

## External Possession, Reflexivization and Body Parts in Russian

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### 1. Introduction

This paper surveys basic syntactic techniques for expressing the relationship between a body part and its possessor in Russian, focusing on external possession constructions. We examine conditions allowing pronominalization by means of reflexive pronouns in the case of external possession.<sup>1</sup> Our main goal is to provide a coherent semantic and pragmatic account for the particular pattern of syntactic configurations exhibited by the various constructions in this family of construction types. In Russian, the range of allowable body part (BP) possession constructions depends on the semantic and pragmatic character of the relationship between the possessor and his/her/its body part, as represented by the lexical meaning of the head verb as well as conventionalized metaphorical extensions of this meaning.

Russian is one of the many Indo-European languages that allow so-called "possessor raising"<sup>2</sup> constructions, often classified as "dative of interest", "ethical", "benefactive", or "sympathetic dative" (cf., inter alia, Cienki 1993; Wierzbicka 1988 and the bibliography there). This type of construction is exemplified in (1):

- (1) *Postiraj mne, požalujsta, rubašku*  
wash:IMP I:DAT please shirt:ACC  
'Wash me the shirt, please.'

The animate dative nominal in these constructions is "extra-thematic," in that this argument is not licensed by the head verb, or 'is not part of the case frame of



the head' verb (Shibatani 1994: 465). The referent of the dative nominal is always affected by the action denoted by the head verb (Rakhilina 1982; Wierzbicka 1988: 169–236). The notion of affectedness will be discussed in detail in the next section, but, for now, we shall focus on the fact that the relationship between the referents of the dative nominal and the accusative nominal is usually, but not exclusively, possessive. In (2), for instance, the actual possessor of the shirt is marked internally to the direct object constituent:

- (2) *Postiraj mne, požalujsta, papinu sinjuju rubašku*  
 wash:IMP I:DAT please father:POSS:ACC blue:ACC shirt:ACC  
 'Wash father's blue shirt for me, please.'

When a direct object is a BP nominal<sup>3</sup>, the possessive interpretation is forced in Russian (as well as in many other languages where similar dative constructions are observed, as pointed out in Shibatani 1994). In this case, the referent of the dative nominal is interpreted as the possessor of the BP and no simultaneous internal possessor marking is allowed:

- (3) *Petja slomal Vase (\*svoju / \*ego /*  
 Petja:NOM has.broken Vasja:DAT (\*REFL:POSS:ACC / \*he:POSS:ACC /  
*\*Petinu / \*Vasinu) ruku*  
 \*Petja:POSS:ACC / \*Vasja:POSS:ACC) arm:ACC  
 'Petja has broken Vasja's arm.' Lit. 'Petja has broken [for/on] Vasja [the] arm.'

An important point to notice here is the fact that, without the extra-thematic dative, if a Russian verb has an animate subject and a BP noun as another core argument (usually a direct object), it is the animate subject that is interpreted as the possessor and, normally, the possessor is not simultaneously expressed internally to the direct object constituent (either by a possessive pronoun, or by a reflexive possessive pronoun, or by a possessive adjective):

- (4) *Petja slomal (\*svoju / \*ego / \*Petinu)*  
 Petja:NOM broke (\*REFL:POSS:ACC / \*POSS:ACC / \*Petja:POSS:ACC)  
*ruku*  
 arm:ACC  
 'Petja<sub>i</sub> broke [his<sub>i</sub>] arm.'

This means that, when the internal possessor marking is blocked, it is the presence or absence of the extra-thematic dative argument that indicates the actual possessor of the body part. Since in the absence of the dative argument the possessor is unambiguously associated with the referent of the subject, one could



expect that there should be no need of reflexivization in sentences like (3) and (4) above. However, alongside (3) and (4), the following dative construction with the reflexive *sebe* is also possible:

- (5) *Petja slomal sebe ruku*  
 Petja:NOM broke REFL:DAT arm:ACC  
 'Petja<sub>i</sub> broke his<sub>i</sub> arm.' Lit. 'Petja<sub>i</sub> broke [for/on] himself<sub>i</sub>, [the] arm.'

