## Case and agreement patterns in Northern Russian participial constructions in -n-/-t-

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## 1. Relevant data and literature on the topic

Several proposals have been put forward, in recent generative literature, to account for constructions of the type in (1) and (2) that are found in several Northern Russian dialects and were first discussed by Timberlake (1976). In these participial sentences the external argument corresponds to a locative PP while the internal argument can either be NOM, as in (1), or ACC, as in (2). In both cases the "participle" has the invariable -n-o/-t-o Neuter inflection or, in some dialects, the Masculine inflection in -n-o/-t-o0, (in the latter case licensing only NOM morphology on the the internal argument, as in (3)).

- (1) U lisicy unese-n-o kuročk-a at fox-gen carry off-prtc pst pass-neut chicken-nom fem sg (Kuz'mina & Nemčenko 1971 [=KN]:27)
- (2) *U bat'k-i u tvo-ego saže-n-o berëzk-u* at father-gen at yours-gen plant-prtc pst pass-neut birch-ACC fem sg 'Your father has planted a birch' / 'A birch has been planted by you father' (KN: 38)
- (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)

Other dialects display agreement of the participle in gender and number with the argument in NOM, yielding the more canonical passive structure of (4).

(4) *U nej by-l-a privede-n-a snoch-a* at her be-pst-fem sg bring-prtc pst pass-fem sg daughter in law-nom fem sg 'the daughter-in-law was brought by her' (KN: 20)

Many proposals rely on the notion of "quirky subject" for the sentence-initial locative PP (Lavine 1999; cf. alsoRivero & Savchenko 2005 about anticausative constructions in Standard Russian) and/or see it as an "ergative subject" generated in an intermediate projection between TP and VP (Jung 2009), in a way similar to accounts proposed for infinitival dative construction of the type *Mne uxodit*" (Sigurðsson 2002) or for *-no/-to* constructions in Polish and Ukrainian (Lavine 2005).

However, these proposals, in assigning the u+GEN locative PP the role of subject of the sentence, seem not to take into account that this PP may be omitted, thus allowing impersonal or genuinely passive readings, as in (5). Moreover, the variation across different dialects with respect to the morphological case of the the internal object is hardly taken into account (cf. Jung 2009), such as the different agreement patterns with copula in past-tense sentences (cf. the contrast between (5) – copula agreeing with the participle – and (6) – copula agreeing with NP in NOM).

- (5) 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' (KN: 36)
- (6) 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)

## 2. Proposal

We will work in a framework of unification of morphology and syntax (e.g. Manzini & Savoia 2007; Kayne 2010) adopting 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 (5)-(6), 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.

Before considering the various patters in (1)-(4) and (5)-(6) 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 (5)-(6) 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 (7), corresponding to (1), a predicative relation between D and the (internal argument y) DP is instantiated.

- (7)  $\left[ \prod_{IP} \left[ \prod_{I} \operatorname{unesen}_{(x,y)} \right] \left[ \bigcap_{D} \operatorname{o}_{(y)} \right] \right] \left[ \bigcap_{P} \operatorname{kuročka}_{(y)} \right] \right]$
- 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 (8)
  - (8) *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 (5). 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 (9) (cf. the ACC clitic in (9b))

(9) 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 on 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 ( $ber\ddot{e}zka$ ) governed by the same V+I position, whereas  $ber\ddot{e}zka$ , 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  $sa\check{z}e-n$ - to assign accusative case down to the object, or, in other words, for -o to license accusative case on  $ber\ddot{e}zka$ .

## References

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