EXTERNAL vs. INTERNAL POSSESSOR STRUCTURES AND
INALIENABILITY IN RUSSIAN^{†*}

0. INTRODUCTION

This study will deal with the competition between three ways of expressing the possessor in Russian, i. e. the possessive adjective, the possessive dative and the *y*-structure with possessive meaning, as illustrated respectively in (1a), (1b) and (1c).

- (1) a. *Она обняла его шею [...] и плотно прижа[лась] к его груди.* (Горький, т. 2, 203)
she embraced his neck and tightly pressed herself to his chest
'She put her arms around his neck [...] and clung closely to his chest.'
- b. *Она кладёт мне в рот чернослив.* (Берберова, 62)
she puts me_{dat} in mouth_{acc} prune_{acc}
'She puts a prune into my mouth.'
- c. [...] *у неё сжалось сердце [...].* (Паустовский, 32)
at her_{gen} shrank heart
'[...] her heart was wrung [...].'

In all these structures, the possessor contributes to the referential specification of an NP denoting a possessed object, which we will call the "possessum", but it is expressed in three different ways. In (1a) it is encoded as an adnominal modifier, in (1b) as a dative pronoun and in (1c) as a locative PP introduced by the preposition *y* ('at', 'near', 'with'), governing the genitive case. In the two latter cases, the possessor occupies a verb complement position, but as it is not subcategorized by the verb, it has to be analyzed as an adjunct. Structures as the one illustrated in (1b), called "possessive dative constructions", exist in many languages,¹ while the structure illustrated in (1c) is less common.² Since in (1b) and (1c) the possessor is encoded outside the NP, which the former seems to determine semantically, we will call these constructions "external possessor structures", following Vergnaud, Zubizarreta (1992), while the adnominal use of the possessive adjective will be called "internal possessor structure".

The aim of this contribution being to study the competition between these three possessive structures, we will examine various constraints on the use of each of them. First we will present the three structures (section 1) and we will show

that the two external possessor structures in Russian exhibit roughly the same general properties as the external dative structures in other languages such as French, Spanish, etc. (section 2). In section 3, we will concentrate on the semantic constraints on the NP denoting the possessum in external possessor structures, which will lead us to a discussion of the relationship between these two structures and inalienability. Section 4 will be devoted to the study of the restrictions on the verb in the two external possessor structures, while section 5 will focus on the competition between the possessive adjective on the one hand and the external possessor structures on the other hand.

Our main claim will be that the competition between the two external possessor constructions is related to the semantic role associated with the possessor within the verb phrase, the dative presenting the possessor either as a goal or as an experiencer, and the *y*-PP viewing it either as a source or as a locality. As for the possessive adjective, it presents the possessor as less affected by the process expressed by the verb.

Without adopting the theoretical framework of cognitive grammar,³ our study will pursue a common goal, i. e. to describe the semantic constraints on the use of the three possessive constructions. However, when considering the syntactic properties of the latter, we will also take into account the findings of generative grammar.⁴

The majority of our data come from the following literary sources and the few fabricated or manipulated examples have been carefully tested with various native speakers:

- Берберова Н., *L'accompagnatrice – Аккомпаниаторша*, Paris, 1994.
- Горький М., *Полное собрание сочинений в 25 томах*, Москва, 1968.
- Достоевский Ф. М., *Собрание сочинений в 10 томах, Преступление и наказание*, т. 5, Москва, 1957.
- Паустовский К., *Новые рассказы*, Москва, 1946.
- Цветаева М., *Благославляю Вас...*, Москва, 2002.

1. VARIETY OF POSSESSIVE STRUCTURES IN RUSSIAN

In Russian the possessive adjective is not a clitic form, as it is in English or in French, but a syntactically autonomous form, which can occur alone as a pronoun (cf. (2a) and (2b)) or even as a predicate adjective (cf. (2c) and (2d)).

- (2) а. *Наша земля – истинный рай.* (Паустовский, 182)
 our soil true paradise
 ‘Our soil is a true paradise.’

- b. *Наша – истинный рай.* c. *Эта земля наша.*
 ours true paradise this soil ours
 ‘Ours is a true paradise.’ ‘This soil is ours.’
- d. *Ты – наш и мы – твои.* (Цветаева, 212)
 you ours and we yours
 ‘You are ours and we are yours.’

The use of the possessive adjective is thus rather emphatic. Therefore, when the possessor is clear from the context, it remains mostly implicit, especially when it is co-referential with the subject, as in (3):⁵

- (3) *Он засунул руки глубоко в карманы* [. . .]. (Горький, т. 2, 197)
 he shoved hands deeply in pockets
 ‘His hands were deep in his pockets.’

