexical item (not necessarily a verb): the tautological nature of the repetition serves the function of connecting the utterance to the previous discourse by marking, or establishing, a topic/theme.

An example of "verum focus" constructions in colloquial Russian is what Paillard and Plungjan (1993) classify as Type A (see (3) and the illustration in (4), repeated here for convenience as (7) and (8):[3]

(7)   **Russian "Verum Focus" Constructions: Paillard & Plungjan's (1993) Type A (1-2)**

A.   (1) V_0 <*no* 'but'> $V_{1\text{-Inf}}$ $V_{1\text{-Fin}}$

      (2) V_0 <a/*no* 'but'> $V_{1\text{-Inf}}$ *ne* 'not' $V_{1\text{-Fin}}$

(8)   *Ja, rebjata, obeščanija ne   daju,   no   popytat'sja popytajus'.* [cf. Paillard & Plungjan   267]

      'I   guys   promise   NEG give   *but*   try(*infin*)   try(*fut*)'
      'I don't give my promise, guys, but as for trying, I WILL try.'

However, the function of the colloquial Russian *X-to X, a* construction appears to be rather different: the verum focus reading does not account for all the implicatures associated with it. For one thing, a verum focus construction can be used to end the speaker's utterance since it provides an unambiguous answer to a (implicit or explicit) question posed earlier in discourse (for example, such an implicit question for (8) is "Will the speaker try?" and the final clause containing the verum focus construction answers this question affirmatively). However, the clause containing "X-*to* X…" is always followed by another clause, which is introduced by an adversative conjunction (or particle), usually by *a* 'but/and'.

In the next section I will concentrate on the semantic and discourse properties of the particle *–to*, which is not present in the Russian "verum focus" construction but which I claim to be the crucial element of the *X-to X, a* construction.

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[3] For other types of constructions in colloquial Russian containing lexical repetition see Nikolina 1993.

2   Set-Evoking ("Kontrastive") Particle –*TO* [4]

In McCoy 2001a, 2001b, forthcoming, the particle –*to* is analyzed as a set-evoking, or set-generating, particle and is labeled a "kontrastive" marker (utilizing the notion of kontrast proposed in Vallduví and Vilkuna 1998[5]). Specifically, the particle –*to* marks a set of sets of propositions, marks referents known to the hearer but not currently activated in the discourse, encliticizes to a kontrastive element within the '*topic/link*', and generates a discourse tree, the branches of which are 'sisters' dominated by the same *Question Under Discussion*. Below I will discuss the first and the last properties of –*to*, i.e. the type of set marked and its role in discourse.

2.1   Type of Set Marked by -*TO*

The particle –*to* marks a set of sets of related propositions (equivalently, a set of questions) which is generated by introducing alternatives to a kontrastive element within the *topic/link* and a kontrastive element within the *rheme*. Consider an example from CHILDES:

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[4] The colloquial particle –*to* is etymologically related to the distal deictic/demonstrative pronoun *to(t)* 'that', as opposed to the proximal deictic *èto(t)* 'this'. Particle –*to* is multifunctional. In one of its meanings, it forms <u>indefinite</u> pronouns by cliticizing to wh-words: e.g., *gde-to* 'somewhere'*, kto-to* 'someone'*, počemu-to* 'for some reason', etc. It is also used in <u>disjunctions</u>: e.g., *to zdes' to tam* 'now here, now there'. Here I will be concerned with the other — <u>non-indefinite/non-disjunctive</u> — meanings of –*to* that have been discussed in the literature under such labels as the 'marker of contrast/emphasis', 'theme/topic marker', 'marker of the information known to the hearer', 'marker of unexpectedness in addressing a topic', etc. Such non-indefinite/non-disjunctive usages of –*to*, which I propose to analyze as set-evoking, or 'kontrastive', are illustrated in (i) and (ii):

    (i)   *Ty   čego   zdes' stoiš'?   Avtobus-TO   uže   ušel.*
          'you what-for here are-standing? Bus-*TO*   already left.'
          'Why are you standing here? As for the bus(-*TO*), it has already left.'

    (ii) Tancuet-*TO*   kak!
          'is-dancing-*TO* how'
          'As for his/her dancing(-*TO*), it is so [great]!' or 'How wonderfully s/he's dancing!'

[5] Vallduví and Vilkuna 1998 introduce the notion of *kontrast* — the ability of certain linguistic expressions to generate a set of alternatives — with the goal of establishing a conceptual distinction between two notions that have been conflated in the literature by the term of *focus*: one is *rheme*, a concept which, in opposition with *theme*, belongs to the domain of information packaging (Vallduví 1992 inter alia) and the other is what the authors label as *kontrast*, the notion covering quantificational phenomena of a more formal semantic nature (Rooth 1985, 1992, Krifka 1991-92, etc.).

(8)   [Varja and her mother are looking at a picture of a dog who put her paw on a bear. They first discuss the dog, then start talking about the bear. Varja gets distracted by taking a scoop into her hand. Mother says:] (CHILDES, séance 2)

*U tebja-**TO** sovok, a   chto   u medvedja v lape?*
'At you-***TO***   scoop   but what at   bear   in   paw?'

