Focus association with only in Russian

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This paper explores the behavior of only in Russian. I show that only must be immediately adjacent to the focused item in Russian, arguing that this requirement is due to syntactic focus movement, triggered by a strong [Foc] feature of only. The displacement of an F-marked constituent results in right-adjunction to only, yielding an appropriately local feature-checking configuration. Furthermore, I demonstrate that only itself is limited to a handful of positions within the structure. Specifically, it must meet two requirements in order to merge successfully. I suggest that only is an adjunct strictly to functional projections, which are also phases. Ultimately, my goal is to show that only can adjoin to vP, CP and FP (a functional projection in the nominal domain).

1 Facts and preliminary analysis

1.1 Adjacency requirement
It is a well-established fact that (1)a and (1)b yield distinct truth conditional propositions in English (Rooth 1985). If John introduced Bill and Arnold to Sue (with no further social pleasantries), then (1)b would be true, but (1)a would be false.1

(1) a. John only introduced [BILL]F to Sue.
   b. John only introduced Bill [to SUE]F.

1 Henceforth I use brackets and small caps to identify the associates of only.
Furthermore, it has been observed that English *only* can associate with a constituent inside an island, as in (2) (see Anderson 1972, Drubig 1994, Jackendoff 1972, Krifka 2006, Wagner 2006 for discussion).

(2) I only introduced [a man [that [JILL]$_F$ admires]] to Sue.

The crucial takeaway from the above is that *only* in English is easy to separate from its associate, whether the latter is relatively local, as in (1), or distant, as in (2). This is very much not the case in Russian. As it turns out, Russian *only* must be immediately adjacent to its associate. This means that the structure in (1) reported for English (and the ambiguity that goes with it) simply does not obtain in Russian at all: the focalized element must modify the F-marked XP.

Consider first an attempted association into a complex NP in (3)a, which is entirely akin to English (2), but vastly ungrammatical. Placing *only* after the verb, as in (3)b, improves nothing: the sentence remains degraded. The only way to render it acceptable is by placing *only* before its NP-associate inside the island, as in (3)c. Rather unsurprisingly, the extraction of an F-marked constituent out of this complex NPs to adjoin to *only* in the main clause is prohibited, as shown in (4).

   Intended: ‘He only introduced a man who [ANNA]$_F$ knows.’
   c. …, kotorogo *tol'ko* [ANNA]$_F$ znaet.

(4) *On *tol'ko [ANNA]$_F$ predstavil čeloveka, kotorogo t$_{NP}$ znaet.

It is not just a matter of islandhood, as the locality requirement for *only* and its associate is far more stringent in Russian than in English: the focalized XP must surface next to *only*. (5) illustrates precisely this claim. In the paradigm below the F-marked element cannot be separated from *only* by anything: whether the intervener is a verb or an XP.

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2 Some speakers find the paradigm in (5) degraded rather than fully unacceptable. But even these speakers acknowledge that there is a contrast between (5) and (6).
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(5) a. *Andrej tol’ko ispek [PIROG]_{F} dlja sestry.
    Andrey only baked pie for sister
    Intended: ‘Andrey only baked [A PIE]_{F} for his sister.’

b. *Andrej tol’ko ispek dlja sestry [PIROG]_{F}.

c. *Andrej tol’ko ispek [dlja SESTRY]_{F} pirog.

d. *Andrej tol’ko ispek pirog [dlja SESTRY]_{F}.

Examples in (6) evince a range of possible grammatical renditions of the same sentence, all of which feature only next to its focalized associate. Additionally, (6) serves to show that the only+[XP]_{F} complex may either precede or follow the verb as long as this complex itself is intact.

(6) a. Andrej tol’ko [PIROG]_{F} ispek dlja sestry.
    Andrey only pie baked for sister
    ‘Andrey only baked [A PIE]_{F} for his sister.’

b. Andrej tol’ko [dlja SESTRY]_{F} ispek pirog.

c. Andrej ispek tol’ko [PIROG]_{F} dlja sestry.

d. Andrej ispek pirog tol’ko [dlja SESTRY]_{F}.

