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Structural Conditions for Ergativity: A View from North Russian

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Synopsis

0. **Intro: DSM by structural and semantic factors**
1. **Ergativity and the North Russian BE-perfect**
2. **Semantic motivation for DSM: Agentivity**
3. **Structural conditions for DSM: Nominalization**
4. **DSM in North Russian: Semantic or Structural?**
5. **Conclusions**

0. Intro: DSM by structural and semantic factors (1)

- (1) Semantic factors: DSM to signal high-prominence (e.g. animacy, specificity, agentivity, volitionality, strongness; Cf. distinguishing function of DSM: Silverstein 1976)

ex. Tsova-Tusi (Holisky 1987: agentivity, volitionality)

- a. (*as*) *vuiž-n-as*.
1SG-ERG fell-AOR-1SG-ERG
'I fell down (on purpose).'
- b. (*so*) *vož-en-sO*.
1SG-NOM fell-AOR-1SG-NOM
'I fell down (by accident).'

[Holisky 1987: 105]

- (2) Structural factors: syntactic conditions requiring specific case-marking on the subject (e.g. nominal structures requiring genitive case)

ex. Inuktitut (Johns 1992, Cf. Bok-Bennema 1991)

anguti-up_i nanuq-∅ t_i kapi-ja-a-∅
man-ERG/GEN bear-ABS stab-NOM-3s-3s
'The bear is the man's stabbed one=the man stabbed the bear'

0. Intro: DSM by structural and semantic factors (2)

(3) When these factors conflict:

ex. Turkish (Kornfilt 2009):

- Syntactic DSM: nominalized indicative adjuncts require nominative subject.
- Semantic DSM: specific subject requires genitive marking
- Syntactic DSM wins over semantic DSM.

[Ben (*-im) yemek pişir-diğ-im]-den konser-e gid-e-me-di-m.
I.NOM (-GEN) food cook-FN-1SG-ABL concert-DAT go-ABIL-NEG-PST-1SG
'Because I cooked, I was unable to go to the concert.' [Kornfilt 2009: 97]

(4) When these factors coincide:

ex. North Russian

I. Ergativity and the North Russian BE-perfect (1)

1.1. Morphological ergativity

(5) Factors defining ergativity:

- Case alignment

A	vs. S/O	No intransitive split: Inuit, Tongan
External arg.	vs. Internal arg.	Intransitive split: Hindi, Basque

(6) Morphological ergativity: the case-marking system which syntactically behaves like the accusative system in terms of anaphor binding, control, and ellipsis in coordination (Anderson 1976).

- Subject properties of the ergative argument
- Agent-oriented ergative marking (Holisky 1987, Mohanan 1994)

(7) Correlation between Tense/Aspect-split, the BE-possessive, and ergativity: Benveniste (1952), Trask (1979), Kayne (1993), Mahajan (1997) (Hindi, Classical Armenian, etc.)

I. Ergativity and the North Russian BE-perfect (2)

1.2. The North Russian -n/-t- perfect

1.2.1. Two types of perfect constructions in North Russian

(8) The -n/-t- perfect

- a. *U Šurk-i* \emptyset *prived-en-o* *svoj-a star-aja nevest-a.*
at Šurka-GEN (be.PRS) bring-PTCP-N.SG [his own old fiancée]-NOM.F.SG
'Šurka has brought his own old fiancée.' [Kuz'mina & Nemčenko 1971: 35]
- b. *U menja* *by-l-o* *telenk-a* *zareza-n-o.*
at me.GEN BE-PST-N.SG calf-ACC.Anim.M.SG slaughter-PTCP-N.SG
'I had slaughtered a/the calf.' [Ibid. 38]
- c. *U nix* *by-l- \emptyset* *postavl-en- \emptyset* *konjušnj-a.*
at them.GEN BE-PST-M.SG build-PTCP-M.SG barn-NOM.F.SG
'They had built a barn.' [Ibid. 79]
- d. *U nas* *takoj- \emptyset* *by-l- \emptyset* *bol'šoj- \emptyset trampin- \emptyset* *sdela-n-o.*
at us.GEN such-NOM.M.SG BE-PST-M.SG [big springboard]-NOM.M.SG make-PTCP-N.SG
'We had made such a big springboard (trampoline).' [Ibid. 42]

I. Ergativity and the North Russian BE-perfect (3)

- PP subject (*u* 'at'+GEN), NOM or ACC object.
- Indeclinable participle in Neut or Masc SG forms (*-no/-to, -n/-t*) originating from the PPP.
- The auxiliary either agrees with the nominative object or with the participle.

(9) Cf. The passive: Both the auxiliary and participle agree with the nominative patient.

Ego familij-a by-l-a kem-to tam napisa-n-a.
his surname-NOM.F.SG BE-PST-F.SG someone.INSTR.M.SG there write-PTCP-F.SG
'His last name was written there by someone.'

