

Chapter 10

Maximal interpretation and definiteness of nominal phrases in Russian: Implication for the NP/DP parameter

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The aim of this paper is to demonstrate that the maximal (exhaustive) interpretation of nominal phrases cannot be used to support the existence of determiner phrases in Russian. The paper argues that the maximal interpretation of phrases including numerals and possessives arises irrespective of the syntactic position of the possessors. Rather, it should be dealt with as a merely semantic matter and the difference between the maximal and non-maximal interpretations can be reduced to (in)definiteness.

Keywords: Russian, maximal interpretation, definiteness, DP hypothesis, numeral, possessive

1 Introduction

The literature on the structure of Slavic nominal phrases without overt articles splits into two standpoints. Some researchers insist on the presence of determiner phrases (DPs) even in articleless Slavic languages (UNIVERSAL DP HYPOTHESIS; see, e.g., Progovac 1998, Rappaport 2002, Rutkowski 2002, Bašić 2004, Franks & Pereltsvaig 2004, Pereltsvaig 2007, Rutkowski & Maliszewska 2007). Others maintain that nominal phrases in Slavic are NPs (PARAMETERIZED DP HYPOTHESIS; e.g., Zlatić 1998, Trenkic 2004, Bošković 2005, 2007, 2009, Despić 2013). Kagan & Pereltsvaig (2012) contributed to the investigation of this matter by considering some behaviors of adjectival modifiers. They conclude that the DP layer exists even in articleless Russian.



The aim of the present paper is to demonstrate that a maximal (exhaustive) interpretation of nominal phrases cannot be used to support the claim that there is a DP projection in Russian. Contrary to Kagan & Pereltsvaig (2012), I claim that a maximal interpretation of phrases including numerals and possessors arises independently of the high syntactic position of the possessor, since it is also available with possessors in a low syntactic position. The maximal interpretation should thus be dealt with as a merely semantic matter. It follows that the difference between maximal and non-maximal interpretations can be reduced to an opposition of definiteness versus indefiniteness.

The paper is organized as follows: §2 provides some data regarding a maximal interpretation in Russian nominal phrases with a focus on prenominal and post-nominal possessors. In addition, I outline the discussion of Kagan & Pereltsvaig (2012) in terms of a maximal interpretation. §3 presents my hypothesis that the maximal interpretation can be reduced to simple definiteness on the basis of the semantics of definiteness. §4 and §5 verify the validity of the hypothesis by using the definiteness effect and the genitive of negation. §6 concludes the paper.

2 Russian possessors and their interpretation

2.1 Prenominal possessors

In Russian, adjectival modifiers such as possessive adjectives (like *Dimin* ‘Dima’s’, *Mašin* ‘Masha’s’) can precede or follow numerals as shown in (1) and (2).¹

- (1) a. *pjat’ Diminyx knig*
five Dima.GEN.PL book.GEN.PL
‘five of Dima’s books’
b. *Diminy pjat’ knig*
Dima.NOM.PL five book.GEN.PL
‘Dima’s five books’ (Kagan & Pereltsvaig 2012: 173)
- (2) a. *devjat’ Mašinyx sumok*
nine Masha.GEN.PL bag.GEN.PL
‘nine of Masha’s bags’
b. *Mašiny devjat’ sumok*
Masha.NOM.PL nine bag.GEN.PL
‘Masha’s nine bags’

¹In this paper, the focus is on possessives. In fact, some other adjectival modifiers seem to behave almost the same way as possessive adjectives in terms of word order (see §2.2). However, further research is necessary to draw conclusions about the correlation between syntactic positions of other adjectives and the rise of a maximal interpretation.

The phrases (1a) and (2a), where the possessive adjectives follow the numerals, are not interpreted maximally: Dima may have more than five books, and Masha may have more than nine bags. These phrases show the unmarked word order, thus possessives in Russian are usually considered non-exhaustive (see, e.g., Par-tee 2006). However, Kagan & Pereltsvaig (2012) point out that the alternative order is possible where a possessive adjective precedes a numeral. For example, the phrases (1b) and (2b) are grammatical. Unlike (1a) and (2a), the phrases in (1b) and (2b) receive a maximal interpretation and presuppose that Dima has exactly five books and Masha has exactly nine bags, respectively.