Moreover, the reflexive pronoun *sebe* as an extra-thematic dative argument may occur even with verbs that describe situations where the possessor of the body part can be no one else but the animate figure expressed by the subject. This happens in constructions that we will conventionally label "pseudo possessor raising" (see Section 3 for further discussion):

- (6) *Ona stërla Ø / sebe / \*ej nogu*  
 she:NOM rubbed Ø / REFL:DAT / \*she:DAT foot:ACC  
 'She gave herself a blister.' Lit. 'She<sub>i</sub> rubbed Ø / [for/on] herself<sub>i</sub>, [the] foot [sore].'

The Russian verb *steret* here has the meaning 'to get blisters because your shoes rub' and you simply cannot describe rubbing someone else's foot with this particular verb. Hence, the reflexive pronoun is not necessary for pointing out the actual possessor. In other words, again, the reflexive pronoun appears here not for reference disambiguation, and, thus, must have some other functional motivation.

On the other hand, not all verbs that allow BP nominals as direct objects also allow extra-thematic dative arguments — reflexivized or not. Verbs of perception and sensation, for instance, usually force the internal possessor marking and do not allow dative constructions:

- (7) *Ja ljublju (\*sebe / \*tebe) tvoi svetlye volosy*  
 I:NOM love (\*REFL:DAT / \*you:DAT) your:ACC fair:ACC hair:ACC  
 'I love your fair hair.'

Thus, some verbs with BP direct objects in Russian allow an extra-thematic dative argument (sometimes with its further reflexivization) even in cases where there seems to be no reason for it, while others prohibit it even in cases where there are no obvious contraindications.

In this paper we will argue that, in addition to pure syntactic restrictions, there are also semantic and pragmatic factors controlling the phenomenon and that among them the lexical meaning of the head verb should be considered as one of the most decisive.



The paper consists of two major divisions, Section 2 and Section 3. In Section 2, we will compare possessor raising and possessor splitting constructions — two basic Russian constructions in which a possessive relationship is necessarily entailed between a BP nominal and an animate nominal, and where the possessor is expressed externally to the constituent which contains the (inalienably) possessed item. We try to show that it is mainly the lexical meaning of the head verb that controls the choice between possessor raising and possessor splitting patterns. Then, in Section 3, we discuss the conditions that allow or favor reflexivization in possessor raising constructions. We would like to advance a coherent semantico-pragmatic account that combines the lexical meaning of the verb, the semantic contribution made by the dative construction per se, and the semantic effect of reflexivization.

## 2. Basic BP external possession constructions in Russian

Russian has two distinct BP external possession constructions with extra-thematic arguments, namely, possessor splitting and possessor raising.<sup>4</sup> In the possessor splitting construction, the possessor is a core argument (usually a direct object marked with the accusative) of the head verb, while a BP nominal is an extra-thematic argument specifying the most “affected” BP. This argument is expressed by a directional preposition plus the BP nominal in the case required by the preposition — normally, dative or accusative.

- (8) *Griša poceloval Mašu v guby*  
 Griša:NOM kissed Maša:ACC in lips:ACC  
 ‘Griša kissed Maša on the lips.’
- (9) *Maša udarila Grišu po ščeke*  
 Maša:NOM hit Griša:ACC on cheek:DAT  
 ‘Maša hit Griša on the cheek.’

Possessor raising constructions, in contrast, have a BP nominal as a core argument (usually a direct object) of the head verb while the possessor is an extra-thematic argument marked with the dative. In other words, while in possessor splitting constructions it is the possessor and **not the BP** that fills in the valency slot opened by the head verb, in possessor raising constructions, it is the BP and **not the possessor** that fills in the relevant valency slot:

- (10) *Babuška pomyla vnuku ruki*  
 grandmother:NOM washed grandson:DAT hands:ACC



'Grandmother washed the grandson's hands.' Lit. '...washed [for/on] grandson [the] hands'

- (11) *Vrač obrabotal bol'nomu ranu*  
 doctor:NOM dressed patient:DAT injury:ACC  
 'The doctor dressed the patient's injury.' Lit. '...dressed [for/on] [the] patient [the] injury.'

