

External ‘Possessors’ in Bulgarian: An Applicative Account

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Bulgarian (BG) has an external possessive construction (EPC), (1), and a local one, (2), that involve a dative clitic possessor. Discussion has focused on the possessive meaning of these constructions and on whether it represents a transformational *possessor raising* or a *base-generated* possessive construction (Stateva 2002, Schürcks and Wunderlich 2003, Pancheva 2004, Cinque and Krapova 2009, Krapova and Cinque 2013, Iovtcheva 2017). The fact that (1) (but not 2) produces an additional meaning, in which the dative is interpreted as a non-agentive event participant, has been analyzed either as possessor raising into an ‘affectee’ theta position (Stateva 2002) or as base-generated possessor binding (Krapova and Cinque 2013):

- (1) šte **mu** pročetem (**na Ivan**) [_{DP} nova-ta kniga] (2) šte pročetem [_{DP} nova-ta **mu** kniga (**na Ivan**)]
pro will he.DAT read.IPL (on Ivan) new-the book *pro* will read.IP new-the he.DAT book (on Ivan)
 ‘We will read **Ivan’s** new book’ ‘We will read **Ivan’s** new book’
 ‘We will read **Ivan** the new book’ *We will read **Ivan** the new book’

In this talk I argue for a third alternative analysis. I argue that the two surface positions of the dative-marked arguments in (1) and (2) are not transformationally related and that the ‘possessive’ interpretation of the EPCs represents an *inference*, rather than a structurally encoded relationship within the possessee nominal. I provide novel evidence in support of a non-derivational applicative account for the dative constructions (along the lines of Marantz 1993/1997 and Pykkänen 2002/2008). I propose that the dative clitic represents a morpho-syntactic realization of a functional argument-introducing head, which is employed as a general mechanism of creating predicative structure (Hale and Keyser 1993). Crucially, this head is underspecified in meaning (against Pykkänen 2002/2008 and Cuervo 2003), which a speaker fills in via inference and context:

- (3) [_{AppIP} DP_{DAT} [_{APPL} APPL⁰ [_{XP} ...]]]

Pragmatic context and predicate meaning cancel structural sensitivity. Possessor raising and possessor binding analyses of BG have especially focused on clausal transitive configurations that apparently show structural sensitivity such as definiteness requirement (4a) and PP-islandhood (4b) and have used this as an argument that the ‘possessor’ interpretation of the dative argument arises from within the DP (Stateva 2002, Krapova and Cinque 2013, Iovtcheva 2017):

- (4) a. *Az **mu** xaresvam [_{DP} šapka/prăst] b. *Az **í** mislja [_{PP} za [_{DP} oči-te/statija-ta]]
 I he.DAT like.1SG hat-the/finger I she.DAT think.1SG about eyes-the
 Intended: ‘I like a hat/a finger of **his**’ Intended: ‘I think about **her** eyes/her article’
 (Stateva 2002) (Krapova and Cinque 2013)

In general in BG, clausal dative arguments that refer to non-agentive event participants are easily available with roots that denote *activities* or *states*, such as √break, √bake, √hold, √give, etc.. Furthermore, a ‘possessive’ reading with such verbs arises independently of the (in)definiteness or the prepositional embedding of the direct object. Consequently, the unacceptability of the data in (4) is surprising. Yet, when provided with a pragmatic context that allows interpretational accommodation of an additional event participant as in (5), any structural sensitivity in the data in (4) disappears and the clausal dative with a potential possessive interpretation becomes perfectly acceptable:

- (5) a. Context for (in)alienable possessive clausal relation to the indefinite direct object in (4a):
Ivan wants/needs me to like a hat/a finger for him (beneficiary) OR Ivan does not want me to like a hat/a finger for him (malefactive);
 b. Context for (in)alienable possessive relation to the PP embedded direct object in (4b):
Maria wants/needs me to think about the beautiful eyes (that most probably are hers) or about an article (that might be of her possession or that might have been written by her);

The claimed non-acceptability of the data in (4) is therefore misleading and merely represents an unacceptable ‘out-of-the-blue’ use of the dative construction with predicates that denote psych and physical perception and is not an argument in favor of a structural possessor raising analysis.

