

The Locational Predicative Possession Construction in Russian

The topic of this talk is the Russian predicative possession construction illustrated in (1). The construction involves a PP possessor, a Nominative possessum, and an existential verb, mainly *byt* 'be':

- (1) U menja est' sobak-a.
at I.GEN is dog.F-NOM.SG
'I have a dog.'

The sentence in (1) is an instance of the *locational* strategy of encoding predicative possession, according to the typological classification of Stassen (2005).

The predominant analysis of the structure of the Russian locational predicative possession construction (LPPC) is a PP/Small Clause analysis in the style of Freeze (1992), Den Dikken (1998), Harley (2002). The small clause containing the possessor and the possessum is headed either by the preposition *u* 'at', or by some kind of abstract head *X*. The verb *byt* 'be' in a small clause analysis can be viewed either as a functional element in the IP domain or a one-place predicate taking the small clause as its argument.

One of the problems for the PP/Small Clause analysis is that it cannot account for the differences between the LPPC and unambiguously small clause constructions, such as constructions with AP/NP predicates. The differences include the distribution of the Genitive of Negation, the behavior of the verb *byt* 'be', and the possibility of embedding under control and raising predicates.

In this talk I argue for an alternative view of the structure of the Russian LPPC: a double unaccusative analysis, where the existential *byt* 'be' is a lexical predicate taking the possessor and the possessum as its two internal arguments (cf. Chvany 1975). I discuss the details of the double unaccusative analysis, such as the ordering of the arguments in the LPPC, which can be established with the help of Harley's (2002) quantifier binding diagnostic. Finally, I suggest that a double unaccusative analysis of the Russian LPPC can more easily incorporate the properties differentiating the LPPC from AP/NP predicate constructions.

References

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