
How “external” is the possessor of BE-possessives?

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It is claimed in this paper that BE-possessives and BE-existentials do not have any external argument in the canonical sense, hence no VoiceP needs to project in their VP-internal domain. This undermines the universal status of VoiceP in the VP-layer of verbal predicates (see Kratzer 1996, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulous & Schäfer 2015, Myler 2016). Existential and possessive BE-sentences are taken to be dyadic unaccusatives, in which the verbal predicate lacks the upper vP layer altogether. Possessor and location arguments in possessive and existential sentences take the highest argument position of the truncated VP-shell but they are lower than canonical causer arguments are. The theme argument, on the other hand, is hosted in the lowest layer of the VP-shell. The syntactic tests used in Russian and Hungarian existential and possessive sentences point in the direction that possessor and location arguments are not external in the sense of Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou & Schäfer (2015). Accommodating possessor and location arguments in VoiceP (Myler 2016) would imply that they occupy the same VP-internal position in possessive and existential sentences as causer subjects do elsewhere, contrary to the facts.

The present proposal starts out with a truncated VP-shell. This makes existential and possessive BE-sentences reminiscent of dyadic unaccusative psych-predicates. The surface positioning of the arguments in these sentences is derived from discourse-semantic factors. Possessor and location arguments target the C-domain of the sentence, where discourse-semantic functional projections are hosted (see Rizzi 1997, 2013). This makes additional functional projections or abstract prepositions inside the VP-shell unnecessary..

References: • Alexiadou, A. & Anagnostopoulou, E. & Schaefer, F. 2015. *External Arguments in Transitivity Alternations*. • Kratzer, A. 1996. Severing the external argument from the verb. • Myler, N. 2016. *Building and interpreting possession sentences*. • Rizzi, L. 1997. The fine structure of the left periphery.

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