In possessor splitting constructions the BP nominal can be omitted while the possessor nominal cannot:

- (12) *Griša poceloval Mašu v guby*  
 Griša:NOM kissed Maša:ACC in lips:ACC  
 'Griša kissed Maša on the lips.'
- ⇒ *Griša poceloval Mašu*  
 Griša:NOM kissed Maša:ACC  
 'Griša kissed Maša.'

but not

- ⇒ \**Griša poceloval v guby*  
 Griša:NOM kissed in lips:ACC  
 'Griša kissed on the lips.'

In possessor raising constructions, by contrast, the possessor nominal can be omitted while the BP nominal cannot:

- (13) *Vrač obrabotal bol'nomu ranu*  
 doctor:NOM dressed patient:DAT injury:ACC  
 'The doctor dressed the patient's injury.' Lit. '...dressed [for/on] [the] patient [the] injury.'
- ⇒ *Vrač obrabotal ranu*  
 doctor:NOM dressed injury:ACC  
 'The doctor dressed the injury.'

but not

- ⇒ \**Vrač obrabotal bol'nomu*  
 doctor:NOM dressed patient:DAT  
 'The doctor dressed [for/on] the patient.'

Thus, in possessor splitting constructions the BP nominal is a peripheral argument, while the possessor nominal is a core argument. In possessor raising constructions, vice versa, the possessor nominal is a peripheral argument, while



the BP nominal is a core argument.<sup>5</sup>

The main function of possessor raising constructions is to show personal affectedness of the possessor (see for details Rakhilina 1982; Wierzbicka 1988: 169–236). The semantic element that could be conventionally labeled as ‘affectedness’ must be a part of the lexical meaning for those verbs that allow possessor raising. Using the framework outlined in Wierzbicka 1988: 169–236, we will demonstrate below that a difference in ‘affectedness’ may be the only difference between two almost synonymous verbs. This explains the fact that one verb allows integration of the possessor as an extra-thematic dative argument while another does not.

A good example of the lexically motivated possessor raising in the BP domain is given by a group of Russian verbs that denote different ways of ‘touching’. Verbs that describe operating with the object itself, without any possible consequences for its possessor, normally disallow possessor raising, except in very limited contexts. For instance, the verb *potrogat* ‘to touch’ is normally used with the internal possessor, or with possessor splitting, as in (14), but not with possessor raising, cf. (15):

- (14) *Potrogaj eë za kolenku*  
touch:IMP she:ACC for knee:ACC  
‘Touch her on the knee’

but

- (15) ??*Potrogaj ej kolenku*  
touch:IMP she:DAT knee:ACC  
‘Touch her knee.’ Lit. ‘Touch [for/on] her [the] knee’

The verb *potrogat* allows possessor raising only in contexts like (16):

- (16) *Po-moemu u neë temperatura. Potrogaj*  
[it seems to] me by she:GEN fever:NOM touch:IMP  
*ej lob!*  
she:DAT forehead:ACC  
‘She seems to have fever. Feel her forehead!’ Lit. ‘Touch [for/on] her [the] forehead’.

The natural interpretation of (16) is ‘touch her forehead to see if she has fever’. Here the verb *potrogat* is a contextual synonym to the verb *poščupat* ‘to feel (to touch in order to find out something)’. The latter easily allows possessor raising which in BP possession constructions is interpreted as ‘touching the BP in order to find out the state of the possessor’. One may use (17) with reference



to a child who just came in after playing in the snow:

- (17) *Nado poščupat' emu nogi, ne promočil li?*  
 [it.is].necessary touch.and.check:INF he:DAT feet:ACC NEG got:wet Q  
 '[We] should feel his feet: maybe he got wet'. Lit. 'touch-and-check  
 [for/on] him [the] feet'

The verb *naščupat'* 'to find by groping', on the other hand, refers only to the fact of touching an object **as a whole**, and its parts cannot be specified. Therefore, the verb does not allow possessor splitting, cf. (18). It implies no affectedness of the possessor, and, therefore, it blocks possessor raising as well, cf. (19), and, thus the only possibility is to use the internal possessor, as shown in (20):

- (18) \**Ona naščupala ego v temnote za lokot'*  
 she:NOM groped he:ACC in darkness:LOC on elbow:ACC  
 'She found [and touched] him on the elbow in the darkness.'
- (19) \**Ona naščupala v temnote emu lokot'*  
 she:NOM groped in darkness:LOC he:DAT elbow:ACC  
 'She found [and touched] [for/on] him the elbow in the darkness.'
- (20) *Ona naščupala v temnote*  
 she:NOM groped in darkness:LOC  
*ego lokot'*  
 his:ACC elbow:ACC  
 'She found [and touched] his elbow in the darkness.'