Based on these facts, I propose that Russian only is endowed with a strong [Foc] feature, which is checked by an appropriate focus-bearing XP. The checking relationship between only and its associate must be very local, given the adjacency requirement reported above. Hence, a befitting feature checking configuration arises thanks to displacement, whereby a focused constituent moves to only. This movement results in right-adjunction to only in the manner of (7): to wit, NP adjoins to only. The technology for the proposed operation is not without precedent in the literature: Rudin (1988) argues for the very same adjunction configuration in Bulgarian multiple wh-questions. She further shows that right-adjunction boasts a particular property: once a constituent is formed, it is not splittable by any interveners. I will shortly demonstrate that this prohibition on splitting holds of Russian only+XP complexes as well. Finally, the movement itself is understood as A-bar (phrasal) displacement: so, XPs, but not heads, are eligible to form a complex with only (this is not a revolutionary claim; see, e.g., Wagner 2006).

(7)

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Only [Foc]  
       / \  
      νP   νP  
    /   \   \  
   Only   tnp  
   NP   
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There is one final piece required for the ensuing exposition. Observe that in my schematic (7), only is rendered as a vP adjunct. But even from the baseline facts in (6), it is apparent that the surface position of the only-complex is quite lax: it is free to show up either before or after the verb. Despite this ostensible flexibility of the only-phrase, I intend to show that only is, in fact, very much restricted in the way it may enter the derivation. In particular, I argue that only can adjoin strictly to functional projections which are also phases: CP in the clausal domain, vP in the verbal domain, and FP in the nominal domain. For now, however, I will limit myself to the discussion of only’s “genesis”, demonstrating that it cannot be merged directly with the NP. This is the focus of Section 1.2.

1.2 Russian ONLY is not an NP-adjunct
It is tempting to conclude on the basis of facts in (3)c and (6)a/c that only originates inside the NP (which would then give us a simple explanation of the adjacency requirement). In this section I provide three pieces of evidence against this seemingly intuitive analysis. For one, Russian does not tolerate the contexts, in which only appears between a noun and a preposition. Further, only does not pattern with other nominal or adjectival modifiers in relevant respects. And finally, the interpretation of only+XP is consistent with the analysis under which only is adverbial: it lacks the ambiguity characteristic of English adnominal only.

Taglicht (1984) argues that English only can adjoin either to NP or VP. Unfortunately, Taglicht’s distinction cannot apply to Russian in view of the facts in (8). Russian only may not intervene between a preposition and its complement. This contrasts with English (9)a, where only follows the preposition. In fact, the examples where only intervenes between a preposition and a DP in English are abundant. Speakers confirm that the instances in (10) (collected online) all feel quite natural to them. Conversely, the Russian equivalents of (10) are sharply ungrammatical.

(8) a. *dlja toł’ko sestry
   for only sister

b. ...vzaimodeistvuet toł’ko s krupnymi finansovymi gruppami
   ‘interacts only with the large financial groups’

c. *s toł’ko krupnymi finansovymi gruppami / s očen’ krupnymi...
   with very large

d. *s krupnymi toł’ko finansovymi gruppami
(9) a. We escaped with only one broken window. [www]
    b. We only escaped with one broken window.

(10) a. Doctor said I need glasses for only my left eye…
    b. Living with only the bare essentials has not only provided

Furthermore, only is peculiar when compared to the well-behaving modifiers (like očen ‘very’), which are traditionally assumed to be the constituents of AdjP. The contrast between (11)a and (11)b showcases the point. While the adverbs in (b) can be easily extracted, only in (a) is inseparable from its associate. Its apparent immobility follows from my earlier proposal (i.e.: only and its associate form a Rudin-style adjunction structure, and, hence, cannot be split). Had only been an adjunct to AdjP, we would expect for it to operate exactly like očen’, contrary to what we actually observe. The examples in (12) demonstrate that only does not pattern with adjectives either: the latter can be extracted, as in (12)b, but only in (12)a cannot be. Given that only deviates from the conventional nominal modifiers in the extraction contexts, it stands to reason that the mechanism involved in forming a constituent with it must be distinct from the operation that builds a noun phrase.

    only you fresh fish bought
    Intended: ‘Did you only buy the [FRESH]F fish?’

    b. Očen’i ty [t bol’šuju tsenu] za škury zaprosil. [www]
    very you big price for pelts asked
    ‘You requested too high a price for the pelts.’