'YOU(-***TO***) have a SCOOP, but what does the BEAR have in his paw?'

The information structure of the (English version of the) utterance containing *–to* is shown in (9). Below it, in (10), a generalized structure of the utterance with *–to* is given:

(9)   [$_{+K/Link}$ You] (***-TO***) have [$_{+K/Rheme}$ a scoop]…

(10)   [$_{+K/Link}$ *A*]***-TO*** *has property* [$_{+K/Rheme}$ *x*]
          where *A* belongs to a set of entities: M_1={A, B, C,…}
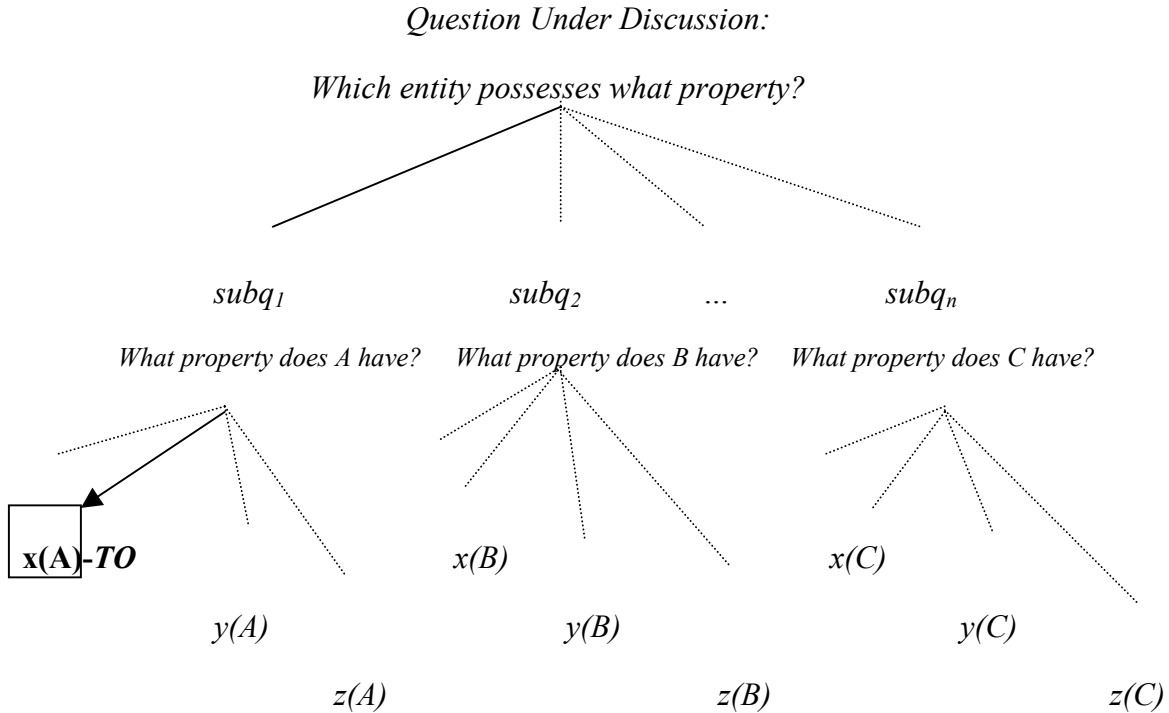   and   *x* belongs to a set of properties: M_2={x, y, z,…}

The default case for (10) is when the kontrastive (element within the) link *A* belongs to a set of entities: M_1={A, B, C,…} and the kontrastive (element within the) rheme *x* belongs to a set of properties: M_2={x, y, z,…}. Thus, the proposition **x(A)** marked with *-to* makes the hearer generate a set M_3, shown in three alternative ways in (11/12/13). In (11), the set M_3 is represented as a set of sets of propositions, in (12) the same set is shown as a set of questions, and in (13) the set M_3 marked by *–to* is shown graphically:

(11) M_3={ {**x(A)**, *y(A)*,   *z(A)*, …};
                 {x(B), y(B),   z(B), …};
                 {x(C), y(C),   z(C), …};…}

(12) $M_3 = \{$What is true of A?; What is true of B?; What is true of C?; …$\}$

(13)   **The set of sets of propositions (or, a set of questions) M_3 marked by -*TO*:**

Question Under Discussion:

Which entity possesses what property?

subq$_1$ *subq$_2$*   …   *subq$_n$*

What property does A have?   *What property does B have?*   *What property does C have?*

x(A)-*TO*   x(B)   x(C)

y(A)   y(B)   y(C)

z(A)   z(B)   z(C)

So, the primary function of *–to* is a marker of a set of sets of propositions which is generated by introducing alternatives to the kontrastive link and the kontrastive rheme. While for the proposition containing *–to* the truth value is asserted, it is not the case with the alternative propositions: they are only made salient with the help of *–to*.