Another example of lexical constraints on possessor raising is given by Russian verbs that denote greeting gestures. The degree of personal affectedness of the possessor may depend on the way the BP is involved in a culturally institutionalized gesture. For example, "kissing on the chin" (in the Russian cultural paradigm) is nothing more than specifying where a person was kissed. "Hand-kissing", on the other hand, is a sort of conventionalized gesture that requires that the recipient is personally affected, being the one who is greeted by this gesture. That is why the former is naturally described with possessor splitting (see 21 as opposed to 22), while the latter with possessor raising (see 23 as opposed to 24):

#### possessor splitting

- (21) *On poceloval eë v podborodok*  
 he:NOM kissed she:ACC in chin:ACC  
 'He kissed her on the chin.'

but



- (22) ??*On* — *poceloval eë*      *v ruku*  
 he:NOM kissed      she:ACC in hand:ACC  
 'He kissed her on the hand.'

**possessor raising**

- (23) *On*      *poceloval ej*      *ruku*  
 he:NOM kissed      she:DAT hand:ACC  
 'He kissed her hand.' Lit. 'He kissed [for/on] her [the] hand.'

but

- (24) ??*On*      *poceloval ej*      *podborodok*  
 he:NOM kissed      she:DAT chin:ACC  
 'He kissed her chin.' Lit. 'He kissed [for/on] her [the] chin.'

Possessor raising is allowed in Russian not only from the direct object, but also from noun phrases introduced by directional prepositions. These noun phrases normally express the goal of movement. Here again, the BP nominal and not the possessor is required to satisfy the valency of the head verb, and the possessor is raised to show its personal affectedness. Compare the two sentences with the verb *nastupit'* 'to tread (over/on)' which keeps the possessor internally marked when the item, e.g. 'carpet' in (25), is alienably possessed, but forces possessor raising from the prepositional phrase in combination with a BP nominal, as in (26):

- (25) *Ona*      *nastupila na ego*      *kovër*      (*grjaznymi botinkami*)  
 she:NOM trod      on his:ACC carpet:ACC dirty:INSTR boots:INSTR  
 'She trod over his carpet (in [her] dirty boots).'
- (26) *Ona*      *nastupila emu*      *na nogu*  
 she:NOM trod      he:DAT on foot:ACC  
 'She trod on his toe'. Lit. '...[for/on] him on [the] foot'

Possessors raised from phrases headed by directional prepositions may be expressed not only with "plain" dative case, but also with the preposition *k* 'to[ward]' plus dative. Thus (27) may have two variants — *k nemu* 'to[ward] he:DAT' and *emu* 'he:DAT':

- (27) *Ona*      *sela*      *k*      *nemu* / *emu*      *na koleni*  
 she:NOM sat:down to[ward] he:DAT / he:DAT on knees:ACC  
 'She sat on his knees'. Lit. '...to[ward] him / him on [the] knees'

The possessor cannot be marked with *k* when his/her personal affectedness goes beyond pure spatial changes. Thus, the raised possessor in (28) can only be used with the plain dative, but not with *k* plus dative, because 'she' experiences not



just that the shawl is moved from some place to her shoulders, but also that she feels now warmer and more comfortable:

- (28) *On nabrosil šal' ej / \*k nej*  
 he:NOM threw:over shawl:ACC she:DAT / \*to[ward] she:DAT  
*na pleči*  
 on shoulders:ACC  
 'He threw the shawl over her shoulders.'

Similarly, one and the same expression with a BP may allow both plain dative and *k* plus dative in its direct meaning, but forbids *k* plus dative when used metaphorically:

- (29) *Rebēnok sel emu / k nemu na šeju*  
 child:NOM sat:down he:DAT / to[ward] he:DAT on neck:ACC  
 'The child<sub>i</sub> sat on his<sub>j</sub> neck'. Lit. 'him / to[ward] him on the neck'  
 (pure spatial interpretation)

but

- (30) *Rebēnok sel emu / \*k nemu na šeju*  
 child:NOM sat:down he:DAT / \*to[ward] he:DAT on neck:ACC  
 'The child<sub>i</sub> sat on his<sub>j</sub> neck'. Lit. 'him / \*to[ward] him on the neck'  
 i.e. "stopped earning money relying only on his financial help"  
 (metaphoric interpretation).