(12) a. * Vy tol’ko kupili [RYBU]F ?
    you only bought fish
    Intended: ‘Did you only buy [FISH]F’?

    b. Vy svežuju, kupili [t rybu]?
    you fresh bought fish
    ‘You bought [FRESH]F fish.’

The final argument for the claim that Russian only is ineligible to adjoin to NP stems from the interpretation of only-complexes. Taking English only and German nur as a baseline, I examine how Russian fares with respect to the scope interactions of tol’ko-phrases with matrix predicates in embedded clauses.
As mentioned earlier, English *only* can be an adjunct to a noun phrase or a verb phrase. The former *only* is shown in (13). Observe that this example is ambiguous. By contrast, the VP-adjacent *only* in (14) obligatorily takes surface scope.

(13) I knew that he had learnt **only** [SPANISH]$_F$.
    a. *knew > only*: I knew he hadn’t learnt any other language.
    b. *only > knew*: I didn’t know he had learnt any other language.

(14) a. I knew that he had **only** learnt [SPANISH]$_F$.
    $^{\text{OK}}$ *knew > only; *only > knew
    b. I **only** knew that he had learnt [SPANISH]$_F$.
    $^{\text{OK}}$ only > knew; *knew > only

Equipped with the insight that the NP-adjacent *only* gives rise to ambiguity (in contrast to the VP-adjointed one, which does not), we can now test Russian for the same effects. Consider (15) with examples modeled after Büring and Hartmann (2001) (who in turn credit von Stechow 1991 for a similar observation in German). (15)a looks remarkably similar to English (13). Unlike English, however, Russian (15)a lacks the wide scope construal of the *only*-phrase. Moreover, the speakers who accept extractions out of čto-clauses confirm that cases like (15)b are likewise unambiguous. Here, the *only*-phrase obligatorily outscopes the matrix verb. In short, Russian *only*-phrase is always interpreted in the clause in which it appears. We now arrive at the following seemingly contradictory conclusion: even though the interpretation facts in (15) replicate the English pattern in (14) with the VP-adjointed *only*, the tol’ko-complex itself resembles the NP-adjunction structure of (13). Of course, my account handles the facts in a straightforward fashion: Russian is unambiguous precisely because it prohibits the adjunction to NP. If so, (14) is the single underlying option for Russian; adjacency to NP is a consequence of movement to *only*.

    I regret that kissed only Masha
    ‘I regret that I kissed only Maria.’

  [i] √and no one else.
  [ii] #but I don’t regret that I kissed Anastasia
I only Masha regret that kissed
[i]# and no one else.
[ii] √ but I don’t regret that I kissed Anastasia

In fact, Büring and Hartmann (2001) report on the German facts, reproduced in (16), which are strikingly similar to my Russian data above. (16)a is ambiguous in the way its translated English equivalent is. And it looks just English (13). However, the ambiguity disappears if the embedded CP is extraposed in the manner of (16)b. Their takeaway boils down to the following: first, nur must be treated as an adverb; and second, as such, it is eligible to adjoin only to VP, as schematized in (17)a, or to CP, as demonstrated in (17)b. On this account, the ambiguity of (16)a follows from the two possible attachment sites for nur. Per contra, (16)b boasts but one possible position for only – on the edge of the embedded CP. This, in turn, predicts the absence of the wide scope reading of only Gerda (in compliance with the reported facts).

   because I only Gerda kissed to have regret
   ‘I only regret to have kissed Gerda.’
[i] √ I regret to have kissed nobody but Gerda.
[ii] #Gerda is the only person that I regret to have kissed.

(17) a. [VP nur [VP [CP[GERDA]ₚ geküsst zu haben] V]]
   b. [VP [CP nur [CP[GERDA]ₚ geküsst zu haben] V]]

It should now be easy to see the points of affinity between Russian and German. In fact, my proposal for Russian only is in the spirit of what Büring and Hartmann endorse for German. Tol’ko in (15) may adjoin to the lower vP, as in (15)a, or the matrix vP, as in (15)b. However, unlike German and English, Russian imposes an additional requirement: a focused associate must move to only. In Section 2, I argue for a more principled explanation of the possible base positions of only, showing that it adjoins strictly to phases that are also functional projections.
1.3 Summary
As a general case, Russian requires that the XPₖ be adjacent to only. Only itself is not eligible to adjoin to NP, since it is illicit as a direct modifier to NP-complements of P, fails to pattern with other modifiers, and induces surface scope. This is summarized in the table below:

