

Multi-level datives and (in)flexible syntax

1. As its starting point, the paper considers the distribution of dative argument-like dependents in Russian and compares them to their counterparts headed by the preposition *u* ‘at’, (1). These data raise the following questions: (i) Given that datives and *u*-PPs can receive various readings (Beneficiary, Possessor, Experiencer, Causer, etc.), how many distinct types of syntactic dependents are we actually dealing with, and can these readings be formally derived? (ii) What are the base positions of datives and *u*-PPs, i.e., are these dependents generated in the same projection or do they occupy distinct positions?

(1) {Mne / U men’a} rebënok razbil vazû.
I.DAT at me.GEN child.NOM broke vase.ACC

dative: ‘The child broke **my** vase.’, ‘**For me** the child broke a vase.’

PP: ‘(My) child broke (my) vase.’, ‘At my place/in my care the child broke a vase.’

2. We argue that datives and *u*-PPs occupy distinct positions. Datives are structurally lower than *u*-PPs and they are introduced by a high Appl as Affectees. *U*-PPs are introduced above the external argument projection, in AnchorP (see Arylova 2013 and the structure in (5)) to denote the so-called dominion (Matushansky 2021). We further advocate delayed gratification and argue that an argument can receive a composite role matching the semantic features of the functional heads it c-commands. This explains the ambiguity of datives and *u*-PPs and allows us to unify the contexts where they are attested.

3. Evidence that *u*-PPs are merged higher than datives and even higher than external argument comes primarily from the behavior of anaphors and quantifiers (as we show in the full version of the paper). Following Boneh & Nash (2017) i.a., we analyze datives as either Affectees introduced by a high applicative head or Goals introduced by a low applicative head. An occasional possessor reading is a side effect resulting from the dative binding an implicit possessor (consider e.g., the unavailability of using dative as a “pure” possessor in (2a); see Burukina 2014 on implicit possessors in Russian). As for *u*-PPs, (2), we argue that their primary role is that of **dominion** (using the terminology in Matushansky 2021, i.a.; cf. Anchor in Arylova 2013), that is, the area of influence or control of an animate individual. We further propose that the possessor reading arises when the “dominion” binds an implicit possessive pronoun inside another dependent, but it is not a defining characteristic of such constructions. We contend that *u*-PPs are merged in spec,AnchorP, above vP/VoiceP, (5).

(2) a. U menja_i / *mne byla e_i/tvoja kniga.
at me me.DAT was your book

‘I had a/your book.’

b. U nas stemnelo/noč’.
at us got.dark/night

‘At our place it got dark/it’s night.’

Importantly, *u*-PPs regularly receive an unintentional Causer reading, see (3). This becomes especially noticeable in dispositional middles, where a dative dependent is interpreted as an Attitude Holder (Affectee), but a *u*-PP is associated with the causing event (4).

(3) {U menja / *mne} {sgorel sup / vaza razbilas’}.
at me me.DAT burnt soup vase broke

‘The soup burnt/the vase broke and I was responsible.’

(4) {Mne / u etogo avtora} **legko** čitajut-sja takije knigi.
me.DAT at this author easily read-SJA such books.NOM

with DAT: ‘For me such books read easily.’ with PP: ‘Such books **by** this author read easily.’

We argue that the semantic differences between *u*-PPs and datives derive from syntax, as follows.

4. Building on insights in Reinhart (2002) and Kallulli (2006), we advocate an analysis in terms of **featural composition** whereby particular semantic roles are composed of features such as [±intent], [±cause], [±affected] matching the ones located in the heads on the clausal spine that introduce the corresponding arguments. The maximal structure of the thematic domain is schematized in (5). Appl_c bears the [-intent, +cause] feature and introduces a Cause/Causer. *v* bears the [+intent, -cause] feature and introduces an Agent. Appl_a is equipped with the [-intent, +affected] feature and introduces an Affectee. Appl_p denotes the transfer of possession (Pylkkänen 2008) and introduces a Goal.

(5) [AnchorP *u*-PP [Anchor [AppIP _ [Appl_c] [vP Agent [v [AppIP _ [Appl_a] [VP V [AppIP _ [Appl_p Theme]]]]]]]]]]]]

5. We propose that an argument can receive a composite role matching the semantic features of several Appl heads via delayed gratification, much in the spirit of Flexible Syntax (Neeleman & Weerman 1999). Thus, a *u*-PP can check the [+cause] feature on Appl_c and also the [+affected] feature on Appl_a, essentially saturating three roles at the same time. This approach makes the following predictions, which we discuss in detail in the full version of the paper:

◆ There can be constructions that are only compatible with Appl_cP/App_aP/App_pP.