2.2   Consequence: Role of *–TO* in Discourse

The role of *–to* at the discourse level is a consequence of being a marker of a set of questions (equivalently, a set of sets of propositions). In a discourse tree, as shown in (14), any Question Under Discussion (QUD) is constrained by k-marker *-to* in the same way as in (13) — i.e., the shaded and circled area of the discourse tree corresponding to *QUD$_2$* in (14) is exactly the same as the set of questions marked by *–to* in (13). In other words, by using the particle *–to*, the speaker makes salient not only that particular sub-question which is directly answered (*subq$_1$* in the diagram) but also the other sub-

questions which are directly related to $subq_1$ by being its "sisters" and which also address the same super-question — QUD_2 in the diagram below:

(14)
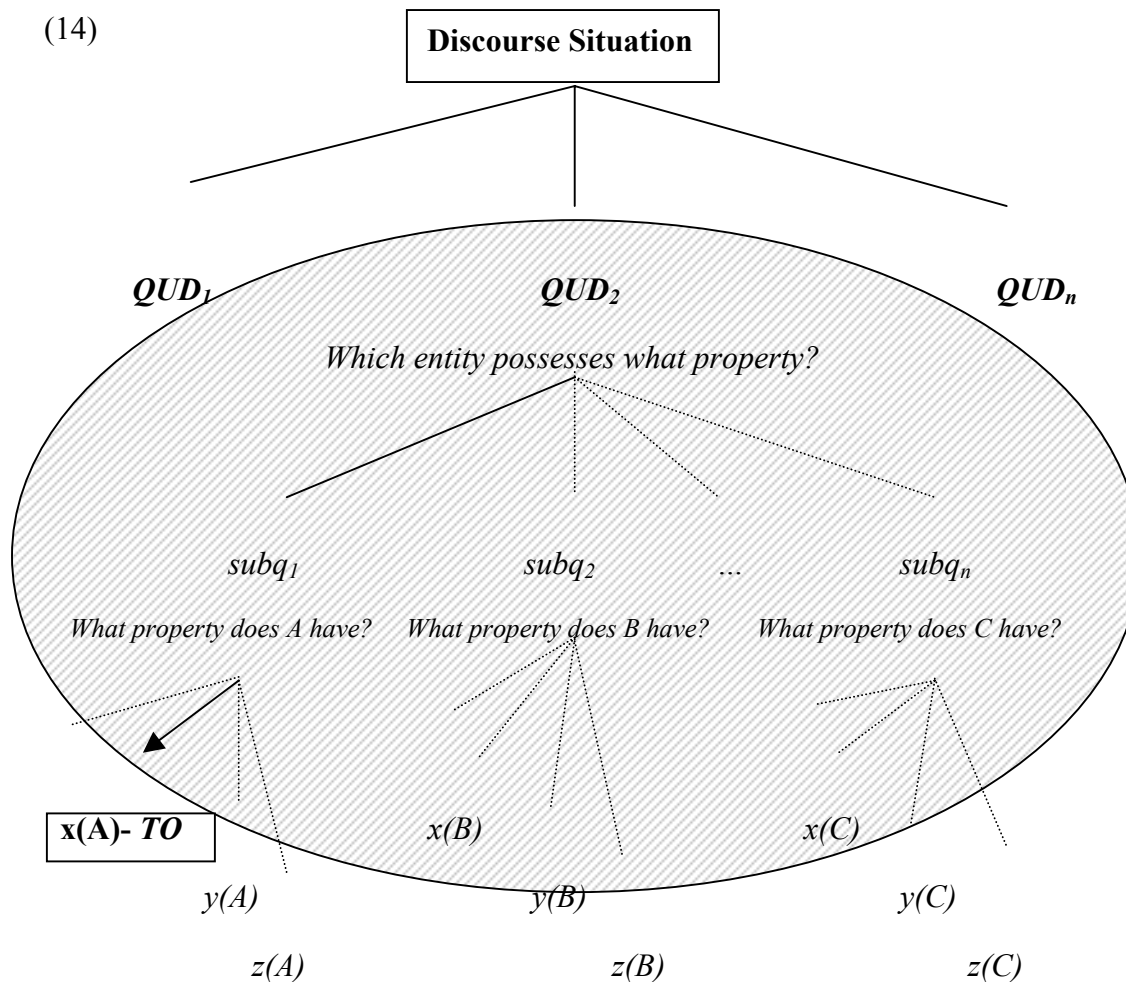
To summarize, the particle *–to* is analyzed as a marker of a set of sets of propositions (equivalently, a set of questions), which determines its discourse role as a generator of a Discourse tree, the branches of which are "sisters" dominated by the same Question Under Discussion. It is important that these properties of *–to* are preserved in the *X-to X, a* construction.

In the next section I will discuss properties of another element of this construction, i.e., the discourse marker/ conjunction *a*.

3　　Conjunction/ Discourse Marker *'a'*

The discourse marker/ conjunction *a* is one of the most frequent conversational elements which has been analyzed in the literature as contributing to cohesion and coherence of discourse and as marking turn-taking and bringing up a related discourse topic, illustrated by (15):

(15)　A:　　*Pojdem v kino.*　　　'Let's go the movies.'

　　　B:　　*A čto idet?*　　　　'**And** what's on?'