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<td>1) Adjacency:</td>
<td>v…only XPₖ…</td>
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<td>*…only…XPₖ…</td>
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<td>XPₖ associate must move for [Foc] to form a constituent with only</td>
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<td>2) Only ≠ NP-adjunct:</td>
<td>[a] only cannot appear between P and its complement NP</td>
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<td></td>
<td>[b] only-complex does not pattern with other nominal modifiers</td>
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<td>[c] only+XP is interpreted in the clause in which it appears on the surface (=English preverbal only)</td>
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<td>only adjoins to vP; adjacency is accomplished via movement</td>
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2 Analysis
So far, I argued that Russian only is an element generated outside of the NP. Adjacency to only is a consequence of syntactic movement: a focus marked XP right adjoins to only in order to check its [Foc] feature. The objective now is to corroborate my earlier hints that the base position of only is extremely limited. The ambition is to show that only is eligible to adjoin strictly to vP, CP or FP, all of which are functional projections and phases within a verbal, sentential, and nominal domain, respectively. If true, this proposal offers a unifying explanation for the behavior of only across the domains. First I present evidence that vP and CP, but not TP, are eligible hosts for only. Then I extend this analysis to the nominal domain based on certain peculiar cases that appear to run counter to the adjacency generalization from Section 1.

(18) (repeated from (6)) presents an immediate conundrum for the advertised analysis. Recall that, once formed, only+XPₖ can appear either before or after the verb. This flexibility of the only-phrase is puzzling,
given my claim that TP is not available for *only* (a position [tol’ko [PIROG]₂] appears to occupy in (18)b).

(18)  a. Andrej *tsepek tol’ko [PIROG]₁ drja sestry.  (=6)c  
      Andrey baked only pie for sister  
   b. Andrej *tol’ko [PIROG]₁* tsepek drja sestry.  (=6)a

The diagram in (19) marshals possible derivations, which result in the attested word order permutations. My proposal invokes three distinct computational mechanisms. To begin with, the number of adjunction sites for *only* is severely restricted. For now, I am presenting only two options: *only* adjoins to vP (Option 1) or, alternatively, to CP (Option 2). The second component is the familiar focus movement: the focal associate (NP in (19) below) must move to form a constituent with *only*. The final piece concerns the behavior of verbs. The status of the latter in Russian is subject to some debate: for the most part, the field converges on the analysis under which Vs *do* move. The outstanding questions are: [i] what is the landing site for this movement; and [ii] is this movement obligatory? Bailyn (1995) and Gribanova (2013), for instance, argue that Vs in Russian move out of VP, though not as high as T. King (1995) endorses the view that they are indeed subject to raising to T. More recent experimental studies (Kallestinova and Slabakova 2008) indicate that the standard adverb placement test yields ambiguous results for Russian: speakers, apparently, allow postverbal adverbs (which is standardly taken to be symptomatic of verb raising) under certain pragmatic conditions. The point here is that Russian seems to behave in a rather inconsistent way: some diagnostics suggest that it ought to be treated on a par with English (which does not raise V-to-T), others point to the opposite conclusion. In view of this and my data on *only*, I would like to entertain the idea that Russian verbs are subject to optional raising akin to French non-finite verbs (Pollock 1989).

I should emphasize that it is immaterial for my purposes what the ultimate landing site for Vs turns out to be: my proposal is compatible with the analyses under which T or any other projection within the verbal domain (e.g., Asp) above vP serve as the target for the raising verbs. Now consider what this accomplishes for my *only*-pattern.
To derive (18)a we need to assume Option 1 for the base position of only. The NP *pirog* moves to adjoin to it. The verb raises out of vP. This yields the surface string, whereby the verb precedes the only-complex. The derivation for (18)b is entirely analogous to (18)a, save for the verb: here it does not move, which produces the opposite order (i.e. *only*+NP>Verb).

In short, I am making two claims here. First, there is but one position in the verbal domain for only: it can only adjoin to vP. Second, the verb in Russian may raise optionally. In the ensuing exposition, I provide evidence in favor of this proposal and demonstrate that CP (rather than TP) is the locus of only in the sentential domain. Both points are defended based on the behavior of only in embedded Yes/No questions.