Russian non-Agentive *sja* predicates are incompatible with Affectees. They preserve the causing sub-event entailment (as suggested by their compatibility with certain modifiers and Causes, (6b)) and allow *u*-PPs that are interpreted simultaneously as Domains and unintentional Causers (6a).

- (6) a. {U menja / *mne} razbila-s' vaza.
 at me.GEN me.DAT broke-SJA vase.NOM
 (i) 'My vase broke.' (ii) 'The vase broke and I was responsible.'
- b. Ot vetra razbila-s' vaza.
 from wind broke-SJA vase.NOM
 'The vase broke from the wind.'

◆ If the construction does not allow an Appl_aP but allows an Appl_cP, the *u*-PP is no longer [+affected].

◆ In the presence of an overt Affectee the *u*-PP is no longer [+affected]. ◆ In the presence of an overt Affectee *u*-PP Causer cannot be [+poss] (intervention). ◆ A dative dependent cannot receive a secondary unintentional Causer reading.

6. **Beyond Russian.** In languages lacking the distinction that Russian makes between dative and genitive, the various interpretations of dative and genitive (*u*-PPs) arguments in Russian seen above are expressed exclusively either by datives or genitives, depending on the language. This is e.g. the case both in Albanian (which lacks genitive) and German (where the genitive is being supplanted by the dative), but also in Greek, where only genitive has survived. Indeed, Kallulli (2006) analyzes the examples in (7), in which a dative (or, in Greek, a genitive) may be interpreted as an affected participant, a possessor, or an unintentional causer in a very similar fashion to the Russian data analyzed above.

- (7) a. *Benit i-u thye dritarja.* (Albanian)
 Ben.the_{DAT} him_{CL,DAT}-NACT.AOR broke.3S window.the_{NOM}
- b. *Tu Ben tu kaike i supa.* (Greek)
 the_{GEN} Ben him_{CL,GEN} burn-NACT.P the_{NOM} soup
- c. *Na Ben mu se šcupixa očilata.* (Bulgarian)
 to Ben him_{CL,DAT} REFL broke.3PL glasses.the
- d. *Lui Ben i se sparse ferestrea.* (Rumanian)
 Ben_{DAT} him_{CL,DAT} REFL broke.3S window.the
- e. *Dem Ben zerbrach das Fenster.* (German)
 the_{DAT} Ben broke the_{NOM} window
- b. *A Ben se le rompió el coche.* (Spanish)
 To Ben REFL CL_{,DAT} broke the car
- (i) 'Ben's window broke.' (ii) 'The window broke and Ben was affected by that.'
 (iii) 'Ben unintentionally broke the window.' / 'Ben had the window break on him.'

Consequently, we may state that *u*-PP (with the genitive) in Russian seems to function as an exponent of the dative or the genitive (depending on the language) in these other languages. This brings us back to Flexible Syntax, where Case is taken to provide a syntactic foothold for thematic interpretation. Ending on a speculative note, we might further want to relate the differences between Russian and the rest of the languages mentioned above to the fact that they also differ in terms of BE- vs. HAVE-possession: the thematic split between dative and *u*-PP dependents in Russian correlates with BE-possession, while the languages with a single strategy mentioned here employ HAVE possession. Note that the unintentional causer reading is even in English rendered through HAVE.

Selected refs. Arylova, A. 2013. Possession in the Russian Clause. PhD diss. Universiteit Groningen. Boneh, N. & L. Nash. 2017. The syntax and semantics of dative DPs in Russian ditransitives. *NLLT* 35(4): 899-953. Burukina, I. 2014. Syntax of the Implicit Possessives in Russian. MA thesis. RSUH, Moscow, Russia. Kallulli, D. 2006. Unaccusatives with dative causers and experiencers. In *Datives and other cases* 271–300. Benjamins. Matushansky, O. 2021. Intersecting location and possession. *LV* 21(1): 174–213. Neeleman, A. & F. Weerman. 1999. *Flexible Syntax*. Springer. Reinhart, T. 2002. The theta-system: an overview. *TL* 28: 229–290.