
On the syntax of U-possessor phrases in Ukrainian and Russian

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We use purpose clauses to distinguish the base positions of different kinds of PPs headed by u- ‘at’ in Ukrainian and Russian. U- phrases have been argued to mark a possessor, a location, or a ‘human location’. Freeze (1992) claims that the locative use is basic that the others are derived from. We argue here that each of these u- phrases has a different base position, with u- phrases with true possessive meaning merged in the highest position, while u-phrases denoting locations are merged low in the structure. Evidence for the base structural distinctness of the three kinds of u- phrases comes from their compatibility with a certain binding configuration in purpose clauses (following Hallman 2015). We see that the possessor u-PP in (1) has no difficulty binding the PRO subject of the purpose clause, while the true locative u-PP in (2) cannot.

- (1) U Koli_i est’ mašina_j [čtoby PRO_i ezdit’ na rabotu e_j]
At Kolia_{GEN} is car_{NOM} in.order.to drive on work_{PREP}
‘Kolia has a car to drive to work’ (POSSESSIVE)
- (2) *Kolja_j byl v Moskve_i [čtoby PRO_i vpečatlit’ e_j]
Kolia_{NOM} was in Moscow_{PREP} in.order.to impress_{INF}
‘Kolia was in Moscow to be impressed’ (LOCATIVE)

Thus we claim that the possessor u-phrases are generated high, possibly in Spec,ApplP, while the location u-phrases are generated low, in the complement of V. Locative-possessive u-phrases prefer to function as locations but may marginally occur in a high position like possessors.

References: • Freeze, R. (1992): Existentials and other locatives. *Language* 68, 553–595. • Hallman, P. (2015): Syntactic Neutralization in Double Object Constructions. *Linguistic Inquiry* 46, 389-424.