Another way to avoid the use of a rather emphatic possessive, especially when the possessor is not in the subject position, is to encode it separately from the NP or PP denoting the possessum. This separation can be realized in various structures. Two types of structures can be distinguished, only the first one being of concern in this paper:

- (i) In the first type, the most frequent one, the possessum is encoded as a complement which is subcategorized by the verb, whereas the possessor occurs in a non-subcategorized syntactic position (cf. (1b) and (1c)).⁶
- (ii) In the second type, it is the possessor argument that is subcategorized by the verb, whereas the possessum is encoded either as an adjunct, mostly a PP with locative meaning (cf. (4)), or even as a subcategorized PP (cf. (5)).
- (4) *Женщина взяла его за руку и повела по расчищенной дорожке.* (Паустовский, 41)
 woman took him_{acc} by hand_{acc} and led upon cleared path
 ‘The woman took him by the hand and led him along a cleared path.’
- (5) *Он пришёл ко мне в комнату.*
 he came to me_{dat} to room_{acc}
 ‘He came to my room.’

The possessive dative and the *y*-structure are generally of the first type, but both can be of the second type as well. For instance, in (6), both the dative and the *y*-PP are subcategorized complements of the verb. In (6a), the dative is selected by the verb *сунуть* (‘shove’) and the locative PP specifies the precise location, while in (6b), *отнимать* (‘take away’) expresses removal, which is one of the core meanings of the preposition *y*.

- (6) a. [...] дед [...] сунул ему в руку какую-то тряпицу [...].
(Горький, т. 1, 68)
grandfather shoved him_{dat} in hand_{acc} some cloth_{acc}
‘[...] the grandfather [...] shoved a piece of cloth into his hand [...].’
- b. Эта жара да степь отнимают у него зрение [...].
(Горький, т. 1, 55)
this heat and steppe take away from him_{gen} sight_{acc}
‘This heat and the steppe are taking away his sight [...].’

However, sometimes the identification of the external possessor structure can be problematic. This occurs for instance with the possessive *y*-PP in ‘be’-sentences. As in many other languages, ‘be’-sentences are mostly verbless in Russian (cf. Benveniste 1966). Moreover, Russian being a “be-language”, that is a language which uses the verb ‘to be’ to express possession (cf. Garde 1987), this kind of sentences can be used to assert not only a characteristic, but also predicative possession. Therefore, sentences like (7a) and (7b) can either be analyzed as (i) copular sentences, in which the adjective is a predicate at the clause level, or as (ii) sentences asserting possession, in which case the adjective is analyzed as an NP modifier.⁷ In this paper we are interested exclusively in the first interpretation.

- (7) a. У неё круглые, красивые глаза, большой рот [...]. (Берберова, 32)
at her_{gen} round beautiful eyes, big mouth
‘Her eyes are round, beautiful, her mouth is big [...].’
or ‘She has beautiful round eyes, a big mouth [...].’
- b. У неё тёплое пальто.
at her_{gen} warm coat
‘Her coat is warm.’ or ‘She has a warm coat.’

The difference between the two interpretations of these sentences concerns primarily their information structure:

- (i) Under the first interpretation, the *y*-PP is analyzed as a semantic specifier of the possessum NP (cf. “attributive possession” in Heine 1997), and the topic is both the possessum and the possessor, the focus being on the adjectival predicate only.
- (ii) Under the second interpretation, the *y*-PP is analyzed as the topic of the sentence, the focus being on the possessum, of which a characteristic is predicated (cf. “predicative possession” in Heine 1997).

We could therefore expect that sentences in which the possessive relation is presupposed, for instance when the possessum denotes a body part, as in (7a), are necessarily interpreted as expressing attributive possession. However, even this

sentence can be translated into English in two ways: (i) by a copular sentence, focalizing the adjectival predicate (cf. 'His eyes are blue') and (ii) by a *have*-construction, which has to be interpreted as topicalizing the possessor only (cf. 'He has blue eyes').⁸ In Russian, the only way to express these differences in information structure is word order, which is very flexible, but at the same time very meaningful and therefore less free than it seems to be. Therefore, when we change the word order of (7a) as in (8a), putting the possessor after the possessum, or as in (8b), putting the adjectival modifier after the noun, the focus will be necessarily on the adjective, and the *y*-PP will have an attributive interpretation, translated by means of a possessive adjective in English. The difference between these two sentences is that in (8a) the topic is the eyes or the mouth, while in (8b), it is the person who is described through the peculiarities of his/her eyes and mouth, which are topical too.

- (8) a. *Глаза у неё красивые, рот большой.*
 eyes at her_{gen} beautiful mouth big
 'Her eyes are beautiful, her mouth is big.'
- b. *У неё глаза красивые, рот большой.*
 at her_{gen} eyes beautiful mouth big
 'Her eyes are beautiful, her mouth is big.'

As the analysis of these examples requires extended context and involves various interfering issues, we will predominantly concentrate on sentences that have an explicit verb other than *быть* ('be').