　　　(Krylova and Khavronina 1988: 144)

For example, Levin (1970/1975) and Abraham (1979) note that the function of the discourse marker *a* (at least one of its functions) is comparable to the English *but* in its concessive meaning, illustrated by (16):

(16)　*On ne xodit, **a** begaet*

　　　'he neg walks ***a*** runs'

　　　'He does not walk **but** runs' [about an active toddler].

There is also a focus-semantic analysis of the English *but* presented in Umbach (2001) who proposes that the use of *but* instead of *and* is obligatory if the answer provided is over-informative (i.e., it includes an additional topic). It appears as a promising avenue for future work to test whether the Russian *a* shares this particular property with the English *but*.

To the best of my knowledge, the Russian *a* has not yet been analyzed in detail from the perspective of evoking sets of propositions.[6] Consider, however, the following

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[6] For analyses of the discourse marker/ conjunction *a* from various other perspectives, see Vasilyeva (1972), Yokoyama (1981, 1991), Fougeron (1988), Parrott (1997).

quote from Yokoyama (1986) pointing out in the direction of the set-generating properties of *a*:

> ...two-member sets and multi-member sets behave analogously in Russian as far as the sentential conjunction *a* 'and' is involved: the conjunction a is used to conjoin the last sentence based on the referential knowledge of the last member of the given set found in Ca∩Cb [=the intersection of the interlocutors' A and B sets of matters of current concern]...   (Yokoyama 1986: 314-315)

What is important for the present purposes is that the meaning and function of the Russian *a* appear to be compatible with the set-evoking particle –*to*.

4   CONSTRUCTION "X-*to* X, *a*…"

In the previous sections I have considered the elements of the *X-to X, a* construction. Now I will discuss several occurrences of this construction in context in order to analyze its semantic and discourse properties.

The first two examples are from Vasilij Šukšin's short story *Zabuksoval* 'Stuck'. The set-up is the following: a collective farm mechanical engineer Roman Zvjagin is listening to his son Valerka doing his homework. Valerka is learning by heart the *Rus'-Trojka* excerpt from Gogol's *Mertvye Duši* 'Dead Souls'[7] (all schoolchildren in the

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[7] Gogol's novel is set in mid-19th century Russia. The main character, an adventurer and a scoundrel, Čičikov, is traveling from one nobleman's estate to another one trying to buy from them the so-called "dead souls" — the names of serfs who died since the last census but who are still considered alive for tax purposes. The first volume ends up with Čičikov's escape in order to avoid the scandal and possible prosecution.

The novel portrays very colorful types of people and, in general, is considered a satire on bureaucratic Russia. The very last pages of the first volume, though, possess a rather nostalgic note. In this last excerpt, which ends volume 1 of "Dead Souls," Gogol elaborates on the fast pace of a three-horse carriage (*trojka* or *troika* in alternative spellings) which is supposed to symbolize Russia's fast development and unknown destiny. Here is the English translation by David Magarshack:

> ...Oh, you *troika*, you bird of a *troika*, who invented you? You could only have been born among a high-spirited people in a land that does not like doing things by halves, but has spread in a vast smooth plain over half the world, and you may count the milestones till your eyes are dizzy...
> Is it not like that that you, too, Russia, are speeding along like a spirited *troika* that nothing can overtake? The road is like a cloud of smoke under you, the bridges thunder, and everything falls back and is left far behind. The spectator stops dead, struck dumb by the divine miracle: is it not a flash of lightning thrown down by heaven? What is the meaning of this terrifying motion? And what mysterious force is hidden in these horses the like of which the world has never seen?... Russia, where are you flying to? Answer! She gives no answer. The bells fill the air with their

former Soviet Union were required to learn this excerpt by heart). While listening to his son's rote learning, Roman suddenly encounters a challenging idea:

(17)

[a]   - *Valerk! [...] [b] A   kto   na trojke-**TO** edet?*
                        'And who on trojka-**TO** rides?'
          '- Valerka! [...] As for the trojka(**-TO**), who is riding there?'

[c]   - *Selifan.*
          '- Selifan.'

 [d]   - ***Selifan-TO Selifan!***   *[e] To   ž-   kučer.*
           'Selifan-**TO** Selifan!   That PART coachman.'
           '- Forget about Selifan(**-TO**)! He is the coachman.'

[f]   ***A   kogo   on vezet-TO,   Selifan-TO?***
          'And whom he carries**-TO**, Selifan-**TO**?'
          'The problem is who is he, Selifan(**-TO**), giving(**-TO**) a ride to!'

[g]   - *Čičikova.*
          '- Čičikov.'

[h]   - *Tak... Nu? tut - Rus'-trojka... A?*
          '-So... Well? Look, here's Russia-the-trojka... Come on?'

[i]   - *Nu. I čto?*
          '- And so what?'

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wonderful tinkling; the air is torn asunder, it thunders and is transformed into wind; everything on earth is flying past, and, looking askance, other nations and states draw aside and make way for her.   *<end of volume 1>*   (Gogol 1961: 258-9; translated by D. Magarshack)

[j]   - *Kak čto? Kak čto?!*

'- What do you mean so what?!'