The difference in interpretation is reflected in the contrast between (3a), (4a) and (3b), (4b), respectively.

- (3) a. * vse pjat' Diminyx knig
 all.NOM.PL five Dima.GEN.PL book.GEN.PL
 Intended: 'all five of Dima's books'
- b. vse Diminy pjat' knig
 all.NOM.PL Dima.NOM.PL five book.GEN.PL
 'all Dima's five books'
- (4) a. * vse devjat' Mašinyx sumok
 all.NOM.PL nine Masha.GEN.PL bag.GEN.PL
 Intended: 'all nine of Masha's bags'
- b. vse Mašiny devjat' sumok
 all.NOM.PL Masha.NOM.PL nine bag.GEN.PL
 'all Masha's nine bags'

The universal quantifier *ves'* 'all' compels the maximal interpretation because of its lexical meaning. Therefore, it can be added to (1b) and (2b), which receive the maximal interpretation without semantic contradiction as shown in (3b) and (4b). However, it cannot be added to (1a) or (2a), which do not receive a maximal interpretation because of semantic contradiction as shown in (3a) and (4a).

The above-mentioned statements regarding possessive adjectives also apply to possessive pronouns (e.g. *naš* 'our', *tvoj* 'your') as shown in (5) and (6).

- (5) a. (*vse) pjat' našix knig
 all five our.GEN.PL book.GEN.PL
 'five of our books'
- b. (vse) naši pjat' knig
 all our.NOM.PL five books.GEN.PL
 '(all) our five books'

- (6) a. (*vse) devjat' tvoix sumok
 all nine your.GEN.PL bag.GEN.PL
 'nine of your bags'
 b. (vse) tvoi devjat' sumok
 all your.NOM.PL nine bag.GEN.PL
 '(all) your nine bags'

Possessive pronouns can follow the numerals as in (5a) and (6a), but can also precede them as in (5b) and (6b), which is fully parallel to possessive adjectives as shown in (1) and (2) above. Also regarding interpretation, possessive pronouns behave similarly to possessive adjectives. The phrases in (5a) and (6a) are interpreted non-maximally: The speakers or the addressee may have more than five books or nine bags, respectively. On the other hand, the phrases in (5b) and (6b) show a maximal interpretation: The relevant persons possess exactly five books or nine bags, respectively.

2.2 Maximal interpretation and syntactic structure of nominals

Kagan & Pereltsvaig (2012) state that a maximal interpretation as in (1b) and (2b) is due to the fact that the possessive adjective appears in a high position and that there is a projection responsible for maximality. Generally, authors associate exhaustive interpretation with the projection of a DP (e.g., Zamparelli 2000).² Therefore, Kagan & Pereltsvaig conclude that there is a DP layer in Russian, since the high position in which a possessive adjective can appear is located in the DP field. That position is the highest AP (in $\alpha P-1$) in Figure 1.

According to Kagan & Pereltsvaig (2012: 168), high adjectives that appear in $\alpha P-1$ modify the referent of DP, intermediate adjectives in $\alpha P-2$ modify the quantity denoted by NumP, and low adjectives in $\alpha P-3$ modify the property of NP.

In particular, the high projection in $\alpha P-1$ hosts adjectives such as *poslednij* 'last', *pervyj* 'first', *sledujuščij* 'next', *takoj* 'such', *opredelënnij* 'certain', and adjectival elements like demonstratives (e.g., *ëtot* 'this'), indefinite pronouns (e.g., *kakoj-to*

²Kagan & Pereltsvaig (2012) do not provide a detailed explanation of how to realize a maximal interpretation in nominal phrases, except that they claim that it results from a high syntactic position of the possessor. However, maximal interpretation is related to definiteness (see §3), if we take into consideration that DP is the projection of definiteness (see Lyons 1999) and that Kagan & Pereltsvaig connect maximal interpretation with DP. In addition, Koev (2011) claims that definiteness in Bulgarian is realized through a slightly modified version of Agree, based on Baker (2008). Thus, at this stage it is natural to assume that maximal interpretations in Russian are also realized through Agree.