Another difficulty arises in the delimitation of the possessive dative. At first sight, the dative occurring in example (9) could be analyzed as a possessive dative. However, the fact that the possessum NP can contain a demonstrative in this example shows that this analysis is not correct. As we will see in section 2, the possessor NP contains necessarily a bound variable, which is empty in Russian, and cannot be replaced by another referential determiner (cf. (10)).

- (9) *Мне (это) платье мало.*
 me_{dat} (this) dress small
 'The (/ This) dress is too small for me.'
- (10) *Он стукнул мне в (*эту) дверь / (*это) окно.*⁹
 he knocked me_{dat} on (this) door_{acc} / (this) window_{acc}
 'He knocked on my (/ *this) door / my (/ *this) window.'

Thus, the impossibility of using a lexical determiner with the possessum NP can be viewed as a criterion for distinguishing real possessive datives, as in (10), from other kinds of datives, such as benefactive or ethical datives as in (9).¹⁰ We will consider only examples with the non ambiguous possessive dative.

2. GENERAL PROPERTIES OF EXTERNAL POSSESSOR STRUCTURES

As mentioned earlier, the possessive dative exists in many languages, such as French, Spanish, Rumanian, German, most Slavic languages and many others such as Hebrew, and it has given rise to extensive literature (cf. among many others Kayne 1977; Guéron 1985; Vergnaud, Zubizarreta 1992; Lamiroy, Delbecque 1998; Landau 1999; Šarić 2002). It has been argued that although the dative acts as a syntactic argument of the verb without being subcategorized, it is a semantic argument of the possessum NP. The latter usually denotes an inalienable object, such as a body-part, which is “inherently defined in terms of another object, of which it is a part” (cf. Vergnaud, Zubizarreta 1992, 596). The possessum NP is therefore not fully interpretable without the possessor argument and functions as an “open” NP, containing a variable which has to be saturated by its dependence on the dative argument (*ibid.*). In languages such as French, Spanish and German, this variable, mostly a definite article, is therefore analyzed as a locally bound anaphoric pronoun, the antecedent of which is the dative pronoun, which “c-commands” the possessor NP.¹¹ As a result, the possessum NP may be in the singular even when its interpretation implies the existence of a plurality of referents, as in (11). This is due to the fact that the inalienable possessum is associated with the plural possessor argument, which gives rise to a distributive interpretation of the possessum NP.

- (11) *Le médecin leur a examiné la gorge.*
 the doctor them_{dat} examined the throat
 ‘The doctor examined their throats.’

Although Russian has no definite article, the fact that it has the same distributive structure, illustrated by (12), shows that in Russian too the possessum NP contains a variable, which is bound by the dative or by the *y*-structure.

- (12) a. *Врач проверил им / у них горло / печень.*
 doctor checked them_{dat} / at them_{gen} throat_{acc} / liver_{acc}
 ‘The doctor examined their throats / livers.’
 b. *В салоне всем женщинам / у всех женщин голову мыла Маша.*
 in salon all women_{dat} / at all women_{gen} head_{acc} washed Masha
 ‘At the hairdresser’s Masha washed all women’s hair.’

Another well-known consequence of the non-saturated character of the possessor NP is that it can be modified only by restrictive adjectives, and not by descriptive ones (cf. Kayne 1977; Julien 1983; Vergnaud, Zubizarreta 1992, see also section 5).

- (13) a. **Она кладёт мне в красивый рот чернослив.*
 she puts me_{dat} in beautiful mouth_{acc} prune_{acc}
 b. **У него потемнело в красивых глазах.*
 at him_{gen} darkened_{impers} in beautiful eyes_{prep}

We can thus postulate that these two external possessor constructions in Russian exhibit the same properties as the possessive dative structure in other languages.

3. EXTERNAL POSSESSOR CONSTRUCTIONS AND INALIENABILITY

The external possessor structures are generally considered as marking inalienability. They are used with possessed objects, such as body parts or kinship relations, that need the possessor to be referentially identified.¹² The inalienable character of the possessum explains why the possessor is encoded outside the NP as a dative: due to the strong connection between the possessor and the possessum, the process expressed by the verb is viewed as affecting not only the possessum, but also the possessor. However, in Russian, both external constructions are used with inalienable possession (cf. (14a)), and both can also occur with more or less alienable possessed objects, such as clothes (14b), an apartment (14c), a car (14d), and even items that are not really possessed, like lakes and rivers of one's country (14e), or a spatial object (14f).

- (14) a. *У него фашисты убили в Мадриде отца.* (Паустовский, 137)
 at him_{gen} fascists killed in Madrid father_{acc}
 'Fascists killed his father in Madrid.'
 b. *Платье у меня было из скатерти.* (Берберова, 26)
 dress at me_{gen} was out of tablecloth
 'My dress was out of a tablecloth.'
 c. *Им перевернули всю квартиру.* (Levine 1986, 17)
 them_{dat} [they] turned upside down whole apartment_{acc}
 'Their whole apartment was turned upside down.'
 d. *Хулиганы поцарапали мне машину.* (Levine 1986, 17)
 vandals scratched me_{dat} car_{acc}
 'Vandals scratched my car.'
 e. *Фабричные отходы загрязняют нам озёра и реки.* (Levine 1986, 18)
 factory wastes pollute us_{dat} lakes_{acc} and rivers_{acc}
 'Factory wastes are polluting our lakes and rivers.'