[k]   *Rus'-trojka, vse gremit, vse zalivaetsja, a v trojke - proxindej, šuler...*

'Russia is rushing like the trojka, everything in her way is jingling, everything is singing, while in the trojka there is a swindler, a cheat.'

[l]   *Do Valerki vse nikak ne doxodilo — i čto?*

'Valerka still couldn't grasp that - so what?'

[m]   - *Da kak že?! [...]*

'-Can't you get it?!'

[Roman realizes that his son is too young to understand the meaning of his discovery and lets the boy study. Meanwhile, his agitation grows as he is thinking to himself:]

[n]   *Vot tak nomer.! [o] Mčitsja, vdoxnovennaja bogom! — a vezet šulera. [...]*

'That's amazing!   [It] is rushing, inspired by God — and in it there is a cheat.'

[...]

[p]   *Tut že javnyj nedosmotr.*

'That's a sheer oversight.'

[q]   ***Mčimsja-TO   mčimsja****, elki zelenye, **a   kogo mčim?***

'[We]are-rushing-**TO** [we]are-rushing , [=damn it] and whom are-we-rushing?'

'As for rushing(-**TO**), we ARE rushing, but, damn it, WHO are we rushing?'

[r]   *Možno že ne tak vse ponjat'...*

'You can easily misinterpret all this.'

'[a] - Valerka! [...] [b] What about the trojka-***TO***, who is riding there?

[c] - Selifan.

[d] - <u>Forget about Selifan(-***TO***)</u>! [e]. He is the coachman. [f] <u>The problem is who is he, Selifan-***TO***</u>, <u>giving-***TO*** a ride to</u>!

[g] - To Čičikov

[h] -So... Well? Look, here's Russia-the-trojka... Come on?

[i] - And so what?

[j] - What do you mean so what?! [k] Russia is rushing like the trojka, everything in her way is jingling, everything is singing, while in the trojka there is a swindler, a cheat.

[l] Valerka still couldn't grasp that — so what?

[m] -Can't you get it?!

[Roman realizes that his son is too young to understand the meaning of his discovery and lets the boy study. Meanwhile, his agitation grows as he is thinking to himself:]

[n] That's amazing! [o] The carriage is rushing, inspired by God - and in it there is a cheat. [...] [p] That's a sheer oversight. [q] <u>As for rushing(-***TO***)</u>, <u>we ARE rushing, but,</u> damn it, <u>WHO are we rushing</u>? [r] You can easily misinterpret all this.'

In both occurrences of the *X-to X, a* construction in this excerpt there is a sense that the information provided in the previous discourse is somehow not relevant or not quite sufficient, even though it cannot be considered incorrect. Roman asks his son who is in the carriage and Valerka answers: "Selifan". The boy's answer cannot be viewed as false, since Selifan is the coachman, but that is not what the father was looking for. Roman exclaims: *Selifan-**TO** Selifan!* ... (see (17d)), which can be given an interpretative translation as 'I know about Selifan [being in the carriage], that's obvious! But that's not what I am asking about!' or even 'Every fool knows that Selifan is there, but can you tell me who else is in the carriage?' Here the construction has the form "NP-*to* NP;" however the NP represents the full proposition {Selifan is riding in the carriage}, with other terms of the proposition undergoing ellipsis.
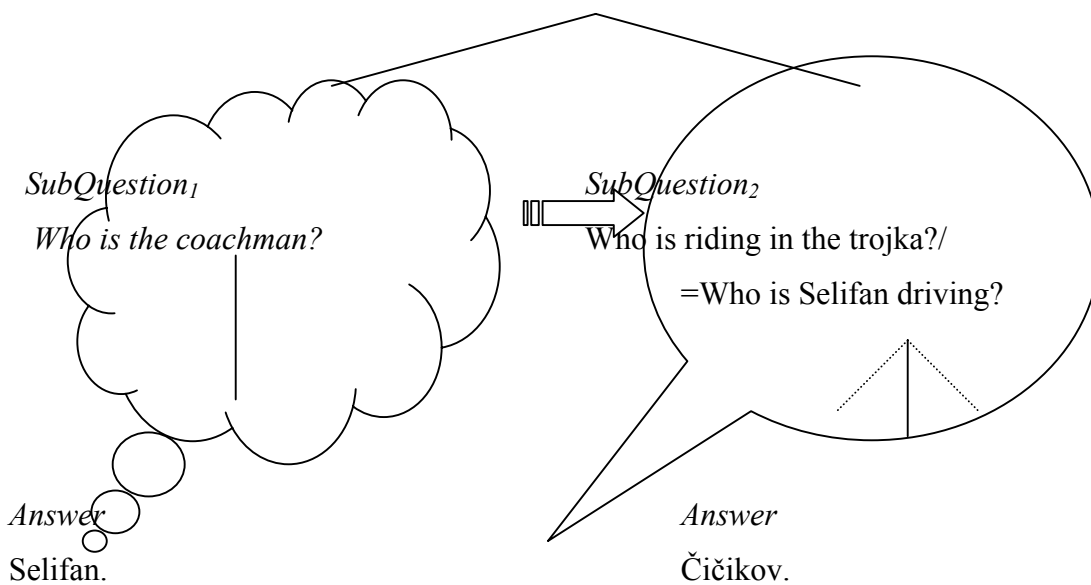
If instructions to the hearer encoded in this construction are represented in the form of a discourse tree, the speaker's view of the discourse situation can be seen as follows: by using the *X-to X, a* construction, the speaker points out to the hearer that the hearer has been concerned with a question, which is related to the one the speaker has been concerned with, but not the very same one that the speaker is seeking an answer to. Actually, the relationship between these two questions — i.e., the one that the hearer is concerned with and the one that the speaker is concerned with — is the same one that is characteristic of the k-marker *–to* in general: these two questions are sub-questions dominated by the same question under discussion. The speaker's use of the construction "*X-to X*," intended to correct the hearer's representation of the discourse situation, is shown in (18) for (17d): *Selifan-**TO** Selifan! ...*