Evidence against possessor raising and in support of a non-derivational account

Argument #1: Clausal datives fail to bind DP-internal reflexive anaphors. In line with Principle A of the Binding Theory, DP-internal datives serve as the local antecedent of the reflexive *svoj* (6a), DP-external datives fail to do so both with activity and psych predicates (6b):

- (6) a. Petăr otradna/xaresva [_{DP} *svoi-te* **mu** snimki (**na Ivan**)]
Peter stole._{3SG}/likes._{3SG} self-the he._{DAT} photographs (on Ivan)
'Peter stole/likes **Ivan's** photographs.' /*'Peter_i stole/likes his_i own photograph by Ivan'
- b. Petăr **mu** otradna/xaresva (**na Ivan**) [_{DP} *svoi-(te)* snimki]
Peter he._{DAT} stole._{3SG}/like._{3SG} (on Ivan) self-(the) photographs
'Peter_i stole/likes his_i own photos to affect Ivan' / *'Peter_i stole/likes Ivan's photos'

The binding facts raise a structural problem for a raising analysis of the EPCs especially because in raising constructions of the type *John seems to like himself* the subject that surfaces in the matrix clause binds an anaphoric element in the embedded clause proving that traces remain active for binding purposes also in BG:

- (7) Ivan izgležda [_{TP} xaresva *svoi-te* snimki]
Ivan seems._{3SG} like._{3PL} self-the snimki
'Ivan_i seems to like his_{i/*j} own photographs.'

Argument #2: Clausal dative 'possessors' produce idioms that are not available DP-internally. A possessor raising analysis is also not able to account for distinct idiomatic readings. Note that the idioms in (8) are specifically chosen as they employ a verb that denotes physical perception, thus demonstrating that clausal datives are in general fine with all verb classes in BG:

- (8) a. (**na Ivan**) **mu** vidjaxa smetka-ta. b. vidjaxa [_{DP} smetkata **mu** (**na Ivan**)].
pro (on Ivan) he._{DAT} saw._{3PL} bill-the *pro* saw._{3PL} bill-the he._{DAT} (on Ivan)
'They finished **Ivan**.' 'They saw **Ivan's** final bill.'
(i.e. They saw the final bill to affect Ivan.) *'They finished Ivan.'

Argument #3: Canceling a DP-internal possessive relation changes truth conditions. Negating the possessive relation with a clausal dative (9a) does not sound odd and under the right context the sentence produces the non-contradictory interpretation of a beneficiary. Negating the possessive relation of a DP-internal dative (9b), on the other hand, sounds like a correction:

- (9) a. (**na Ivan**) **mu** xaresvam [_{DP} kuče-to], ama to ne e negovo.
pro (on Ivan) he._{DAT} like._{1SG} dog-the, but it NEG BE._{3SG} his
'I like the dog for Ivan's benefit, but it is not his.'
- b. #xaresvam [_{DP} kuče-to **mu** (**na Ivan**)], ama to ne e negovo.
pro like._{1SG} dog-the he._{DAT} (on Ivan), but it NEG BE._{3SG} his
#'I like **Ivan's** dog, but it is not his.' (only plausible as a correction of the possessive assertion).

Argument #4: DP-external and DP-internal datives can co-occur. The two dative positions can be (i) simultaneously overtly realized and (ii) do not have to refer to the same individual, thus highlighting the separate domains and the non-transformational nature of dative applicatives in the language:

- (10) (**na Ivan**) **mu** sčupix [_{DP} novij-a í telefon (**na Maria**)]
pro (on Ivan) he._{DAT} break._{1SG} new-the she._{DAT} phone (on Maria)
'I broke **Maria's** phone to affect Ivan. (he is affected because they might share possession)'

Furthermore, dative clitic-marked arguments are used productively in BG beyond possessive meaning. The language supports dative experiencers, dative goals, as well as dative arguments of nominal and locative predicates. Thus, I propose that any 'possessive' interpretation of datives in transitive clausal configurations results from (i) the structural context (availability of a direct object), (ii) the overall meaning of the predicate (psych verbs may create interpretational difficulties), (iii) the pragmatic context and general world knowledge.