- f. *Он стукнул мне в дверь / окно.*
 he knocked me_{dat} on door_{acc} / window_{acc}
 'He knocked on my door / my window.'

Russian is not the only language that uses this type of structures for that many kinds of referents.¹³ In fact, the range of possessed objects with which the external structures are used differs in an important way from one language to another. It is therefore generally assumed that the extent of inalienability is language-specific and that the concept of inalienability is determined by cultural¹⁴ or pragmatic¹⁵ differences between languages. As for Russian, it has been argued by Levine (1984, 1986, 1990) that the use of the possessive dative is extended to alienable referents which are pragmatically viewed as inalienable because the process affects not only the possessum, but also the possessor. Our hypothesis, however, is that the extension of inalienability in Russian does not depend on cultural or pragmatic factors, but on the semantic roles associated with the two syntactic positions in which the external possessor can occur:¹⁶ the dative views the possessor either as an animate goal or as an experiencer, while the y-PP presents it as a locality where the process takes place (cf. section 4). As a result, the dative is rather rarely found with inanimate possessors, while the y-construction is very convenient for the expression of inanimate part/whole relations.

- (15) a. *У нас стол развалился. Пойди подклей у него / *ему ножку.*
 at us_{gen} table fell apart go glue at it_{gen}/it_{dat} leg_{acc}
 'Our table has fallen apart. Go and glue its leg.'
- b. *Она отбила у чайника / *чайнику носик.*
 she broke at tea pot_{gen} / tea pot_{dat} spout_{acc}
 'She broke the tea pot's spout.'

With inanimate nouns, the possessive dative is only possible in a few borderline cases, with nouns that can be vaguely viewed as animate, such as flowers, as in (16), where the y-construction is also possible.

- (16) a. *Подрежь розам / у роз концы.*
 cut roses_{dat} / at roses_{gen} ends_{acc}
 'Cut the roses' ends.'
- b. *Подрежь им / у них концы.*
 cut them_{dat} / at them_{gen} ends_{acc}
 'Cut their ends.'

Moreover, the acceptability of the dative in these cases differs depending on whether we are dealing with a dative NP or pronoun, the latter being more restrictive than the former. For instance, with such a referent as a book, only the nominal dative can be used, the pronominal dative being ungrammatical.

- (17) a. *Этой книге / У этой книги нужно поменять переплёт.*
 this book_{dat} / at this book_{gen} necessary to change binding_{acc}
 'It is necessary to change the binding of this book.'
- b. *Мы не выдаём эту книгу читателям. У неё / *Ей нужно поменять переплёт.*
 we not give out this book readers_{dat} at her_{gen} / her_{dat} necessary to change binding_{acc}
 'We do not give this book out to readers. It is necessary to change its binding.'

The above examples show that the *y*-construction puts restrictions neither on the animate character of the possessor, nor on the pronoun use, while the use of the possessive dative, especially of the dative pronoun, is roughly restricted to animate possessors. The consequence is that the delimitation of inalienability in Russian seems to be construction specific: it is more restricted in the dative construction than in the *y*-construction, where it is extended to inanimate part/whole relations.

4. POSSESSIVE DATIVE VS. POSSESSIVE LOCATIVE COMPLEMENT

In this section, we will examine the syntactic and semantic restrictions on the use of the two external possessor structures. First, we will examine which syntactic and semantic environments exclude each one of the two structures. Subsequently, we will analyze the semantic differences between the two structures in contexts that accept them both.

4.1. Syntactic constraints

As mentioned earlier, it is well known that the syntactic relation between the possessum and the possessor is a bound anaphora, the latter *c*-commanding the former (cf. Guéron 1985). This implies that the syntactic configuration in which the opposite is true, i. e. the possessum *c*-commanding the possessor, is ungrammatical. Therefore the possessum cannot occur as a subject, at least not in deep structure. However, as it has been noted by Guéron (1985) for French, the possessum may be an internal argument of an unaccusative verb, occurring as a surface subject.

- (18) a. *Les jambes lui tremblaient.*
 the legs him_{dat} trembled
 'His legs were trembling.'

- b. [e] *lui*_i *tremblaient les*_i *jambes*
 [e] him_{dat} trembled the legs

In Russian this last observation seems to be true only of the *y*-possessor, the only one that can be associated with a surface subject denoting the possessum. As for the possessive dative, it cannot possibly be used when the possessum occurs as the grammatical subject of an intransitive even unaccusative verb, as in (19a), or of a verbless sentence, as in (19b).¹⁷

- (19) a. *От этого у него (*ему) тряслись губы.* (Горький, т. 1, 58)
 from this at him_{gen} / him_{dat} trembled lips
 'Because of that his lips were trembling.'
 b. *У меня (*Мне) руки мокрые от твоих слёз.* (Берберова, 124)
 at me_{gen}/me_{dat} hands wet from your tears
 'My hands are wet from your tears.'