(18) **The Use of Construction "*X-to X*" in (17d)**:
QUD
Who is doing what with respect to the trojka?

SubQuestion₁
Who is the coachman?

SubQuestion₂
Who is riding in the trojka?/
=Who is Selifan driving?

Answer
Selifan.

Answer
Čičikov.

Wrong Q-A pair!
(=hearer's concern)

Correct Q-A pair!
(speaker's concern)

Now let us consider the second occurrence of the *X-to X, a* construction in (17q): *Mčimsja-**TO** mčimsja* '[We] are-rushing-**TO** [we] are-rushing.' The only element of the proposition that has not undergone ellipsis here is the verb. It is not as easy to reconstruct the full proposition in this case as it was with the previous example: there it was in the immediately preceding context. Here, however, the potential antecedent is separated by several utterances. Another complicating factor is the shift back and forth between the character's speech and the narrator's speech. However, we can think of Roman's thought as circular, returning to the same fixed idea (cf. the title of the short story: *Zabuksoval*, which I translate as 'Stuck'). I believe that *Mčimsja-**TO** mčimsja* is related to what Roman's earlier thought *Mčitsja, vdoxnovennaja bogom! — a vezet šulera* '[It] is rushing, inspired by God — and in it there is a cheat', even though the verb form is not quite the same in these two cases. The change from third person singular to first person plural can be explained if the metaphorical and metonymical associations involved here are explored in detail. For example, there is a metonymical connection between "we" and "Russia". At the same time, there is a metaphorical association between "the trojka" — the source domain of this metaphor — and "Russia". So, it is through this chain of associations that the third person singular ("the trojka") is connected to the first person plural ("we").[8]

So, in this case the full proposition that *-to* marks as irrelevant is *The trojka is rushing, inspired by God* (which is an answer to an implicit question *Why is the trojka rushing?*) and the discourse that follows supplies the question that is more relevant to the discussion *Whom are we rushing?* or *Who is in it?* and the eye-opening answer to it is "a cheat"!

Again, if these two questions with their answers are presented in the form of a discourse tree, the *X-to X, a* construction can be thought of as a way for the speaker to shift the focus from a sub-question that is not that relevant but which represents a conventional belief to a more relevant sub-question, as assessed by the speaker. The two sub-questions are again "sisters" dominated by the same question under discussion: *Does*

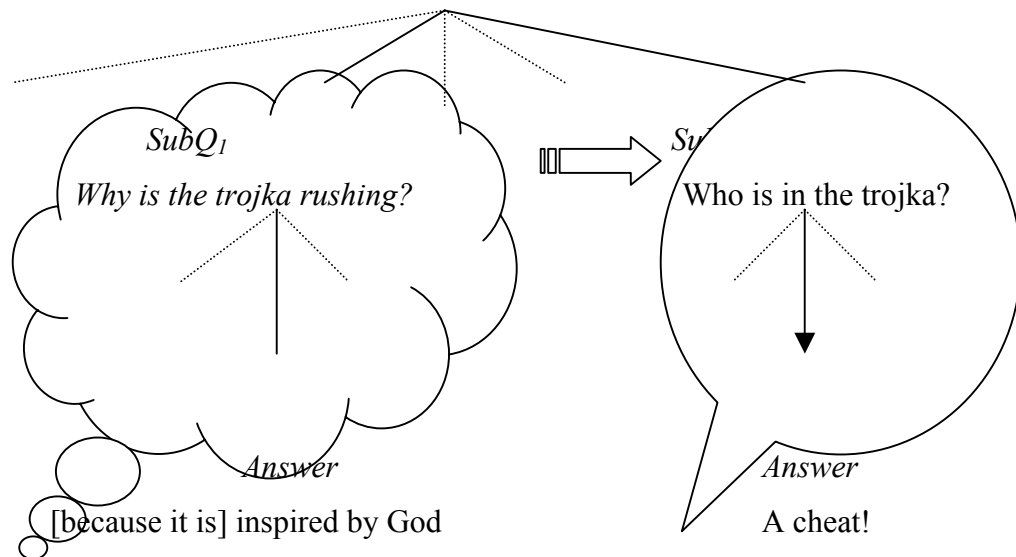[8] Thanks to Laura Janda for pointing out this chain of thought to me.

the trojka symbolize Russia?   This argument between the conventional thinking and Roman's unconventional twist on it is graphically represented in (19):

(19)   **The Use of Construction "*X-to X, a…*" for (17q)**:

Discourse   **Situation**:
Rus'-Trojka as the Symbol of Russia

QUD
Does Rus'-Trojka symbolize Russia?