To make my argument clear, I briefly detour into the properties of embedded polar interrogatives. In Russian, they are formed by introducing a question enclitic *li*, which imposes a strict one prosodic word (1W) requirement on its host. Depending on the nature of the fronted material, one can get a “neutral” Y/N question or a cleft-like Y/N interrogative. The former is demonstrated in (20)a: the position before *li* is occupied by the verb, so the result corresponds to the English translation, i.e. a normal embedded Y/N question. By contrast, the examples in (20)b/c give rise to a focus construal of the fronted material akin to the interpretation found in English clefts (see translations). (20)d showcases the 1W requirement: the element preceding *li* is limited to a single word. Hence, the NP-constituent consisting of two prosodic words is illicit in this pre-*li* position.
(20) a. Ja ne znaju, kupil **li** Ivan mašinu.
   ‘I don’t know whether Ivan bought a car.’

b. Ja ne znaju, Ivan **li** kupil mašinu.
   ‘I don’t know whether it was Ivan who bought the car.’

c. Ja ne znaju, novuju **li** mašinu Ivan kupil.
   ‘I don’t know whether it was the NEW car that Ivan bought.’

d. *Ja ne znaju, novuju mašinu **li** Ivan kupil.

In Zanon (2015) I argue for the following. The Q-marker **li** is generated in C0 (this much seems to be uncontroversial). In examples like (20)a, the verb moves to adjoin to C, hence serving as a satisfactory host for **li** in PF. On the other hand, XPs move to Spec, CP. If the fronted XP contains several stressed elements, **li** must be placed after the first stressed element immediately to its left, as schematized in (21). The latter operation takes place in PF and amounts to a very local rearrangement.

(21) a.... [new car **li** ... ] → syntax output
    b.... [new **li** car ] → PF rearrangement to satisfy 1W of **li**

In other words, in situations like (22)a (where X, Y, and Z are prosodic words that bear stress), **li** can only switch positions with Z, as in (22)b. But this rearrangement produces a configuration which conflicts with the prosodic requirement of **li** (i.e., there is more than one prosodic element before it).

(22) a. Xω Yω Zω **li**...
    b. *Xω Yω **li** Zω ...

I interpret this requirement to move overtly to Spec, CP in Y/N questions to stem from obligatory focus movement in Russian, related to the mandatory movement to **only**. If so, we are in a position to offer an interesting theoretical generalization: in overt focus movement languages, a focalized XP-associate must be adjacent to the F-licensing element.

With these preliminaries in place, consider how my proposal for **only** in (19) combines with the analysis of polar interrogatives. Suppose **only** selects Option 1 from (19) (i.e. it adjoins to vP) and the verb moves to **li**, in the manner of (23).
I predict that the object, but not the subject, can move to *only* in such situations. That is because there is no position reserved for *only* in the T-domain. This is borne out in (24): in (b) *only* is vP-adjoined, so the object can move to it; in degraded (a), *only* must be TP-adjoined to accommodate the subject. Since the latter is distinctly odd, it follows that TP is not a legitimate adjunction site for *only*.

(24) Ja ne znaju...
    I neg know
    a. *posmotrel li tol’ko IVANF étot fil’m.
       watched Q only Ivan this movie
    b. posmotrel li Ivan tol’ko ETOTF fil’m.
       watched Q Ivan only this movie

But if *only* cannot adjoin to TP, there must still be a position for it above it, since trivially *only*+subject complexes (in (25)) exist.

     Only Ivan watched this movie

The contention here is that *only* in (25) instantiates Option 2 from (19): i.e., *only* is adjoined to CP. Let us now scrutinize what Option 2 leads to in the context of “neutral” polar interrogatives, when the verb moves to form a complex head with *li*. If the subject were to move to *only*, as in (26), we run into a PF violation. That is because *li* in this configuration ends up with three prosodic words preceding it: *only>*Noun>*Verb. Local PF rearrangement, whereby *li* is placed to the left of the first stressed element in the manner of (21)b, then cannot derive (24)a (exactly as demonstrated schematically in (22)). In other words, moving a subject to *only* in the context of *V+li* fails to yield the word order in (24)a regardless of the local PF rearrangement with *li* discussed above.

