

The Nominative object parameter and dative subjects in Russian

This paper discusses two Russian constructions with a dative subject — Dative-Predicative-Structures (DPS) exemplified by sentences like Ru. *Мне холодно, мне нужно посмотреть фильм, Мне странно, что P* and Dative-Verbal-Structures (DVS) exemplified by sentences like Ru. *Мне легко дышится, мне не хочется смотреть фильм.*

Proposal. I argue that the syntax of both DPS and DVS is explained by a combination of 3 parameters — A) [+Dative subject parameter] licensing dative subjects in a number of languages including Russian and Icelandic [Sigurðsson 2002]; B) [- Nominative object parameter] blocking nominative objects in a number of languages including standard Russian [Zimmerling 2010]; C) [+ Assymetry parameter], according to which infinitival complements of verbs and predicatives do not take positions identical to positions of any non-sentential arguments of these verbs and predicatives, cf. a similar analysis, albeit based on different data in [Nikitina 2009; 2011].

Previous research. Babby (2002) assumes that neither DPS and DVS project a subject position. Zimmerling (2010) argues that Russian has two types of dative subjects constructions — DPS and Dative-Infinitive-Structures — but does not analyze DVS. Say (2013) puts forward a hypothesis that some Russian DPS predicatives inherited the dative valency from adjectives that license dative-nominative structures. Zimmerling & Trubitsina (2015) show that infinitival complements of DPS predicatives violate island constraints and argue that InfP does not raise to subject position if dative subjects are overtly expressed.

Analysis. I'll show that the [- Nominative object] parameter holds for both for DPS and DVS. DPS predicatives block non-sentential objects in the nominative case. Non-agreeing DPS predicatives capable of taking infinitival complements like *приятно₁* (cf. *Мне приятно-Pred читать-Inf эти книги-Acc.Pl.*) often have syntactic homonyms in agreeing adjectives like *приятно₂* licensing dative-nominative structures with a nominative subject (cf. *Мне приятно-Adj.N.Sg. чтение-Nom.Sg.N. этих книг, Мне приятны-Adj.Pl. эти книги-Nom.Pl.*). The same proportion holds for elements like *по силам*, *не по душе*, *кстати*, *некстати*, which do not exhibit agreement on the level of morphology. I argue that those morphologically deficient elements from the *по силам* class that license DPS structures must be recognized as pairs of syntactic homonyms like *по силам₁* (cf. *Мне было-Aux.Prt.3.Sg.N. по силам₁-Pred выполнить-Inf эти задания-Acc.Pl.*) vs agreeing analytic adjectives *по силам₂* (cf. *Мне были-Aux.Prt.3.Pl. по силам₂-Adj эти задания-Nom.Pl.*), along the same lines predicatives like *приятно₁* and morphologically well-formed agreeing short adjectives like *приятно₂* must be recognized as two different elements in syntax. Moreover, there are defective pairs PRED vs

ADJ where the agreeing adjective blocks a dative structure with a nominalization while the predicative takes an infinitival complement. Cf. *Мне опасно₁-Pred брать-Inf пежку-А. на проходе* vs **мне опасно₂-Adj.Sg.N. взятие-N.Sg.N. на проходе*. The last sentence can be improved by substituting the subject-like dative *мне* by a non-subject element *для меня*: *взятие-N.Sg.N. на проходе для меня-Gen.Prep опасно₂ -Adj.Sg.N.* Exactly the same distribution is found in DVS structures. One part of DVS verbs licences both infinitival complements and nominalizations case-marked by the nominative case, cf. *Мне нравится-3Sg.N. читать-Inf книги -Acc.Pl. ~ Мне нравится-3Sg.N. чтение -Nom.Sg.N.*, while another part of DVS verbs only license infinitival complements but blocks nominative objects: *Мне не терпится-3Sg. прочитать-Inf эти книги-Acc.Pl. ~ *Мне не терпится-3Sg прочтение-Nom.Sg.N. этих книг, *Мне не терпятся-3Pl. эти книги-Nom.Pl.*

Typological/contrastive perspective. I am planning to compare the Russian data with Bulgarian, which both has DPS structures with non-agreeing predicatives and DVS structures with a reflexive verb, cf. Bg. *не му се става* ‘He does not want to stand up’. A prominent feature of Bulgarian grammar is that it also licences nominative NPs with detransitive DVS reflexive verbs, which is strictly impossible in Russian, cf. Bg. *Пие-3Sg. ми се кафе-Nom.Sg. ~ Rus. *Мне пьется кофе*. The NP in the nominative (or unmarked) case controls in Bg. the number agreement of the DVS reflexive: Bg. *Яде-3Sg. ми се шоколад-Nom.Sg. ~ Ядат-3Pl. ми се бонбони-Nom.Pl* ‘I feel like eating candies’. Most authors interpret the nominative NP in Bg. DVS sentences as grammatical subject, cf. [Ivanova & Gradinarova 2015], but I’ll discuss an alternative possibility of analyzing it as object and postulating the value [+ Nominative object] for Bulgarian. If this analysis is correct, nominative case marking on the object can be explained in the perspective of Differential Argument Marking, see [Lyutikova, Ronko, Zimmerling 2016].

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