SubQ₁

Why is the trojka rushing?

Answer
[because it is] inspired by God

Su

Who is in the trojka?

Answer
A cheat!

Conventional thinking: *Roman's thinking:*
wrong Q-A pair   *correct Q-A pair*

Let us consider another occurrence of the *X-to X, a* construction in connected discourse. The excerpt in (20) is taken from the CHILDES database and the discourse situation is the following: prior to the interaction between Varja, her mother and her grandfather, the mother and Varja rode in a trolleybus and bought a ticket for the ride;

now the mother is asking Varja whether she wants this ticket (and sure enough, Varja wants it!). Then the mother is trying to elicit an answer from Varja to the question 'Where did we get this ticket?' in front of the grandfather. Varja, however, seems to be still concerned with replying 'Thank you' to the previous question by the mother ('Do you want the ticket?') The grandfather, using the *X-to X, a* construction, is trying to re-direct Varja's attention to the current, still unanswered, question, i.e., 'Where did you get this ticket?':[9]

(20)   [Varja, mother, and grandfather are talking about the trolleybus ticket that Varja and her mother got for their trolleybus ride earlier that day] (CHILDES, séance 2)

*MOT: *Var'!*

%eng: Varja!

*MOT: *A xochesh' biletik?*

%eng: Do you want a ticket?

*VAR: *Bijetik, bijetik, xaosyj, basoj, basoj.*

%eng: A ticket, a ticket, a good, a big.

*MOT: *Otkuda ètot biletik?*

%eng: Where is this ticket from?

*MOT: *Gde my vzjali ètot biletik?*

%eng: Where have we got this ticket?

*VAR: /giving the ticket to the grandfather/ *Pasiba.*

%eng: Thank you.

*GRF: ***Spasibo-TO spasibo, a** gde vy vzjali ètot biletik?*

%eng: ok, thank you, but where have you got this ticket from?[10]

*GRF: *Mama sprashivaet.*

%eng: Mummy asks.

*MOT: *Gde my s toboj exali, kogda my vzjali ètot biletik?*

---

[9] Since Varja is less than 20 months old here (1;7.13), the need to keep her attention on track is a real task for the adults.

[10] This excerpt from CHILDES is given here verbatim, with only minor typographical changes (font, special characters, etc.) and emphasis on the relevant construction being added. Thus, a more accurate translation of this utterance is provided together with the gloss below.

%eng: Where were we going with you, when we've got this ticket?

*VAR: *Paje, pajexali.*

%eng: Go, let's go.

*MOT: *My v trollejbuse exali.*

%eng: By trolleybus we were going.

*MOT: *Tam my ètot biletik vzjali.*
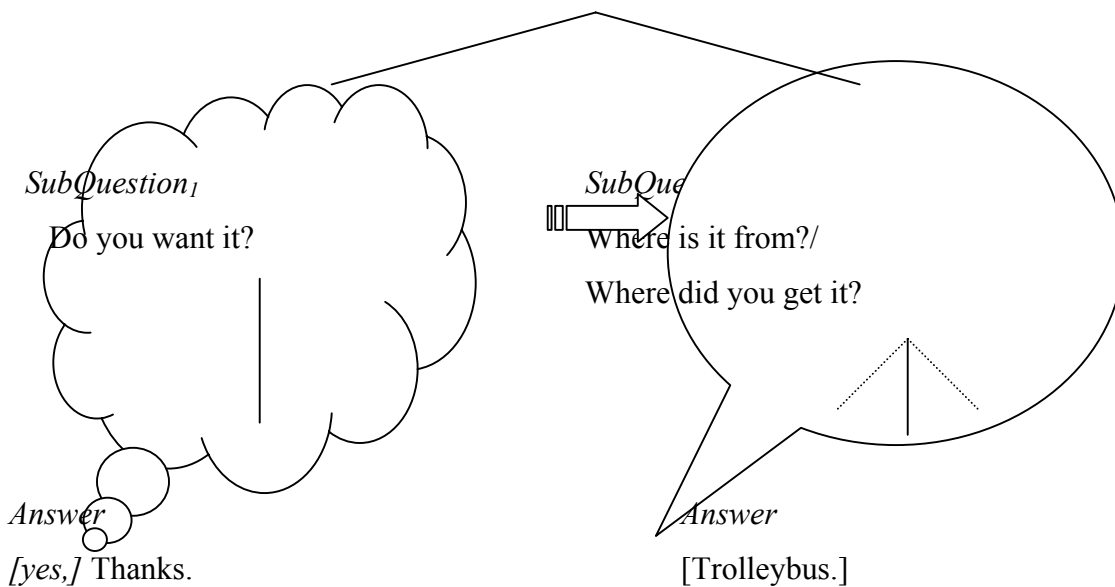
%eng: We have taken this ticket there.