The fact that the dative cannot be associated with a surface subject denoting the possessum implies that the sentence must contain a subject that does not refer to the possessum. In other words, for the possessive dative to be possible, the thematic structure of the verb must contain at least two arguments: an internal argument, denoting the possessum, and another one, which is mostly external, bearing the semantic role of an agent or a cause. However, as is shown by (20), which contains the verb *пасть* ('to fall'), this subject can also be an internal argument of an unaccusative verb.¹⁸

- (20) *На лицо ему пали кудри.* (after Горький, т. 1, 25)
 on face_{acc} him_{dat} fell locks
 'The locks fell upon his face.'

Since this argument occurs as a grammatical subject, it has a role which is necessarily higher in the thematic hierarchy than the roles associated with the possessum NP and the dative. In other words, the dative needs the presence of a thematically higher argument in the thematic structure of the verb: an agent, a cause or a theme in movement as in (20). This is not the case for the *y*-structure which, as mentioned above, can occur with verbs having only a theme (denoting the possessum) in their thematic structure. From a semantic point of view, this means that the possessive dative can occur only with action verbs¹⁹ (cf. also Šarić 2002), while the *y*-PP can also occur in static contexts. The same conclusion has been reached by Garde (1987, 561), who also associates the opposition *y*-PP vs. dative with the opposition static vs. dynamic processes.

4.2. *Semantic constraints*

Further constraints are of a semantic nature. The most obvious one can be found with verbs expressing movement. With this kind of verbs, the encoding of the possessor is highly dependent on the direction of the movement, either toward or away from the possessum. The dative is the only possible construction when movement toward the possessum is expressed (see also Šarić 2002), as in (21), containing Russian equivalents of ‘to look at’, which are inherently directional and govern the directional prepositions *на* or *в* (‘at’), assigning the accusative case. The directional meaning of the verb blocks the use of the *y*-construction here.

- (21) a. *Взглянёт он тебе (*у тебя) в очи.* (Горький, т. 1, 17)
 will look he_{nom} you_{dat} / at you_{gen} in eyes_{acc}
 ‘He will look into your eyes.’
- b. [*Разумихин*] *глядел ему (*у него) прямо в глаза [...].*
 (Достоевский, 149)
 Razumixin looked him_{dat} / at him_{gen} straight in eyes_{acc}
 ‘[Razumixin] was looking him straight in the eyes [...].’

The same explanation holds for the already mentioned example (20) with the verb *насть* (‘to fall’): the locks fall on the face and the verb expresses movement. In each of these examples, the possessum occurs as a PP with the thematic role of a goal, typically associated with the dative.

As for the *y*-structure, it is the only possible choice when the process expressed by the verb involves movement coming from inside the possessum, as in (22). The possessum has in this case the thematic role of a source, a typical role associated with the genitive in Russian.

- (22) *Девочка не выходит у него / *ему из памяти.* (after Горький, т. 1, 66)
 girl no came out at him_{gen} / him_{dat} from memory_{gen}
 ‘He could not get the girl off his mind.’

From a directional point of view, the genitive case can be seen as the opposite of the dative, the former involving movement away from the source, and the latter implying a movement toward the target.²⁰

4.3. *Competition between the two external possessor structures*

Both external constructions can occur not only with directional verbs, but also with verbs expressing a movement within a specific space. For instance, both are

possible in (23), due to the lack of directional meaning of the verb *трепать* ('to blow'): the hair is blown within the space defined by the head.

- (23) *Ветер трепал ему (/у него) волосы на голове.* (Горький, т. 1, 22)
 wind blew him_{dat} / at him_{gen} hair_{acc} on head_{prep}
 'The wind was blowing the hair on his head.'

However, there is a slight semantic difference between the use of the two structures: the dative views the possessor as an experiencer, another thematic role typically associated with the dative case, while the *y*-construction presents it as a location, thus allowing a static representation of the situation. This is confirmed by the fact that with pure psychological verbs, such as *веселить* ('to rejoice'), with which the possessor cannot be viewed otherwise than as an experiencer, the dative is the only possible construction.

- (24) *Говор морской волны веселит ему (/у него) сердце.* (Горький, т. 1, 14)
 murmur sea_{adj} wave_{gen} rejoices him_{dat} / at him_{gen} heart_{acc}
 'His heart is rejoicing in the murmur of the sea wave.'