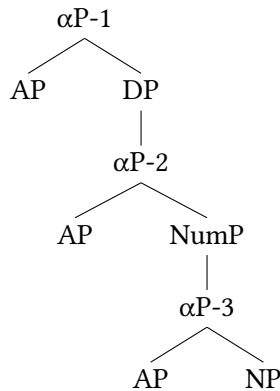


Figure 1: Sketch of the structure of nominal phrases in Russian (Kagan & Pereltsvaig 2012: 168)

‘some’), and possessives (e.g., *moj* ‘my’). The intermediate adjectives that can appear in α P-2 include *dobryj* ‘good’, *celyj* ‘whole’, *dolgij* ‘long’, *kakoj-nibud* ‘some; any’, *nepolnyj* ‘incomplete’, and so on. The difference between the high and intermediate adjectives is found in the contrast between cases of adjectives in (7) and (8).

- (7) a. *poslednie pjat’ knig*
 last.NOM.PL five books.GEN
 ‘the last five books’
- b. *kakie-to desjat’ podrostkov*
 some.NOM.PL ten teenagers.GEN
 ‘some (unknown) ten teenagers’ (Kagan & Pereltsvaig 2012: 169)
- (8) a. *celyx tridcat’ svobodnyx dnej*
 whole.GEN.PL thirty free.GEN.PL days.GEN.PL
 ‘a whole thirty free days’ (Babby 1987: 121)
- b. *dobryx desjat’ kilometrov*
 good.GEN.PL ten kilometers.GEN.PL
 ‘a good ten kilometers’ (Kagan & Pereltsvaig 2012: 175)

In (7), the adjectives precede the numerals, and they appear in nominative case. On the other hand, in (8), the adjectives appear in genitive case, although they precede the numerals just like the adjectives in (7) do.

The low adjectives in α P-3 follow the numerals and appear in genitive case.³

³For more details, see Kagan & Pereltsvaig (2012).

- (9) a. *pjat' umnyx mal'čikov*
 five clever.GEN.PL boys.GEN.PL
 'five clever boys'
 b. *desjat' bol'six gorodov*
 ten big.GEN.PL cities.GEN.PL
 'ten big cities' (Kagan & Pereltsvaig 2012: 169)

2.3 Postnominal possessors

Kagan & Pereltsvaig's (2012) argument introduced in §2.2 seems to be valid. The maximal interpretation, however, should not be considered a result of the high syntactic position of the possessor, since it is also available in a phrase where a noun in genitive case following a head noun is used as a possessor.

Adnominal genitives are usually supposed to be located in a lower position than their head nouns (see, e.g., Franks 1995: 38; Bailyn 2012: 214, Mitrenina et al. 2012: 84), which is shown in Figure 2.⁴

The phrases in (10) show this type of configuration.⁵

- (10) a. *pjat' knig Dimy*
 five books.GEN.PL Dima.GEN
 'Dima's five books/five of Dima's books'

⁴To be precise, Bailyn (2012) does not propose the structure in Figure 2. According to him, adnominal genitives occupy the complement position in a QP as shown in (i):

(i) $[_{NP} N [_{QP} Q NP_{GEN}]]$ (Bailyn 2012: 214; slightly modified)

Bailyn (2012: 214) proposes that Q assigns genitive case to its sister NP (there is case where Q is covert). These differences in the positioning of the genitive NP have no effect on the argument of this paper, since a genitive possessor NP is located lower than a possessee NP.

⁵In Russian, a possessive adjective is derived from a noun (e.g., *Dima* > *Dimin* 'Dima's'). Therefore, the nominal phrases including possessive adjectives such as (1) and (2) can be paraphrased by locating the genitive possessors after the heads like in (10) (see Švedova 1980). On the other hand, possessive pronouns (e.g., *naš* 'our', *tvoj* 'your') cannot be paraphrased by using corresponding personal pronouns as postnominal genitive possessors; see (i).