*GRF: ***Spasibo-TO spasibo, a   gde   vy   vzjali ètot biletik?***

        'Thanks-***TO*** thanks,   but where you-pl. got   this ticket'

     ' "*Thanks*" is ok, but [you didn't answer] where did you two get this ticket from?'

    The grandfather's correction of Varja's representation of the discourse situation is graphically represented in (21); he is using the utterance *Spasibo-**TO** spasibo, a…* to re-direct Varja's attention from the sub-question that has been resolved to the other one which is still unanswered:
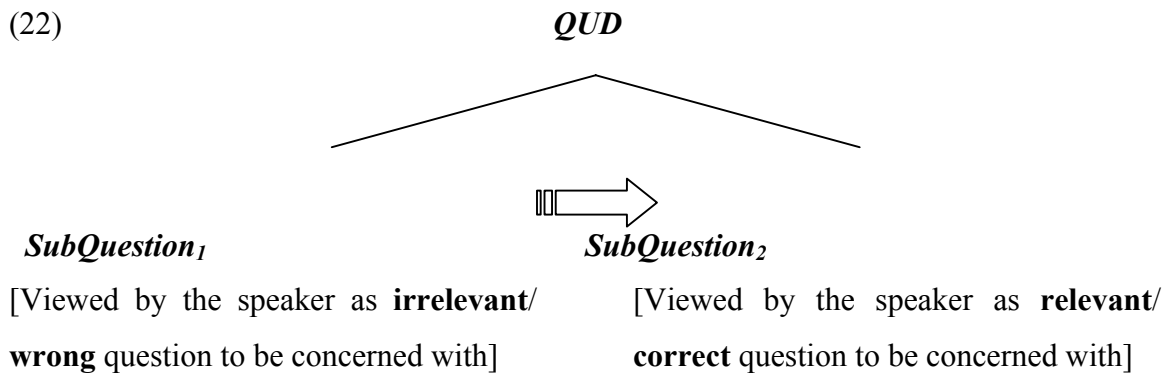
(21)   *QUD*

What about this ticket?

SubQuestion₁	*SubQue…*
Do you want it?	Where is it from?/
	Where did you get it?
Answer	*Answer*
[yes,] Thanks.	[Trolleybus.]

Answered question that   **Unanswered question that**
hearer is still concerned with   **hearer should be concerned with**

The following pattern emerges from the cases discussed in this section: the speaker's usage of the *X-to X, a* construction seems to be aimed at re-directing the hearer's attention from a rather irrelevant question that the hearer is concerned with to another question, which the speaker perceives as more relevant. These two questions are not unrelated: they are sub-questions answering the same question under discussion, which are centered around a particular discourse entity or entities (for example, in (17d/18), the discourse entities are the trojka and the people associated with it; in (17q/19), this is the trojka as the symbol of Russia; in (20/21), the central discourse entity is the trolleybus ticket). The relationship between the two questions addressed by the *X-to X, a* construction is generalized in the diagram in (22):

(22)   ***QUD***

SubQuestion₁   *SubQuestion₂*

[Viewed by the speaker as **irrelevant/ wrong** question to be concerned with]   [Viewed by the speaker as **relevant/ correct** question to be concerned with]

The pattern generalized in (22) appears to hold in all occurrences of the *X-to X, a* construction that I have encountered. Consider, for example, situations in (1) and (2) which have served the purpose of illustrating this construction in the introduction but which have not been discussed in detail so far. In (1), the discourse situation is centered on New Year celebration activities. While the interlocutor A is concerned with one activity — inviting B to spend the holiday together, the interlocutor B, by using this constructions, is re-directing A's attention to another related activity which is more relevant to him/her — connecting through writing. Similarly, in (2), the Question Under Discussion is whether Kapa can be accused of the situation she caused (by being paralyzed and bedridden); while Ol'ga Ivanovna (interlocutor A) is currently concerned with the sub-question of whether a sickly person can really be accused of anything, Pan'ka (interlocutor B) re-directs her partner's attention to a sub-question which she considers to be more relevant — i.e., whether or not the sickly person should be understanding of the situation she caused.

To summarize, the specific pragmatic meaning encoded in the *X-to X, a* construction is to re-direct the hearer's attention from one sub-question to another one.

5   CONCLUSION

In this paper I have discussed semantic and discourse properties of the colloquial Russian *X-to X, a* construction. This construction has been found to be pragmatically different from "verum focus" constructions in Yiddish, Romance, and also from "Type A" construction (Paillard & Plungjan 1993; example (3)). The set-evoking/"kontrastive"

properties of particle *–to* are found to be preserved in this construction, and the meaning of *a* is supplementary to that of set-evoking *–to*.

In short, the semantico-pragmatic meaning of the *X-to X, a* construction is the following: by using this construction, the speaker aims at re-directing the hearer's attention from a rather irrelevant question that the hearer is concerned with to another question, which the speaker perceives as more relevant. These two questions are related by being sub-questions answering the same question under discussion.

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