Example (25), however, in spite of its apparent similarity to (24), allows both constructions. This is due to the fact that the verb *разорвать* ('to tear apart') denotes primarily a concrete physical process, but is used here in a metaphorical psychological sense. The concrete meaning of the verb *разорвать* authorizes the use of the *y*-construction, which attributes a locative reading to the possessor, while the metaphorical reading allows the use of the dative, which views the possessor as an experiencer. This shows that, unlike the hypothesis put forward by Giusti (1981, 170), the use of the *y*-construction is not incompatible with non static predicates and the perfective aspect of the verb.

- (25) *[Девка] разорвёт тебе (/ у тебя) сердце.* (Горький, т. 1, 15)
 girl will tear apart you_{dat} / at you_{gen} heart_{acc}
 'The girl will tear your heart apart.'

From what precedes, we can conclude that, in cases of competition between the two constructions, the possessive dative functions either as a goal or as an experiencer of the process, while the *y*-PP functions either as a source or as the location of the process. The fact that the *y*-PP is viewed as a location explains why it is particularly convenient for static processes or even descriptive sentences. This difference in thematic role of the possessor NP explains at the same time the syntactic constraint on the use of the dative, commented in section 4.1.

5. EXTERNAL POSSESSOR STRUCTURES VS. POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVE

In this last section we will consider the competition between the two external structures on the one hand and the internal possessor structure on the other hand. We will first mention some cases in which only the possessive adjective can be used (5.1). Subsequently, we will consider the semantic differences between the sentences in which both the internal and one or two external possessor structures are possible (5.2).

5.1. *Possessive adjective only*

5.1.1. The first constraint is entirely syntactic. As we have seen in section 2, the possessum NP must be c-commanded by the possessor NP or pronoun. However, as it has been shown by Landau (1999, 9) for Hebrew, in complex NPs only the matrix NP may be associated with the possessive dative and not the embedded one. This suggests that the notion of c-command is to be interpreted in a very strict way (cf. Landau 1999). The following example shows that the same is true for Russian.

- (26) a. *Пот крупными каплями выступ[ил] в морщинах его лица.*
(Горький, т. 1, 71)
sweat large_{instr} drops_{instr} came out in wrinkles_{prep} his face_{gen}
'Sweat came out in the wrinkles of his face in large drops.'
- b. **Пот крупными каплями выступил у него / ему в морщинах лица.*
sweat large_{instr} drops_{instr} came out at him_{gen} / him_{dat} in wrinkles_{prep} face_{gen}

5.1.2. The second constraint we will mention has already been commented in section 2: the use of external structures is excluded when the noun is modified by a descriptive adjective, as in (27a). This constraint is very well known in the literature on inalienable possession and is explained by Julien (1983) by the fact that the presence of a descriptive adjective presents the body-part as alienable. According to Vergnaud, Zubizarreta (1992), this constraint is related to the open character of the possessum NP, which is not a complete argument because of its dependence on the possessor and therefore cannot function as an argument for a descriptive adjective.

- (27) a. *На бледное лицо его пали кудри.* (after Горький, т. 1, 25)
on pale face his fell locks
'The locks fell on his pale face.'

- b. **На бледное лицо ему / у него пали кудри.*
 on pale face him_{dat} / at him_{gen} fell locks

5.1.3. Another syntactic constraint concerns the case of the possessum NP: whenever the possessum occurs as a dative or instrumental verb complement, the possessive adjective is the only possible possessive structure. These restrictions will not be examined here, but are probably related to the thematic role of these complements.

- (28) a. *Она подчинилась его взгляду.*
 she obeyed his gaze_{dat}
 'She got subjugated by his gaze.'
- b. **Она подчинилась у него / ему взгляду.*
 she obeyed at him_{gen} / him_{dat} gaze_{dat}
- (29) a. *Она завладела его мыслями.*
 she took possession his thoughts_{instr}
 'She took possession of his thoughts.'
- b. **Она у него / ему завладела мыслями.*
 she at him_{gen} / him_{dat} took possession thoughts_{instr}

5.1.4. Furthermore, in many cases the use of the internal possessor structure is conditioned by lexical factors involving the meaning of the noun; for instance, abstract nouns denoting properties can be used only with the possessive adjective. However, this vast subject goes beyond the scope of this article.

- (30) a. *Может быть, её красоту можно бы на скрипке сыграть*
 [...]. (Горький, т. 1, 16)
 maybe, her beauty possible on violin play.
 'Maybe her beauty can be played on a violin [...].'
- b. **Красоту у неё / ей можно бы на скрипке сыграть.*
 beauty at her_{gen}/her_{dat} possible on violin play

5.2. Competition between the possessive adjective and the external structures

In many cases however, all three structures or at least the internal structure and one of the two external structures are possible and compete with each other. The same occurs in other languages with external possessor structures. It is generally assumed that the external structures present the possessed object viewed in its relation to the entire person, the whole being in some way or another affected

through the possessum. The use of the adnominal possessive adjective in its turn presents the possessum separated from the possessor.

- (31) a. *От этого у него тряслись губы.* (Горький, т. 1, 58)
 from this at him_{gen} trembled lips
 'Because of that his lips were trembling.'
- b. *Его губы тряслись.*
 his lips trembled
 'His lips were trembling.'