In this section we have attempted to show that the lexical meaning of a head verb (or sometimes even the lexical meaning of a given combination of a head verb and a BP noun, cf. 'kissing someone's hand' vs. 'kissing someone's chin' in (21)–(24) above) can block, allow or favor the expression of extra-thematic arguments by means of possessor splitting, "plain" dative and prepositional dative possessor raising. In the next section we will demonstrate that the lexical meaning of a head verb controls also reflexivization in possessor raising BP constructions.

### 3. Reflexivization in possessor raising BP constructions: Some correlations between reflexivization and semantic reflexivity

A verb with an animate subject and a BP nominal as its other core argument may express the three following types of situations.

Type (A). Situations where the animate entity expressed by the subject is



obligatorily the possessor of the body part. Thus, for (31) the only possible interpretation is that the tongue I bit was my own :

- (31) *Ja prikusil [\*ego] jazyk*  
 I:NOM bit [\*his] tongue:ACC  
 'I bit [my] tongue.'

One simply cannot describe biting someone else's tongue with this particular verb.

**Type (B).** Situations where the animate entity expressed by the subject may or may not be the possessor of the body part. Thus, for (32) two interpretations are possible: 'my own ear' and 'someone else's ear' (though 'my own ear' reading is more natural):

- (32) *Ja dotronulsja do uxa*  
 I:NOM touched at ear:GEN  
 'I touched [the] ear.'

For disambiguation it is necessary to specify the possessor, e.g. by means of a possessive pronoun.

**Type (C).** Situations where the animate entity expressed by the subject cannot be the possessor of the body part. Thus, in (33) *požat' ruku* 'to shake one's hand' means a sympathetic gesture and the body part involved cannot belong to the person expressed by the subject:

- (33) *On požal mne ruku*  
 he:NOM shook I:DAT hand:ACC  
 'He shook my hand.' Lit. 'he shook [for/on] me [the] hand.'

We may say that types (A), (B) and (C) differ in degrees of **semantic** reflexivity, such that type (A) is the most semantically reflexive and type (C) is the least semantically reflexive.

In the next sections we will point out possible correlations between semantic and syntactic reflexivity. In other words, we will try to show that, depending on its lexical meaning, the head verb may block, allow or favor reflexivization of the extra-thematic argument and, furthermore, the extra-thematic argument substituted for a reflexive pronoun may differently contribute to the general meaning of the construction. The discussion in the next sections is restricted to verbs that don't allow the possessor of the related body part to be expressed, and those that allow the possessor to be expressed either internally or with "plain" dative possessor raising.



3.1 *Strong semantic reflexivity*

## 3.1.1

"Absolute" semantic reflexives are "verb plus BP noun" combinations that describe those relatively rare actions that are performed exclusively with a part of one's own body, normally, with some emotional or communicative motivation. Among them are, for instance, *stisnut' zuby* 'clench [one's] teeth (in a determined or angry way)', *priščurit' glaza* 'to squint [one's eyes]', *prikusit' jazyk* 'bite [one's] tongue (also in the figurative sense, i.e., to refrain from speaking)'. Possessors in these constructions cannot be expressed, either internally or externally:

- (34) *On priščuril*  
 he:NOM squinted  
 \*svoi / \*sebe / \*ego / \*emu glaza  
 \*REFL:POSS:ACC / \*REFL:DAT / \*he:POSS:ACC / \*he:DAT eyes:ACC  
 'He squinted.'. Lit. 'He squinted [the] eyes'

## 3.1.2

Some semantically reflexive "verb plus BP noun" combinations do not allow external possessor, but allow what might be called "the descriptive reflexive" — the reflexive internal possessor that optionally appears together with some other internally expressed attribute of the BP noun. Compare the following two examples:

- (35) *Maša namorščila lob*  
 Maša:NOM wrinkled brow:ACC  
 'Maša<sub>i</sub> wrinkled [her<sub>i</sub>] brow.'
- (36) *Maša namorščila Ø/svoj ušiblennyj lob*  
 Maša:NOM wrinkled REFL:POSS:ACC hurt:ACC brow:ACC  
 'Maša<sub>i</sub> wrinkled Ø/her<sub>i</sub> hurt brow.'