Q. ACC object is not used in the dialects where the participle has a masculine singular ending. WHY?

(10) The *-vši* perfect

On by umer-ši by-l-ø.
he.NOM.M.SG PTCL die-PTCP be-PST-M.SG
'He could have been dead.'
[Kuz'mina 1993:181]

- NOM subject.
- Indeclinable participle (*-vši*) originating from the PAP.
- Intransitive verbs (Trubinskij 1961: 57; K&N 1971: 121, 170-171; Kuz'mina 1975: 232).
- The auxiliary always agrees with the nominative subject.

I. Ergativity and the North Russian BE-perfect (4)

1.2.2. The subject properties of the u+GEN PP (Timberlake 1976: 654)

(11) a. Subject-oriented anaphor binding

U Šurk-i_i prived-en-o svoj-a_i star-aja nevest-a. [K&N: 35]
at Šurka-GEN bring-PTCP-N.SG [own old fiancée]-NOM.F.SG
'Šurka has brought his own old fiancée.'

b. PRO control

U babk-i_i naverno [PRO_i kosi-t' ujd-en-o].
at grandma-GEN probably mow-INF leave-PTCP-N.SG
'Grandma has probably left to mow.' [Matveenko 1961:123]

c. Coordination

U menja eto ne zakonč-en-o, no ∅ pojd-u pogulja-t'.
at me.GEN this NEG finish-PTCP.N.SG but go-NPST.1.SG take a walk-INF
'I have not finished this but will go to take a walk.' [pers.comm. Zh. Glushan]

(12) Cf. The NOM/ACC theme does not bear these subject properties > surface object

I. Ergativity and the North Russian BE-perfect (5)

1.2.3. Case alignment

(13) Intransitive perfect is mostly expressed by the *-vši* construction with the NOM subject.

On Ø *sil'no* *vypi-vši.* [Kuz'mina 1993:146]
he.NOM.M.SG (BE.PRST) very much drink-PTCP
'He has drunk very much.'

(14) Intransitive *-n/-t-* perfect: geographically limited distribution, unergative verbs.

- Comparable with adverbial phrases expressing intention and purpose:

U nego *naročno* *nigde* *ne* *by-t-o,* *čtoby* *podrazni-t'* *mam-u.*
at him.GEN intentionally nowhere NEG BE-PTCP-N.SG COMP make anxious-INF mom-ACC
'He has not gone anywhere intentionally in order to make mom anxious.'
[pers.comm. Zh. Glushan]

- ☞ The North Russian perfect shows ergative pattern, in which only external argument is marked by the oblique case.

II. Semantic motivation for DSM: Agentivity (1)

2.1. Agentivity-sensitive oblique marking (Holisky 1987, de Hoop & Narasimhan 2009, Mohanan 1994)

(15) The *u*+GEN subject should be animate, although it may express unvolitional agent.

U traktor-a *tut* *proexa-n-o.*

at tractor-GEN here pass by-PTCP-N.SG

‘A tractor has passed by here.’

[Kuznecov 1954:96]

(16) The *u*+GEN subject cannot be an applicative: Applicative *u*+GEN does not show subject properties.

U Pavl-a_i *sloma-l-ø-sja* *ego_i/*svoj-ø_i* *kompjuter-ø.*

at Paul-GEN.M.SG break-PST-M.SG-REFL [his/*his own computer]-NOM.M.SG

‘Paul caused his computer to break (accidentally). [Rivero & Savchenko 2004:8]

(17) The applicative PP and the agentive PP can co-occur in a single sentence.

U menja *tri jajca svežix* *by-l-o* *tol’ko polož-en-o* *u kur*

at me-GEN three eggs fresh be-PST-N.SG just lay-PTCP-N.SG at hen-GEN.PL

‘I just had three fresh eggs laid by hens.’

[Matveenکو 1961: 125]

II. Semantic motivation for DSM: Agentivity (2)

2.2. Historical origin of the high-prominence of the *u*+GEN PP

(18) locative adjunct ('at ~'s domain') > benefactive applicative > external argument

a. Passive with an adjunct locative *u*+GEN (the 11th c.)

žiznobud-e *pogubl-en-e* *u syčevic-ь*
Žiznobud-NOM.M.SG kill-PTCP-M.SG at Syčevičes-GEN

'Žiznobud was killed at Syčevičs'/by Syčevičs.' [BBL No. 607/562, Zaliznjak 2004:245]

b. Passive with an applicative (benefactive/causer) *u*+GEN (the 16th c.)

u carj-a *perelož-en-o* ... *rat-ь svoj-a* *na moskovskuju ukrajnu posla-ti.*
at Tsar-GEN arrange-PTCP-N.SG [army own]-NOM.F.SG to Moscow hinterland send-INF

'The Tsar has arranged that his army is sent to the Moscow hinterland.'

[PDSK II, Timberlake 1974:16]

c. Perfect with an agent subject *u*+GEN (the 16th c.)