Constraints on the word order of the constituents of these two sentences reveal that the choice between the two structures is related to topicalisation. The use of the internal structure is more convenient when the body-part, together with the possessor, is topicalized, while the use of the external structure presents the possessor as more topicalized than the body part. Therefore, in (31c), in which the possessum, modified by the possessive adjective, occurs in clause-final position, the whole NP is presented as new information and the use of the possessive adjective is ungrammatical. Conversely, example (31d), in which the body part is presented as more topicalized than the possessor, is not very natural.

- c. **От этого тряслись его губы.*
 from this trembled his lips
- d. ?? *От этого губы тряслись у него.*
 from this lips trembled at him_{gen}

The following examples, already commented in section 4.3 (cf. (23)), illustrate yet another constraint. They contain two body-part nouns denoting the hair and the head. The possessive adjective can only be used with the noun denoting the head in spite of its clause-final position, as in (32a), and not with the noun denoting the hair (cf. (32b)). Even topicalisation of the NP denoting the hair, by fronting it, as in (32c), cannot make the use of the possessive adjective possible. This is due to the hierarchy of the part/whole relation: the hair is part of the head, which is in its turn part of the whole person. Therefore, the possessive adjective can only modify the most prominent possessed item.

- (32) a. *Ветер трепал волосы на его голове.* (after Горький, т. 1, 22)
 wind_{nom} blew hair_{acc} on his head_{prep}
 'The wind was blowing the hair on his head.'
- b. **Ветер трепал его волосы на голове.*
 wind_{nom} blew his hair_{acc} on head_{prep}
 '*The wind was blowing his hair on the head.'

с. *Его волосы на голове трепал ветер.

his hair_{acc} on head_{prep} blew wind_{nom}

‘*His hair on the head was being blown by the wind.’

Another effect of the use of the possessive adjective is that the process seems to concern the possessed object on the whole, while the dative implies that the process takes place within it, without concerning it completely. In example (33a), the locks are covering the entire face, while in (33b), the face is covered only partially.

(33) а. *На лицо его пали кудри* [...]. (Горький, т. 1, 25)

on face his fell locks

‘The locks fell on / covered his face [...].’

б. *На лицо ему пали кудри.*

on face him_{dat} fell locks

‘The locks fell upon his face.’

6. CONCLUSIONS

This study has shown that the choice between the two external possessor structures under discussion is primarily related to the thematic role of the possessor adjunct, which can vary with the same verb: the possessive dative presents it as a goal or as an experience while the *y*-construction views it as a source or a location. As for the possessive adjective, when it competes with external possessor structures, it presents the possessum as separated from the possessor, viewed as a whole, as it has been shown for other languages.

Two general conclusions can be drawn from our study:

- The first one confirms what is already known about the Russian language: the omnipresence of spatial relations. The verbal system, with its variety of movement verbs, is very sensitive to spatial relations, and so is the case system. It is interesting to note that Russian views even the possessive relation through its relationship with space.
- Our second conclusion concerns the delimitation of inalienable possession in Russian. As the dative views the possessor as an experiencer, it is obvious that it is only convenient for animate referents. The *y*-construction, however, presents the possessor as a spatial location for the possessum, which applies as easily to inanimate as to animate referents. Consequently, Russian external possessor structures reflect two different delimitations of inalienable possession, one restricted to animate referents for the dative and one extended to a wide range of possessive relations including inanimate referents for the *y*-construction.

NOTES

* A short version of this article was presented at the International Conference "From NP to DP" held at the Antwerp University in February 2000.

¹ The possessive dative exists in most Slavic languages (cf. Šarić 2002), in all Romance languages as well as in some Germanic languages (cf. Lamiroy, Delbecque 1998) and in many non Indo-European languages such as Japanese, Korean, Hebrew (cf. Landau 1999).

² A similar preposition, i. e. *bij*, meaning 'at', which also alternates with a possessive dative, is used in Dutch inalienable constructions:

- (i) *Ik zet het kind bij Jan / hem op de linker knie.* (Broekhuis, Cornips 1997, 185)
I put the child at John / him on the left knee
- (ii) *Ik zet Jan / hem het kind op de linker knie.*
I put John / him the child on the left knee
'I put the child on John's / his left knee.'

However, the syntactic and semantic restrictions on the occurrence of this *bij*-PP in Dutch are very different from those on the *y*-PP in Russian (cf. Broekhuis, Cornips 1996, 1997).

³ Various studies in cognitive grammar have been consecrated to possessive structures, such as Wierzbicka (1988), Heine (1997), Šarić (2002).

⁴ Cf. Kayne (1977), Guéron (1985), Vergnaud, Zubizarreta (1992), Landau (1999) among many others.

⁵ To express co-reference with the subject, Russian, like many other Slavic languages, has also a reflexive possessive adjective, *свой*. For more details, see Comtet (1984).

