## Cross-dialectal variation in Northern Russian: the 'perfect' with past passive participle

- 1. Northern Russian dialects have developed a special kind of participial perfect/resultative constructions that displays interesting properties, relevant for linguistic theory in many respects subjecthood, case assignment, agreement and, notably, the high degree of their cross-dialectal variation.
- **2.** In these constructions, while the external argument is (optionally) expressed by the locative PP u + GEN, the internal argument can surface, in the different varieties where the participle carries the invariable -n-o/-t-o Neuter inflection, either in Nominative case, as in (1), or in Accusative, as in (2):
  - (1) Muž-to u nej ubito
    husband-nom masc sg-PRT at her-gen 'She killed (her) husband' u nej kill-prtc pst pass-neut
    (Kuz'mina & Nemčenko 1971 [=KN]:35)
  - (2) *U dedka-to merëžu ostavleno* at grandpa-gen fishnet-ACC fem sg leave-prtc pst pass-neut 'Grandpa left a fishnet' / 'A fishnet has been left by grandpa'

What is more, in those dialects where the participle has again no agreement with the internal argument

but carries the Masculine inflection in  $-n-\cancel{0}/-t-\cancel{0}$ , only NOM is licensed on the "object" nominal:

(3) Osin-a u zajc-a gryze-n

(3) Osin-a u zajc-a gryze-n aspen-Nom fem sg at hare-GEN gnaw-prtc pst pass-masc sg 'The aspen is gnawed by a/the hare'

(Obnorskij 1953:158)

(KN: 38)

(KN: 36)

Finally, other dialects display agreement of the participle in gender and number with the argument in Nominative, yielding the canonical passive structure of (4).

- (4) Šapka-to u parnja v okno brošena
  hat-nom fem sg-PRT at boy-gen in window throw-prtc pst pass-fem sg
  'The hat has been thrown out of the window by a/the boy'

  (KN: 24)
- **3.** Since Timberlake's (1976) first analysis of these constructions, many proposals have addressed the issue of subjecthood, regarding the locative PP as a "quirky subject" (Lavine 1999; see also Rivero & Savchenko 2005 on anticausatives in Russian) or an "ergative" subject, generated in an intermediate projection between TP and VP (Jung 2009), in a fashion similar to Lavine's(2005) account of *-no/-to* constructions in Polish and Ukrainian or to Sigurðsson's (2002) proposal for Standard Russian infinitival constructions like (5):
  - (5) Emu čitať knigu.

He-DAT read-inf book-ACC 'He has to read a book'

Yet if the u + GEN PP is the only carrier of subject of the sentence, sentences where the PP is omitted and only an impersonal or passive reading is possible, as (6), remain unexplained. Moreover, cross-dialectal variation is taken into account only by Jung (2009) whereas the different agreement patterns of the auxiliary (with the participle (6) or with the NP in NOM (7)) in past-tense sentences have not received an explanation so far.

- (6) Pereecha-n-o by-l-o dorog-a tut cross-prtc pst pass-neut be-pst-neut sg road-nom fem sg here 'the road was crossed here' / 'they/one crossed the road here'
- (7) Krovat' by-l-a kuple-n-o u ej
  bed-Nom fem sg be-pst-fem sg buy- prtc pst pass-neut at her
  'the bed was bought by her' / 'she (had) bought the bed'

  (KN: 43)
- **4.** In a framework of unification of morphology and syntax (e.g. Manzini & Savoia 2007; Kayne 2010) we will adopt the idea (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998 and many others) that as far as finite verbs are concerned, the EPP can be checked directly by the agreement inflection of the verb. In the sentences in (1)-(4) and (6)-(7), we propose that the variation across dialects depends on the way in which pieces of morphology such as the inflectional head -n- of the passive/past participle and the endings -o and -o (for Neuter and Feminine respectively) satisfy the EPP requirement. The general idea is that once this means of satisfaction are properly understood, the notion of quirky subject can be altogether abandoned, at least for the cases at hand.
- **5.** Before considering the various patterns in (1)-(4) and (6)-(7) we need a preliminary step concerning the nature of the agreement inflection of the perfect/ passive participle. We assume that exactly as in Italian (Burzio 1986) the participial inflection 'picks up' the internal argument of the verb (as in

'ergative' or to be more precise 'active' languages). Consider then (1) (and (6)-(7) as well) where the internal objects are marked NOM. We propose that the -o ending of the Neuter checking the D/EPP position acts as an 'expletive', i.e. as a argumental placeholder whose referential filling depends on its relation with an associate (Chomsky 1995) – which in participial structures will correspond to the DP realizing the internal argument. In this way in the configuration (8), corresponding to (1), a predicative relation between D and the (internal argument y) DP is instantiated.

(8)  $\left[ \prod_{P} \left[ \prod_{v} ubit_{(x,v)} \right] \left[ \prod_{D} o_{(v)} \right] \right] \left[ \prod_{DP} mu\check{z} - to_{(v)} \right] \right]$ 

The same structure can be entertained for overtly agreeing examples of the type in (4) where the identification of the internal argument y with the verb-internal D position and the DP realizing the internal argument comes from their sharing of all the referential properties, as it has been proposed, for instance, for the agreement relation *subject clitic* – D *inflection* – *postverbal subject* in some Northern Italian dialects (Manzini & Savoia 2007). In other words, we propose that the parameter between a dialect like (4) and a dialect like (1) is the same known from French (9)

(9) *Il vient des enfants* It come-3s some children

where the verb inflection agrees with the expletive – vs its English counterpart *There come some boys*, where it does not.

The external argument x, remaining unassigned, admits of a lexicalization through a by-phrase realised by a PP u+GEN or as an implicit/generic argument, yielding for instance the impersonal reading of (6). **6.** We are left with examples of the type in (2), where the internal argument shows up as ACC. The presence of ACC case in an environment with apparently no overt agent nominal is reminiscent of existential constructions in some languages, like Spanish (10) (cf. ACC clitic in (9b))

(10) a. Hay un hombre en la habitación b. Lo hay have-3s a man in the room cl. Acc have-3s 'there is a man in the room'

or, even more closely, with facts like the NOM/ACC alternation of the internal argument in passive/impersonal constructions in Sakha, as discussed by Baker & Vinokurova (2010). This suggests that the ACC case here may be assigned not by agreement with a functional head but configurationally as in Marantz's (1992) theory of Dependent Case, which states that ACC is possible only when there is a second position available. Hence, we propose that in this case the -o invariant inflection is an expletive whose associate is the external argument (be it overtly realized as a by-phrase or not), so to a obtain a configuration where the conditions required to assign dependent case are met: we have in fact a subject position (i.e. -o) not bearing a lexically governed case and a distinct nominal position ( $mer\ddot{e}z\ddot{a}$ ) governed by the same V+I position, whereas  $mer\ddot{e}z\ddot{a}$ , being in turn not assigned a lexically governed case, falls under the second point of the case realization disjunctive hierarchy ("dependent" case). This is enough to for ostavle-n to assign accusative case down to the object, or, in other words, for -o to license accusative case on  $mer\ddot{e}z\ddot{a}$ .

## References

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