In (35) and (36) the brow unambiguously belongs to Maša, because wrinkling is a semantically reflexive action that can be performed exclusively with one's own brow. So the possessive reflexive adjective *svoj* is not needed for disambiguation in (36). It appears to show that the involved body part deserves special characterization. Sometimes when this characterization is implied by the context, the possessive reflexive adjective may appear even without any other attribute, as in (37) below, where the brow is characterized "internally", by the diminutive suffix *ik*:



- (37) *Ne moršči svoj lob-ik!*  
 NEG wrinkle:IMP REFL:POSS:ACC brow-DIM:ACC  
 'Don't wrinkle your [nice, cute, pretty etc.] brow.'

Other examples of semantically reflexive "verb plus BP noun" combinations that allow the internal possessor marked with the "descriptive" reflexive include: *obliznut' guby* 'lick [one's] lips', *nadut' guby* 'pout [one's lips]', *vysunut' jazyk* 'to stick [one's] tongue out.' These constructions with the BP noun as a direct object are functionally very close to semantically reflexive constructions with BP nouns as instrumental objects — the latter also allow internal possessors marked with the "descriptive" reflexives:

- (38) *Ščenok viljal svoim pušistym xvostom*  
 puppy:NOM wagged REFL:POSS:INSTR fluffy:INSTR tail:INSTR  
 'A puppy<sub>i</sub> wagged his<sub>i</sub> fluffy tail.' Lit. '...with his<sub>i</sub> fluffy tail'

### 3.1.3

Some semantically reflexive "verb plus BP noun" combinations allow what we call "pseudo possessor raising", cf. example (6) in Section 1. In these constructions the optional reflexive pronoun in the dative case (*sebe*) is, again, not needed for reference disambiguation:

- (39) *Ona propoloskala Ø / sebe / \*emu gorlo*  
 she:NOM gargled Ø / REFL:DAT / \*he:DAT throat:ACC  
 'She gargled'. Lit. 'She<sub>i</sub> gargled Ø / [for/on] herself<sub>i</sub> [the] throat.'

Gargling presumes operating only with one's own mouth or throat, so the reflexive is not necessary for pointing out the actual possessor. Some other examples of semantically reflexive "verb plus BP noun" combinations that allow "pseudo possessor raising" include: *steret' sebe nogu* 'to rub [oneself] a foot [with a shoe]' (i.e. 'to get blisters, because the shoes rub'), *rastjanut' sebe myšcu* 'to strain [oneself] a muscle', *otrastit' sebe borodu* 'to grow [oneself] a beard.' The dative reflexive pronoun, when used with the verbs of these group, emphasizes the following two points: (a) the situation is either initiated by the subject / = possessor ('gargling'), or results from the action initiated by the subject / = possessor ('rubbing one's foot', e.g. as a result of putting on new shoes), and (b) the situation has a long-lasting visible effect on the subject / = possessor.



### 3.2 Weak semantic reflexivity

In this section we will describe three main types of the “verb plus BP noun” combinations that code activities involving body parts whose possessors are not obligatorily coreferential with the subject.

#### 3.2.1

Expressions like *otkryt' rot* ‘to open [one’s] mouth’, *zakryt' glaza* ‘to close [one’s] eyes’, *povernut' golovu* ‘to turn [one’s] head’, *sognut' ruku* ‘to bend [one’s] arm’ — prototypically are semantic reflexives but allow non-reflexive use under special conditions.

When used prototypically as semantic reflexives they either have the unmarked possessor, as in (40), or allow “the descriptive” reflexive internal possessor (cf. Section 2.1.2.), as in (41):

- (40) *On naklonil golovu*  
 he:NOM bowed head:ACC  
 ‘He<sub>i</sub> bowed [his<sub>i</sub>] head’.
- (41) *On naklonil svoju seduju golovu*  
 he:NOM bowed REFL:POSS:ACC grey:ACC head:ACC  
 ‘He<sub>i</sub> bowed his<sub>i</sub> grey head’.