⁶ In Generative Grammar, two accounts have been proposed for these structures. The first account, known as "possessor raising" (cf. Landau 1999 among many others), assumes that the possessor originates in the NP and rises to a verb complement position, leaving a trace which is bound by the possessor. The alternative account considers the possessor as a semantic argument of the verb, which has, according to Kayne (1977), a semantic role of benefactive or, according to Guéron (1985), roughly the same semantic role as the possessum NP, with which it constitutes a lexical chain.

⁷ The structure exemplified in (7b), using the *y*-complement, is the most neutral one in Russian for expressing predicative possession. For details about this sentence type, refer to Chvany (1975), Babby (1980), Garde (1987), Guiraud-Weber (1996). However, the possessive adjective and the possessive dative can also be used to express predicative possession:

- (i) *Это моё платье.*
this mine dress
'This dress is mine.' or 'This is my dress.'
- (ii) *Мне тридцать лет.*
me_{dat} thirty years
'I am thirty years old.'

⁸ Cf. also French *Ses yeux sont bleus* vs. *Il a les yeux bleus*.

⁹ The use of the demonstrative determiner is however possible in a very specific context, where it selects one referent out of several presupposed referents.

¹⁰ Ethical datives, however, are not subject to confusion with possessive datives:

- (i) *Это тебе не бульвар.* (Стругацкие, in Mikaelian, Roudet 1999, 37)
this you_{dat} not avenue
'Hello?! This is not an avenue (for you)!'

It should be added that in colloquial Russian the *y*-structure is also often used with ethical value. For instance, in (ii) the NP *директор* ('director') can be modified by a descriptive adjective, which shows that this NP is not bound by the *y*-phrase (cf. sections 2 and 5.1.2). Therefore this kind of

y-construction cannot be considered as an external possessor structure and its study goes beyond the scope of this article.

- (ii) *Как поживает у нас (достопочтенный) директор?*
how is living at us_{gen} (highly respectable) director
'How is doing our (highly respectable) director?'
- (iii) *Какой у нас сегодня день?*
what at us_{gen} today day
'What day is it today?'

¹¹ The notion of "c-command", introduced by Reinhart (1981), plays a central role in the Government and Binding Theory of N. Chomsky (1981).

¹² Cf. Fillmore (1968, 61), who describes inalienable referents as "concepts that are inherently relational".

¹³ In languages such as Spanish, Rumanian, German, Polish, Hebrew and many others, the possessive dative can equally co-occur with alienable possessed items, like houses, watches, cars, dogs, etc.

- (i) Spanish: *Nos han entrado ladrones en casa.* (Lamiroy, Delbecque 1998, 61)
us_{dat} have entered thieves in house
'Thieves came into our house.'
- (ii) Rumanian: *Mi-am uitat ceasul pe noptieră.* (Van Peteghem 2000, 154)
me_{dat} have forgotten watch on bedside table
'I forgot my watch on the bedside table.'
- (iii) German: *Es regnet uns ins Haus.* (Draye 1996, 205)
it rains us_{dat} in-the house
'It is raining in our house.'
- (iv) Polish: *Samochód mi się zepsuł.* (Wierzbicka 1988, 403)
car me_{dat} itself broke
'My car broke down (on me).'
- (v) Hebrew: *Ha-kelev ne'elam le-Rina.* (Landau 1999, 7)
the dog disappeared to-Rina
'Rina's dog disappeared.'

For details on possessive structures and inalienability in Slavic languages, see Wierzbicka (1988) and Šarić (2002).

¹⁴ Cf. Bally (1926). See also Heine (1997, 11): "The way inalienability is defined in a given case or in a given language is largely dependent on culture-specific conventions".

¹⁵ Chappell, McGregor (1996, 9) note that "predictions for each language can be made on the basis of cultural and pragmatic knowledge".

¹⁶ In Van Peteghem (2000), the same idea is illustrated for the use of the French and the Rumanian possessive dative.

¹⁷ Example (9) looks like a counterexample. However, as we have shown earlier, the dative in this particular context cannot be really considered as a possessive dative, which is also obvious from its English translation.

¹⁸ In this example the use of the dative pronoun is the only possible one, the y-structure being excluded for semantic reasons, as we will show in section 4.2.

**На лицо у него пали кудри.*
on face at him_{gen} fell locks

¹⁹ We will consider as action verbs those which in English can be used in the progressive form ('to be X-ing'), as opposed to state verbs.

²⁰ Cf. Garde (1987, 560), according to whom the possessum in the y-construction provides an answer to the question *зде?* ('where?') *откуда?* ('from where?') and in the dative construction to the question *куда?* ('where ... to?'). Durst-Andersen (1996, 209–211) similarly called the genitive and the dative "extrovertive" and "introvertive", respectively.

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University of Lille

paykin_arroues@yahoo.fr

peteghem@univ-lille3.fr