Dative and possession

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Dative marked DPs referring to animates are often identified with marking possessors (e.g. Haspelmath 2003, Levin 2008). The paper explores this linkage in ditransitive constructions featuring both core and non-core argument in several languages (Hebrew, Arabic, French, Russian and English).

Whereas syntactically there have been shown to be two main underlying structures for ditransitives: one where the dative is c-commanded by the direct object, which is prepositional-like, the other where the dative c-commands the direct object (Larson 1988, Bruening 2010 among many others), in this talk it will be demonstrated how both underlying structures make available possessive interpretations, tracing the underlying structures identified by Boneh & Sichel (2010) for clausal possession in ditransitive constructions as well. The syntactic analysis coupled with interpretative considerations pertaining to the lexical semantic properties of the verb and pragmatic factors will allow to shed light on the question why possessors are marked similarly to recipients and bene-/maleficiaries, blurring at times the difference between them (see Boneh & Nash 2017). Consequently, the proposed account will question the independent availability of the category labeled "possessor dative" derived by possessor raising, for some of the languages under consideration (e.g. Landau 1999, cf. Deal 2013).

Finally, it will further be suggested that the source for the cross-linguistic variation in the syntactic and interpretative properties of dative arguments should be mainly sought in the syntax, observing the height of attachment of the dative argument, and the availability or lack thereof of a derivational link between the two underlying structures.