The unmarked or internal possessor in the above examples presume the natural interpretation “the body part movement caused by psychoenergy” (cf. Rakhilina 1982). An important point to notice here is the fact that in Russian the same set of verbs is used to describe actions performed naturally with a part of one’s own body as well as actions performed with a part of other person’s body: *naklonit' golovu* means ‘to bow [one’s] head’ and ‘to push [someone’s] head down’; *podnjat' ruku* means ‘to raise [one’s] hand’ and ‘to lift [someone’s] hand’ etc. Unlike English, which has a lexical opposition available, Russian makes use of dative possessor raising constructions to describe actions that cannot be performed in a natural way and need someone’s help:

- (42) *On naklonil Maše golovu*  
 he:NOM bowed Maša:DAT head:ACC  
 ‘He pushed Maša’s head down. Lit. ‘He bowed [for/on] Maša [the] head’.

In other words, the verbs of this group require the dative external possessor to express the unnatural non-reflexive sense. These cases might be called “the disabled dative” (cf. also the opposition “direct vs. indirect bodily actions” in



Wierzbicka 1988: 169–237). The dative external possessor may keep the “disabled” reading even when it is pronominalized by the reflexive pronoun. This is possible when the animate entity referred to by the subject performs an action with his/her own body part in an unnatural way with additional effort, manipulation or an instrument:

- (43) *On naklonil sebe golovu*  
 he:NOM bowed REFL:DAT head:ACC  
 ‘He<sub>i</sub> pushed his<sub>i</sub> head down. Lit. ‘He<sub>i</sub> bowed [for/on] himself<sub>i</sub> [the] head’.

### 3.2.2

Some “verb plus BP noun” combinations may elicit different semantic interpretations depending on whether the subject is coreferential to the possessor of the body part, or not. Thus, “damaging” verbs including *slomat* ‘break’, *porezat* ‘cut’, *pocarapat* ‘scratch’, etc., denote activities when used non-reflexively (to damage someone’s BP), but denote states as a result of some activity when used reflexively (to get one’s own BP damaged):

- (44) *Kakoj-to bandit slomal Pete ruku*  
 some thug:NOM broke Pet’a:DAT arm:ACC  
 ‘Some thug has broken Petja’s arm.’ Lit. ‘...[for/on] Petja [the] arm’
- (45) *Petja slomal Ø / sebe ruku*  
 Pet’a:NOM broke Ø / REFL:DAT arm:ACC  
 ‘Petja<sub>i</sub> broke Ø / his<sub>i</sub> arm.’ Lit. ‘Petja<sub>i</sub> broke Ø / [for/on] himself<sub>i</sub> [the] arm.’

The dative reflexive marker in (45) is optional. Its function is the same as in the case of semantically reflexive verbs discussed in Section 3.1.3.: it emphasizes that (a) the situation is either initiated by the subject / = possessor (‘Petja deliberately broke his arm,’ e.g., to avoid military service), or results from the action initiated by the subject / = possessor (‘Petja intentionally did something [e.g. went somewhere, although he was told not to do that] and, as a result, he broke his arm’), and (b) the situation has a long-lasting visible effect on the subject / = possessor. Without the dative reflexive pronoun *sebe*, (45) can refer only to an accidental event.<sup>6</sup>

### 3.2.3

Some “verb plus BP noun” combinations disallow possessor raising when used as semantic reflexives, but allow the dative possessor raising when used non-reflexively. These are normally combinations like *čistit’ zuby* ‘brush teeth’ or



*myt' ruki* 'wash hands' that denote actions that can be performed on both one's own and someone else's BP, but, when performed on one's own BP, are usually ritualized, habitual actions. Compare (10), repeated below as (46), with the raised possessor, and (47) with obligatorily zero-marked possessor:

- (46) *Babuška pomyla vnuku ruki*  
 grandmother:NOM washed grandson:DAT hands:ACC  
 'Grandmother washed the grandson's hands.' Lit. '...washed [for/on] grandson [the] hands'

- (47) *Babuška pomyla ruki*  
 grandmother:NOM washed hands:ACC  
 'Grandmother<sub>i</sub> washed [her<sub>i</sub>] hands.'