(i) a. **pjat' knig nas*
 five book.GEN.PL US.GEN
 Intended: 'our five books/five of our books'
 b. **devjat' sumok tebja*
 nine bag.GEN.PL YOU.GEN
 Intended: 'your nine bags/nine of your bags'

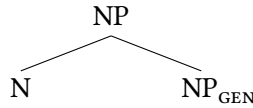


Figure 2: The structure of nominal phrases including adnominal genitives in Russian

- b. devjat' sumok Maši
 nine bag.GEN.PL Masha.GEN
 'Masha's nine bags/nine of Masha's bags'

The phrases in (10) can be interpreted either maximally or non-maximally. In other words, they can be paraphrased with both (1a)/(2a) and (1b)/(2b), respectively. In addition, it is possible to add the universal quantifier *ves'* 'all', which coerces the maximal interpretation.

- (11) a. vse pjat' knig Dimy
 all.NOM.PL five books.GEN.PL Dima.GEN
 'all Dima's five books'
- b. vse devjat' sumok Maši
 all.NOM.PL nine bag.GEN.PL Masha.GEN
 'all Masha's nine bags'

As illustrated in (11), the quantifier *ves'* 'all' and each of the phrases in (10) can co-occur without any problems. This indicates that the maximal interpretation can be obtained when the possessors are located in a low position.

The availability of the maximal interpretation in (10) and (11), which have the possessors in a low position, suggests that it is not necessary to relate the interpretation to a high syntactic position of the possessors. In other words, maximal/non-maximal interpretations are not related to syntax and should be analyzed as a matter of semantics.

In the next section, following Heim (2011), I show the limit of classical semantic analyses of definiteness and their extension by Sharvy (1980). In addition, I present a hypothesis based on the discussion of this section.

3 Hypothesis

The maximal interpretation cannot be yielded by the classical semantics of definiteness in Frege (1892 = 1980) or Russell (1905), respectively, both shown in (12).

- (12) a. Fregean definite:
 $\llbracket \text{the} \rrbracket = \lambda P : \exists x. \forall y [P(y) \leftrightarrow x = y]. \lambda Q. \exists x [P(x) \wedge Q(x)]$
 b. Russellian definite:
 $\llbracket \text{the} \rrbracket = \lambda P. \lambda Q. \exists x [\forall y [P(y) \leftrightarrow x = y] \wedge Q(x)]$

These denotations can correctly capture the meaning of the sentence in (13).

- (13) The book arrived.

However, the coverage of the Russellian and Fregean analyses is limited to singular count nouns only. The denotations of definites in (12) are not enough to capture the presupposition of maximality in (14).

- (14) The books arrived.

The maximal interpretation of (14) can be obtained by using the semantics of definiteness presented in (15), as Sharvy (1980) does, which invokes maximality.

- (15) a. $\llbracket \text{DEF} \rrbracket = \lambda P : \exists x. \forall y [\text{MAX}(P)(y) \leftrightarrow x = y]. \lambda x. \text{MAX}(P)(x)$
 b. $\text{MAX}(P) := \lambda x. P(x) \wedge \neg \exists y [P(y) \wedge x < y]$

Denotation (15a) leads to the interpretation of the presupposition in (14) that all the books arrived. That is, it presupposes that if three books are intended, not one or two but all three books arrived. In this case, it picks out only a maximal plurality as a singleton ($a \oplus b \oplus c$, each atom of which is a book, in the diagram in Figure 3) by the function of the MAX operator, defined in (15b).

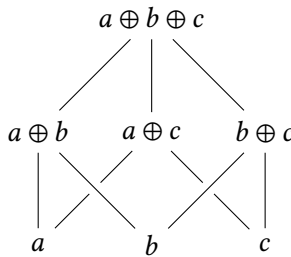


Figure 3: Semi-lattice structure

In the same way as mentioned above, denotation (15a) gives rise to maximal interpretation. For example, the denotation can introduce the interpretation in (1b) that Dima has exactly five books ($a \oplus b \oplus c \oplus d \oplus e$, each atom of which is a book in this case) because of MAX.

As a result of the discussion presented so far, I hypothesize that the contrast in interpretations between (1a)/(2a) and (1b)/(2b) can be reduced to the simple difference in definiteness without any relation to the syntactic position of the possessors.

In §4 and §5, I show that the hypothesis presented in this section is valid through tests using the definiteness effect and the genitive of negation as diagnostics.

4 Test 1: The definiteness effect

4.1 The definiteness effect

Restrictions regarding the syntactic distribution of definites and indefinites are termed the DEFINITENESS EFFECT (DE; also known as definiteness restriction). DE can be observed in a number of constructions in various languages.