(26) [CP ONLY+subject V+li [TP *subject…]TV [vP TV …]]
Curiously, the asymmetry between subjects and objects, illustrated by (24)a and (24)b, disappears in the contexts of constituent fronting, as in (28). This, too, is expected under my account. The subject in (28)a moves to only, resulting in the structure in (28)a. In contrast to (26), PF rearrangement is possible here: placing li to the immediate left of the stressed element leaves it with exactly one prosodic host: namely, only, as demonstrated in (28)b. Likewise for (27)b: the object moves to the CP-joined only. This too necessitates subsequent PF-reordering, as in (28)b.

(27) Ja ne znaju...
I neg know
a. tol’ko li IVANf posmotrel étot film.
only Q Ivan watched this movie
b. tol’ko li ÉTOTf fil’m Ivan posmotrel.
only Q this movie Ivan watched

(28) a. [CP [ONLY + XP li [TP … VERB [vP …]]]]
b. ONLY li XP → PF rearrangement; 1W of li is satisfied

Note also that the only-complex, once formed, is not splittable in syntax, as demonstrated earlier in (11)a/12)a, exactly like Rudin’s Bulgarian MWh clusters. An apparent violation of this is due to a superficial PF-reordering mechanism.

Until this point, I argued that only can adjoin to CP and vP. Their obvious commonality, i.e. phasehood, motivates the following generalization: only adjoins strictly to phases. My objective now is to extend this insight to the nominal domain. While there is some consensus in the literature over the status of vP and CP, the precise definition of phasehood in the nominal domain is disputed. I adopt Bošković’s (2014) dynamic approach to phases. He argues that the highest phrase in the extended domain of a lexical head functions as a phase. The phasehood of a particular XP hinges on its syntactic context. For example, within the domain of N, NP, DP or QP can in principle be a phase, depending on the inventory of functional elements in a given language and the specific configurations resulting from Merge. Assuming that Russian has no DP (Bošković 2013), the structure in (29)a exemplifies a situation when the NP is the highest phrase in the nominal domain; so, it is a phase here. By contrast, (29)b evinces more structure: the FP assumes the role of a phase, since it is now the highest projection in the domain.
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The same reasoning applies to PPs. Bošković (2014) argues that in P-stranding languages (like English), PPs boast a richer structure than in non-P-stranding languages (e.g., Russian). It follows that a bare PPs fulfill the role of a phase in Russian, as in (30).

(30) [V[^phase^phase][FP P[NP]]]

With these theoretical preliminaries in place, I turn to a peculiar set of examples in (31)—(33), each featuring an apparent violation of the adjacency requirement, whereby only is associated with an F-marked element despite the intervener. The utility of this dataset is twofold: first, it serves as an instrument for investigating the contexts under which discontinuous focus association is licit; and second, it provides evidence in support of my claim regarding the status of FP as a legitimate adjunction site for only. Ultimately, I will reconcile Boškovič’s proposal regarding phases in the nominal domain with my data.

(31) a, an instance of head focus, indicates that Russian tolerates the association with a noun in spite of the intervening adjective. Even though (31)a looks like an instance of NP-adjunction, (31)c (together with my earlier discussion) militate against this treatment: tol’ko cannot adjoin to bare NPs. Observe also that the extraction of the head in this situation results in degraded (31)b, which suggests a link between the impossibility of movement and the availability of discontinuous focus association. Evidently, an element, not eligible for extraction, may serve as a focus associate to only even in the presence of an intervener. So far, we have the following: [i] tol’ko cannot adjoin to NP; and [ii] the noun itself is not extractable. Therefore, (31)a must be a result of movement to the vP-adjoined only. An additional piece of evidence for this is furnished by the contrast in (31)d/f with an in-situ verb: as expected, the NP containing a focal element must be adjacent to tol’ko. Crucially, what moves is the entire NP containing the F-marked head and the intervening adjective (presumably, with a secondary mechanism insuring that the right constituent is associated with only).
To establish whether my proposal is on the right track, consider additional contexts of discontinuous focus association. In (32)a, the F-marked adjective finds itself inside the genitive complement. The adjacency to only is disrupted by the accusative head noun, yet the resulting sentence is acceptable. (32)c is particularly instructive (especially when compared with (31)c): apparently, only can be wedged between the accusative noun and the genitive adjective. This, I take to be symptomatic of the structural divergences between the NP [lenivogo prepodavatelja...] in (31)a and [studentov pervogo kursa] in (32)a. I assume that the former has the structure of (29)a, but the latter takes shape of (29)b. If so, the NP of (32)c contains an additional functional projection – FP, which apparently can host only (cf. (31)c with an attempted adjunction to bare NP). Above I claimed that discontinuous focus association is possible if XP_F cannot move. And this is exactly the case in (32)a/b: LBE of the genitive adjective is impossible in (b), but focus association with it in (a) can be established. In short, from this dataset, we glean that adjunction of only in the nominal domain is not banned in principle: it can proceed as long as the merge site is a functional FP, rather than a bare NP. On the other hand, if only is vP-adjoined (in (32)a) the constituent containing an inextricable focal element must move to it.