A tolko u muž-a ... *vse* *pripas-en-o,* *i* *rži* *i* *pšenicy*
only at husband-GEN everything prepare-PTCP-N.SG and wheat and rye

'Only a husband has prepared everything, wheat, rye....' [Domostroj No.43]

III. Structural conditions for DSM: Nominalization (1)

3.1. Nominalization and ergativity

(2=19) Inuktitut (Johns 1992, Cf. Bok-Bennema 1991)

anguti-up_i nanuq-∅ t_i kapi-ja-a-∅
man-ERG/GEN bear-ABS stab-NOM-3s-3s

‘The bear is the man’s stabbed one=the man stabbed the bear’

(20) The correlation between verbal nominalization and ergativity:

- ☞ A nominalized verb structure does not have the ACC case (Alexiadou 2001: defective v, Nash 1996: absence of vP)

III. Structural conditions for DSM: Nominalization (2)

3.2. Auxiliary agreement variation in the North Russian -n/-t- perfect

(21) Agreement with argument: BE agrees with the NOM object

a. BE (Masc) – participle (Neut) – object (Masc)

U nas takoj-ø by-l-ø bol'šoj-ø tramplin-ø sdela-n-o.
at us.GEN such-NOM.M.SG BE-PST-M.SG [big springboard]-NOM.M.SG make-PTCP-N.SG
'We had made such a big springboard (trampoline).' [K&N: 42]

b. BE (Fem) – participle (Masc) – object (Fem)

By-l-a zapečata-n-ø komnat-a. [Ibid. 79]
BE-PST-F.SG seal-PTCP-M.SG room-NOM.F.SG
'They had sealed the room.'

c. BE (PL) – participle (Masc) – object (PL)

U nemc-ev otobra-n-ø kon-i by-l-i. [Ibid. 79]
at Germans-GEN take-PTCP-M.SG horse-NOM.PL BE-PST-PL
'Germans had taken (the) horses.'

III. Structural conditions for DSM: Nominalization (3)

(22) Agreement with participle: BE agrees with the participle

a. BE (Neut) – participle (Neut) – object (Fem)

By-l-o *volj-a* *da-n-o.*
BE-PST-N.SG freedom-NOM.F.SG give-PTCP-N.SG

‘Freedom had been given.’

[K&N: 36]

b. BE (Masc) – participle (Masc) – object (Fem)

U nix *by-l-ø* *postavl-en-ø* *konjušnj-a.*
at them.GEN BE-PST-M.SG build-PTCP-M.SG barn-NOM.F.SG

‘They had built a/the barn.’

[Ibid. 79]

(23) Cf. Default agreement

U nego *prines-en-ø* *tabak-u* *by-l-o.*
at him.GEN bring-PTCP.M.SG tobacco-Part.GEN.M.SG BE-PST-N.SG (default)

‘He had brought tobacco.’

[Ibid: 80]

III. Structural conditions for DSM: Nominalization (4)

3.3. The use of the possessive expression for the subject

(24) The u+GEN possessor

<i>U menja</i>	<i>by-l-a</i>	<i>mašin-a.</i>
at me.GEN	BE-PST-F.SG	car-NOM.F.SG
'I had a car.'		

(25) Lithuanian evidentials: The genitive subject is identical with the possessor form.

<u><i>Mano/*manęs</i></u>	<i>draug-as</i>	<i>pakvies-ta.</i>
my.PossPron.GEN/me.PersPron.GEN	friend-NOM.M.SG	invite-PTCP

'I apparently invited a friend.'

[Lavine 2000]

☞ Verbal nominalization in the North Russian *-n/-t-* perfect

- Indeclinable participial endings in specific gender and number.
- Auxiliary agreement with the participle
- Agent in a possessor form

☞ The intransitive-only *-vši* perfect does not involve a nominalized structure.

III. Structural conditions for DSM: Nominalization (5)

3.4. Object case-marking variation

How can a nominalized structure have ACC objects?

☞ Different levels of nominalization (*his destruction of the city* vs. *his destroying the city*)

(26) NOM object dialects

- The head of the participle phrase is nominal (*n*), thus having fixed gender and number features but lacking the ACC case feature (full nominalization).
- AUX potentially has two Goals for agreement: object head and the participial head.

(27) ACC object dialects

- The head of the participial phrase is verbal (*v*), which cannot be the Goal of agreement (partial nominalization > a mixed category).
- The participial head *v* marks the object with the accusative.

☞ Why are ACC objects incompatible with the masculine singular participle (-*n/-t*)? The masculine singular participle clearly indicates the nominalization of the verb, the head of which is *n* lacking the accusative case.

IV. DSM in North Russian: Semantic or Structural?

(28) Semantic DSM?

Oblique marking on the subject of high-prominence (animate, agentive).

(29) Structural DSM?

Nominalization based on the opposition of external vs. internal arguments
or
transitive vs. intransitive

(30) In North Russian, semantic and structural factors do not conflict with each other, owing to the verb-class-based split, thus consistently marking the agent subject with the oblique case.

V. Conclusions

- (32) In accusative languages (e.g. North Russian), relevant structural conditions such as nominalization may give rise to ergativity and DSM.
- (33) When semantic factors and structural conditions for DSM overlap, the cause of DSM may be ambiguous.

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Thank you!