Thus, for instance, subjects of English existential *there*-sentences are known to be limited to indefinite nouns as shown in (16).

- (16) a. There was a table in the garden.
 b. * There was the table in the garden.

In Icelandic, direct objects can be shifted before negative markers in some cases. As (17) and (18) illustrate, the definite direct object undergoes object shift but the indefinite one does not.

- (17) a. Jón las ekki [bækurnar].
 John read NEG books.DEF
 b. Jón las [bækurnar] ekki.
 John read books.DEF NEG
 ‘John did not read the books.’ (Icelandic; Collins & Thráinsson 1996: 392)
- (18) a. Hann las ekki [bækur].
 he read NEG books
 b. *Hann las [bækur] ekki.
 he read books NEG
 ‘He didn’t read books.’ (Icelandic; Ritter & Rosen 2005: 24)

In Hebrew, only the definite direct object is overtly marked for accusative case, whereas the indefinite one is not; see (19).

- (19) a. ani karati et ha-sefer.
I read ACC DEF-book
'I read the book.'
- b. ani karati (*et) sefer.
I read ACC book
'I read a book.'
- (Hebrew; Ritter & Rosen 2005: 24)

4.2 DE in Russian

Padučeva (2000) points out that a DE similar to English also exists in Russian existential constructions; cf. the sentences in (20) and (21), respectively.

- (20) a. There is a pig in the garden.
b. There were three sailors standing on the corner.
c. There are many solutions to this problem.
d. ? There is every tiger in the garden.
e. ? There were most students in the hall.
f. ? There are all solutions to this problem. (Bach 1989: 58)
- (21) a. V ogorode svinja. / V ogorode est' svinja.
in garden.LOC pig.NOM.SG in garden.LOC is pig.NOM.SG
'There is a pig in the garden.'
- b. Na uglu stojat tri matrosa.
on corner.LOC stand [three sailors].NOM
'There are three sailors standing on the corner.'
- c. {Est' / Suščestvuet} mnogo rešenij ètoj problemy.
is exists [many solutions].NOM [this problem].GEN.SG
'There are many solutions to this problem.'
- d. *V sadu est' každyj tigr.
in garden.LOC is [every tiger].NOM.SG
Intended: 'There is every tiger in the garden.'
- e. *V auditorii bylo bol'sinstvo studentov.
in hall.LOC was majority.NOM.SG student.GEN.PL
Intended: 'There were most students in the lecture hall.'
- f. *{Est' / Suščestvujut} vse rešenija ètoj problemy.
are exist [all solution].NOM.PL [this problem].GEN.SG
Intended: 'There are all solutions to this problem.'
- (Padučeva 2000: 134)

The Russian sentences in (21) are grammatical if the corresponding English sentences in (20) are also grammatical as is shown in (20a–20c) and (21a–21c), respectively. Likewise, Russian sentences are ungrammatical if the corresponding English sentences display low acceptability as in (20d–20f) and (21d–21f), respectively. The Russian translations preserve the (un)grammaticality in their English counterparts regarding DE in existential constructions.⁶

4.3 Test by DE

The Russian DE in the existential construction can be used as a test to verify validity of my hypothesis that the contrast in interpretations between (1a), (2a) and (1b), (2b) can be reduced to the difference in definiteness.

Phrases without maximal interpretation like (1a) and (2a) can occur in the existential construction without any problem as demonstrated in (22a) and (23a), whereas phrases with maximal interpretation like (1b) and (2b) are semantically odd as shown in (22b) and (23b).

(22) (1a) and (1b) in the existential construction

- a. V knižnom škafu est' pjat' Diminyx knig.
in bookshelf.LOC are five Dima's.GEN.PL book.GEN.PL
'There are five of Dima's books in the bookshelf.'
- b. # V knižnom škafu est' Diminy pjat' knig
in bookshelf.LOC are Dima's.NOM.PL five book.GEN.PL
'There are Dima's five books in the bookshelf.'

⁶There are some differences regarding DE between English and Russian as shown in (i) and (ii).