(32)  a. Ja znaju tol’ko [studentov PERVOGOF kursa].
    I know only students ACC firstGEN year GEN
    ‘I only know the FIRSTF year students.’
    b. *Ja PEROVOGOF, znaju [studentov ti kursa].
c. Ja znaju [studentov to’ko PERVOGOF kursa].

(33) supplies the final context. If the NP contains several adjectives, only prefers to associate with the higher one, in the manner of (33)a, but the association with the lower adjective is far from unacceptable, as (33)b shows. Some speakers find the extraction of one of the adjectives, illustrated in (33)c, degraded (I will return to this speaker variation shortly). (33)d establishes that only cannot appear between the two adjectives. For these types of constructions I adopt Bošković’s (2016) structure in (33)e: assuming that adjectives are NP-adjuncts and only does not adjoin to NP, (33)d follows. (33)b then is derived in the manner of (31)a and (32)a: namely, the entire NP containing both adjectives moves to only. We also established earlier that the element eligible for discontinuous association with only is the same element that cannot be overtly extracted (shown in (31)b/(32)b).

Since there is some disagreement over the extraction facts in contexts like (33)c (not all speakers find the example bad), it is worth some additional scrutiny. There is a theory internal reason to suspect that in (33)c, the second (lower) adjective indeed cannot move. Bošković (2016) shows that in cases of multiple edges (Specs/adjuncts) of a phase, only the highest one counts as the phasal edge for the purposes of Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC). Recall that on his account, the adjectives in (33)c are adjoined to NP. Given his idea of PIC, only the higher one is eligible for movement, since it instantiates the highest edge. The lower one (Ceylon) in my (33)c is blocked by the higher edge (fresh) and, hence, inextricable. Now, the speaker variation hinges on how tolerant a given informant is of the adjective order permutation in the contexts of NPs with multiple adjectives. Those who accept examples like (33)c, do not object to a marked adjective order (Ceylon > fresh). If so, for such speakers, Ceylon can be the highest edge, which is eligible for movement in (33)c in compliance with Bošković’s conception of PIC. Importantly, all speakers agree that (33)b is acceptable (though not preferred). Observe that here, the composition of NP entails the final order fresh>Ceylon. The lower adjective is not extractable because of the blocking effect of the higher edge (i.e. fresh). Hence, it must be the case that the entire NP, containing an intervening adjective and the F-marked adjective, moves to the vP-adjointed only.
To summarize, the instances catalogued above yield two generalizations: [i] *only* can be associated with an element over an intervener, if this element is not eligible for overt extractions; [ii] *only* does not adjoin to NP, but it can adjoin to a functional phrase within the nominal domain. I am assuming PPs are also ineligible adjunction sites for *only*.

Recall now that under Bošković’s account, which I adopt, NPs and PPs are, in fact, phases in Russian. The question is how to reconcile [ii] with the claim with that *only* adjoins strictly to phases. The problem is easy to overcome. Suppose, Russian imposes an additional requirement for *only*’s merge: *only* has to adjoin to a phase; and the latter must be a functional projection. I argued that in (32a) the noun takes FP as its complement. FP here is a phase (because it is the highest phrase in the nominal domain); and, crucially, it is a functional projection whose *raison d’être* is to mediate the assignment of genitive. With my new caveat, this FP is a legitimate host for *only*. Therefore, we have three possible merge positions for *only*: CP in the clausal domain, vP in the verbal domain, and FP in the nominal domain. All three are phases and, crucially, functional projections.

