

Modeling Topic/Focus: Evidence from Russian eventive nominalizations

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Two approaches have been developed in the literature to model the notions of topic/focus. The first approach, proposed by Rizzi (1997), relies on special functional projections at the top of the clausal structure, in the split CP (i.e. TopP and FocP), which trigger syntactic, feature-driven movement of appropriate constituents. An alternative approach, advocated in Samek-Lodovici (2006, 2010, 2015), Vallduví (1992), Zubizarreta (1998), *inter alia*, and specifically for Russian in Bailyn (2012) and Titov (2012), treats topic/focus-driven movements as post-syntactic and related to a separate linguistic interface, called “Information Structure” (Vallduví 1992), “Functional Form” (“FF” for short; Bailyn 2012), or “Assertion Structure” (Zubizarreta 1998). In this paper, we argue against the former approach and in favor of the latter based on evidence from eventive nominalizations in Russian:

- (1)
- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|--|--|
| a. | kollekcionirovanie
collecting | redkix monet
[rare coins]. GEN | millionerom Pupkinym
[millionaire Pupkin]. INSTR |
| b. | kollekcionirovanie
collecting | millionerom Pupkinym
[millionaire Pupkin]. INSTR | redkix monet
[rare coins]. GEN |
- BOTH: ‘millionaire Pupkin’s collecting of rare coins’

It has been noted in the previous literature that such nominalizations featuring transitive predicates allow two orders of their arguments, as shown in (1): the internal argument (here, ‘rare coins’) can either precede or follow the external argument (here, ‘millionaire Pupkin’). Babby (1997) proposes that the external argument is marked with the instrumental case exactly because word order alone does not disambiguate which of the arguments is external and which one is internal. However, Babby does not address the issue of why both orders in (1) are possible in the first place.

In this paper, we argue that:

1. Both orders are Merged initially in the same way;
2. The order of the arguments depends on (“presentational” or “new information”) focus, which is assigned at the right edge of a nominal, in parallel to clauses;
3. The Internal>External argument order (as in (1a)) is derived by a further application of Move, akin to “left-shift” in Samek-Lodovici (2015);
4. This movement is A¹-movement, similar to the clausal “MFL” (“Movement-to-the-Far-Left”) in Bailyn (2012);
5. This movement cannot land in a CP-peripheral functional projections, such as Rizzi’s (1997) TopP.

As with other constructions that allow two grammatical frames with the same predicate (e.g. ditransitive predicates, *spray-load* alternations, etc.), the first question to address is whether the two argument orders in (1) are derivationally related. We show that the two argument orders are identical in their argument structures, aspectual properties, adverbial modification and pluralization possibilities and conclude that a unified analysis is indeed preferable. Furthermore, we apply Antonuyk’s (2015) Scope Freezing Generalization and deduce the External-Internal order, which allows both scopal interpretations, reflects the merged order of arguments, while the Internal-External, which is scopally unambiguous, is the derived order:

- (2) a. otkryvanie kakim-to gostem každoj dveri
 opening [some guest].**INSTR** [every door].**GEN**
 ‘opening by some guest of every door’: $\exists\forall, \forall\exists$
- b. otkryvanie kakoj-to dveri každym gostem
 opening [some door].**GEN** [every guest].**INSTR**
 ‘opening by some guest of every door’: $\exists\forall, *\forall\exists$

In addition, we show that the movement of the internal argument over the external one is not motivated by Case or EPP. Moreover, developing ideas in Lyutikova (2014), we show that unlike in non-eventive nominalizations in (3), where the internal argument is “pied-piped” to keep it adjacent to the derived noun, in eventive nominalizations (1a, 2b) the internal argument moves independently of the verbal root.

- (3) sobranie kartin Ėrmitaža
 collection paintings.**GEN** Hermitage.**GEN**
 ‘the Hermitage collection of paintings’

Finally, using binding patterns and WCO as diagnostics, we show that the fronting of the internal argument is A'- rather than A-movement. However, as argued by Tatevosov (2008), eventive nominalizations include only a small range of clausal functional projections, notably the projection hosting the secondary imperfective -yva but not any higher functional projections. This means that CP-level projections such as Rizzi's TopP are absent here, necessitating a different approach to modeling topic/focus. Thus, this paper reaffirms the conclusions of Samek-Lodovici (2010: 817) about the “fine-grained parallelism between [...] clauses and DPs with respect to focus”, a parallelism that can only be modeled by relying on FF/Information Structure as a separate linguistic interface.

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