- (i) a. * There wasn't John at the party.
b. * There weren't John's ten students at the party. (Keenan 1996: 69)
- (ii) a. Na večere ne bylo Džona.
at party.LOC NEG was John.GEN
'John wasn't at the party.'
- b. Na večere ne prisustvovali vse desjat' aspirantov Džona.
at party.LOC NEG were.present [all ten graduate.student].NOM John.GEN
'Not all John's ten students were at the party.'

(Padučeva 2000: 134-135)

The ungrammaticality in the English sentences in (i) is not preserved in their Russian translations in (ii). Padučeva (2000) attributes the difference in grammaticality to lexical differences between the existential verb *byt'* in Russian and *to be* in English. It should be noted that these are negated sentences.

- (23) (2a) and (2b) in the existential construction
- a. Na polu est' devjat' Mašinyx sumok.
on floor.LOC are nine Masha's.GEN.PL bag.GEN.PL
'There are nine bags of Masha's on the floor.'
- b. # Na polu est' Mašiny devjat' sumok
on floor.LOC are Masha's.NOM.PL nine bag.GEN.PL
'There are Masha's nine bags on the floor.'

The (un)acceptability of the sentences in (22) and (23) is indicative that what lies behind the semantic oddity of (1b) and (2b) is the fact that definite NPs are in general excluded from the existential construction both in Russian and English. Accordingly, (1b) and (2b) are definite, while (1a) and (2a) are indefinite.

Note, moreover, that phrases with adnominal genitives as possessors as in (10) can be interpreted either maximally or non-maximally, which is why they can occur in the existential construction as demonstrated in (24).

- (24) (10) in the existential construction
- a. V knižnom škafu est' pjat' knig Dimy.
in bookshelf.LOC are five book.GEN.PL Dima.GEN
'There are five of Dima's books in the bookshelf.'
- b. Na polu est' devjat' sumok Maši.
on floor.LOC are nine bag.GEN.PL Masha.GEN
'There are nine bags of Masha's on the floor.'

I claim that both *pjat' knig Dimy* and *devjat' sumok Maši* have to be interpreted non-maximally in order to avoid semantic oddity.

5 Test 2: The genitive of negation

5.1 The genitive of negation

The genitive of negation (GN), which is available in several Slavic languages, is a phenomenon where an argument is marked with generative case under sentential negation although the argument is marked with the nominative or accusative case in a corresponding affirmative sentence.⁷

⁷Sometimes not only arguments but also adjuncts bear genitive case due to GN. For the sake of simplicity, this paper addresses GN on verbal arguments only.

While the case alternation between nominative and genitive occurs on subjects of unaccusative verbs as shown in (25),⁸ the alternation between accusative and genitive case occurs on direct objects of transitive verbs as shown in (26).⁹

- (25) a. Pis'mo ne prišlo.
letter.NOM NEG came
'The letter did not come.'
- b. Pis'ma ne prišlo.
letter.GEN NEG came
'A letter did not come. (No letter came.)' (Apresjan 1985: 292)
- c. {Pis'mo / *Pis'ma} prišlo.
letter.NOM letter.GEN came
'A/The letter came.'
- (26) a. Anna ne kupila žurnal.
Anna.NOM NEG bought magazine.ACC
'Anna did not buy the magazine.'
- b. Anna ne kupila žurnala.
Anna.NOM NEG bought magazine.GEN
'Anna did not buy a magazine.'
- c. Anna kupila {žurnal / *žurnala}.
Anna.NOM bought magazine.ACC magazine.GEN
'Anna bought a/the magazine.' (Harves 2002: 647)

The nominative-case subject in (25a) can be altered with the genitive-case subject in (25b) under sentential negation. In the same way, the accusative-case direct object in (26a) can be exchanged with the genitive-case object in (26b). Crucially, these alternations do not occur in affirmative sentences.

Many syntactic and semantic (and sometimes stylistic) factors affect the choice between genitive and nominative/accusative. What is significant for this paper is that genitive arguments are generally interpreted as indefinite/non-specific, while accusative arguments tend to be interpreted as definite/specific (see, a.o., Timberlake 1975, Harves 2002, Kim 2003, Partee & Borschev 2004, Kagan 2012, Harves 2013).

⁸In addition to subjects of unaccusatives, GN can also appear on subjects of passive predicates under sentential negation.