The remaining issue involves counterexamples to the generalization that the F-marked element must be adjacent to *only* (found in (31)—(33)). I showed that in in each case of felicitous non-adjacency to *only*, the

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4 There is one speculation worth considering. Suppose that English is the same as Russian when it comes to *only*: i.e., *only* adjoins to phases which are also functional projections. In English a DP is a phase and a functional projection, so *only* is eligible to merge with it. The same holds of PP: under Bošković’s (2014) analysis, English PP has more (functional) structure than Russian, which then enables *only* to adjoin to the highest functional projection within the P-domain. This could explain why English *only* can adjoin to what looks like a noun phrase in contrast to Russian. If this is right, then the difference between English and Russian amounts to availability of overt movement for focus.
The focalized element cannot be extracted, which I take to mean that a larger phrase containing this element must be pied-piped to only. The question is: what restrictions obtain for this type of movement? Observe that each instance in (31)a, (32)a, and (33)a shares a common property: the intervener and the focalized constituent are dominated by the same phrase. The latter constitutes the first minimal unit that is eligible for movement. So, while the F-marked element itself cannot move, it can tag along with the first movable XP, provided the latter is sufficiently small and contains the intervener.

In other words, there are limits imposed on the weight of the moving constituent. This “weight” requirement is understood in terms of minimal pied-piping (see Bošković 2004, Chomsky 1995, Stateva 2002 on minimal pied-piping), a mechanism which must meet precisely the conditions described above. That is: [i] the intervener and the focalized element must be dominated by the same XP; and [ii] this XP must be the minimal mobile element, dominating the immobile focalized constituent.

For instance, in (31)a, the F-marked noun and its intervener (the adjective) are dominated by the NP. This NP is the minimal element that can move (in contrast to the head; cf. (31)b). So, there is simply no choice but to move this entire NP to only.

The context in (33)b is amenable to the same treatment. Because the lower adjective cannot be extracted, the only possible way to get as close as possible to only is by pied-piping the minimal XP, which contains the intervener and this adjective. NP is the minimal mobile XP here.

In (32) the overt extraction of the genitive marked complement out of FP is impossible (repeated in (34)a). Crucially, the extraction of the genitive FP, the first potential movable element, in (34)b, is also unacceptable. Therefore, the higher NP is the first movable phrase that contains both the intervener and the focalized element, as shown in (34)c.

(34)  a.*Ja  PERVERGO  znaju [studentov t kursa].
    b. *Ja [FP PERVERGO KURSA] znaju [studentov t FP].
    c.

First movable XP:
  contains an intervener (N) and the focused element (pervogo)

N  studentov  
F  
NP  
FP  

First potential movable element, but not extractable = (34)b

Not extractable = (34)a

PERVERGO  kursa
5 Conclusion

I considered the behavior of Russian only in some detail, offering new empirical observations that set *tol’ko* apart from its English counterpart. The crucial finding involves the adjacency requirement: Russian only must appear next to its focalized associate. I argued that only can be introduced into the structure as an adjunct to phasal functional projections only: CP, vP, and FP in Russian. Driven by the [Foc] feature-checking requirement, a focalized element moves to form a constituent with only in syntax. On the basis of only’s behavior in embedded Y/N questions I argued that only cannot adjoin to TP. Ditto for NP: in contrast to English, *tol’ko* cannot be an NP-adjunct, because it may not appear between a preposition and an NP, does not pattern with other nominal and adjectival modifiers, and fails to induce a scope reading congruent with the NP-adjoined only. On the other hand, unlike a bare NP, a genitive assigning FP inside a noun phrase can function as an adjunction site for only. In situations when the focused constituent is ineligible to move, the entire XP containing this associate must be pied-piped to only. The latter operation, however, is severely constrained: a pied-piped constituent must be minimal. A more substantial theoretical contribution of this paper concerns overt focus movement languages, of which Russian is one. One may hypothesize that adjacency to only is symptomatic of syntactic movement for focus. If so, the prediction is that the adjacency to only is expected to be obligatory in languages argued to have syntactic focus movement.

References

Bošković, Ž. (2014). Now I'm a phase, now I'm not a phase. *LI* 45, 27-90.

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