#### 4. Conclusions

We have examined several basic syntactic configurations in which possessors can be expressed externally to the corresponding possessed noun phrase in Russian: possessor splitting, possessor raising with the possessor expressed in the plain dative case, and possessor raising with the possessor expressed as the dative case object of the preposition *k*. Our central claim is that the lexical meaning of the verb, especially its semantic reflexivity, motivates the particular pattern of syntactic configurations that it allows. We have intentionally restricted our discussion to the domain of body parts as an example of inalienable possession. In other words, we have kept the "natural" relationship between the participants constant in order to figure out what other components of the verbal meaning can be reflected in the surface grammar of "raising" and "splitting".

A question for further study inevitably arises: how are the listed configurations used beyond the BP domain? It is clear, at least, that semantically reflexive verbs exist beyond the BP domain, and, moreover, they allow reflexivization following "the pseudo possessor raising" pattern. To give just two examples, consider the verbs *prisvoit'* 'to appropriate (to take something for one's own use without permission)', and *vzjat' v žēny / mužja* 'to marry (to take somebody as one's wife / husband)'. These verbs are easily used with a reflexive pronoun in the position of a dative ("raised") argument:

- (48) *On prisvoil Ø / sebe den'gi kompanii*  
 he:NOM appropriated Ø / REFL:DAT money:ACC company:GEN  
 'He<sub>i</sub> has appropriated Ø / [to / for] himself<sub>i</sub> [some of the] company's money.'



- (49) *On vzjal Ø / sebe v žěny Veru*  
 he:NOM took Ø / REFL:DAT in[to] wives Vera:ACC  
 'He married Vera.' Lit. 'He<sub>i</sub> took Vera Ø / [to / for] himself<sub>i</sub> as a wife.'

The reflexive pronoun as a dative argument in the above examples it is not necessary for reference disambiguation: being semantically reflexive, these verbs cannot mean that one appropriates something to/for someone else, but only for oneself. Similarly, one cannot take somebody as a wife for someone else, but only for oneself. As in the BP domain, pseudo possessor raising here brings in the idea of intentionality and a long-lasting visible effect on the subject/possessor.

Thus, the following issue awaits further research: to what extent can the external possession patterns be exploited by the surface grammar beyond the BP domain? We believe that the study presented here has at least established the basis for further movement towards the solution of this problem.

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### Abbreviations

Abbreviations used in this paper are: ACC accusative, DAT dative, DIM diminutive, GEN genitive, IMP imperative, INF infinitive, INSTR instrumental, LOC locative, NEG negative, NOM nominative, Q question, POSS possessive adjective / pronoun, REFL reflexive pronoun.

### Notes

- 1 The term "reflexivization" is restricted in this paper only to the syntactic process, namely, triggering the reflexive pronoun. We do not discuss morphological reflexivization, i.e., the category marked on the verb with suffix *s'/sja* and connected with verbal transitivity.
- 2 Following M. Shibatani, we shall use the term possessor raising "without subscribing to a derivational account that 'raises the possessor' out of the adnominal position" (Shibatani 1994: 461).



- 3 The names of the covering of hair on the head and body of humans and animals, as well as the names of damaged areas of the body, like 'wounds', or 'blisters', are also included in the class of BP nominals in this paper.
- 4 In this paper we will not discuss how the described patterns of external possession in Russian correlate with the so called existential possession constructions (in which the possessor is marked with the preposition *u* 'by' plus the genitive noun). The insightful results in this area can be found in Iordanskaja-Mel'čuk 1995; Cienki 1993; Padučeva 1985, *inter alia*.
- 5 Taking into consideration this symmetry, it would be more consistent to use the term "BP lowering" for what we call possessor splitting; we, however, prefer to keep the term "possessor splitting" which is well established in Russian language studies (cf. Apresjan 1974: 153–156).
- 6 We are grateful to B. Partee for drawing our attention to the fact that externalization of the possessor in English is sometimes also used to mark the intentionality of the referred action. For example, possessor splitting in *I hit John on the arm*, as well as in *I hit myself on the arm*, forces the intentional reading of the sentences, while *I hit my arm [on the door]* typically refers to an accidental event.

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