⁹Some researchers (e.g., Peškovskij 1956, Pesetsky 1982, Franks 1995, Borovikoff 1997, Szucsich 2001, Bailyn 2012) point out that the case alternation can occur on specific accusative nominal adverbials. However, there is debate about whether the genitive case on this type of adjuncts is an instance of the partitive genitive (see Franks & Dziwirek 1993) rather than the GN (see Borovikoff 1997, Pereltsvaig 2000).

5.2 Test by GN

In order to verify the validity of my hypothesis that the contrast in interpretation between non-maximal (1a)/(2a) and maximal (1b)/(2b) can be reduced to the differences in definiteness, GN can be used as a test in the same way as DE, since GN is likewise sensitive to definiteness.¹⁰

Phrases with a non-maximal interpretation like (1a) and (2a) readily occur in GN environments as demonstrated in (27a) and (28a), respectively. On the other hand, phrases with a maximal interpretation like (1b) and (2b) result in semantic oddity as illustrated in (27b) and (28b), respectively.

- (27) (1a) and (1b) in the environment of GN
- a. Ivan ne čital pjati Diminyx knig.
Ivan.NOM NEG read [five Dima's books].GEN
 - b. # Ivan ne čital Diminyx pjati knig.
Ivan.NOM NEG read [Dima's five books].GEN
'Ivan did not read five of Dima's books.'
- (28) (2a) and (2b) in the environment of GN
- a. Ja ne bral devjati Mašinyx sumok.
I.NOM NEG took [nine Masha's bags].GEN
 - b. # Ja ne bral Mašinyx devjati sumok.
I.NOM NEG took [Masha's nine bags].GEN
'I did not take nine of Masha's bags.'

Moreover, the phrases interpreted non-maximally render the acceptability of the sentence lower if they occur as accusative objects under sentential negation as is shown in (29a) and (30a), respectively. In contrast, the phrases with a maximal interpretation are grammatical in the same environment; see (29b) and (30b).

- (29) (1a) and (1b) as accusative objects in a negated environment
- a. ?? Ivan ne čital pjat' Diminyx knig.
Ivan.NOM NEG read [five Dima's books].ACC
 - b. Ivan ne čital Diminyx pjat' knig.
Ivan.NOM NEG read [Dima's five books].ACC
'Ivan did not read Dima's five books.'

¹⁰It is certain that the determinant of GN cannot be reduced to definiteness even if the focus is limited to the case alternation between genitive and accusative on direct objects. See, among many others, Timberlake (1975), Kagan (2012), and Geist (2015) for the discussion of possible alternative and additional factors.

(30) (2a) and (2b) as accusative objects in a negated environment

- a. ?? Ja ne bral devjat' Mašinyx sumok.
 I.NOM NEG took [nine Masha's bags].ACC
- b. Ja ne bral Mašiny devjat' sumok.
 I.NOM NEG took [Masha's nine bags].ACC
 'I did not take Masha's nine bags.'

The facts shown in (27–30) suggest that the phrases in (1b) and (2b), which are interpreted maximally, are definite, while the phrases interpreted non-maximally in (1a) and (2a) are indefinite, since arguments in genitive case are interpreted as indefinite, while arguments in the accusative case are interpreted as definite.

6 Conclusion

I have provided some data regarding non-/maximal interpretation and demonstrated that the relevant interpretation of nominal phrases arises independently of the syntactic position of the possessor. That is, the maximal interpretation comes about not only through high possessors (possessive adjectives and pronouns) but also through low possessors (adnominal genitives). Therefore, the maximal interpretation of nominal phrases cannot be used as a diagnostic to support the existence of DP projections in Russian. In addition, I have shown that the contrast between the maximal and non-maximal interpretations can be reduced to the difference between definiteness and indefiniteness by means of the tests of definiteness effect and genitive of negation.

It goes without saying that there are many other issues left regarding definiteness and the syntactic structure of Russian nominal phrases. I believe, however, that the present paper makes a small contribution to the resolution of these issues.

Abbreviations

ACC	accusative case	LOC	locative case
DE	definiteness effect	NEG	negation
DEF	definite article	NOM	nominative case
GEN	genitive case	PL	plural
GN	genitive of negation	SG	singular

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