# Conceptualizing body parts in the mirror of physical contact verbs: argument expression and semantic shifts

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The work examines the semantic effects arising with different expressions of the Possessor and Part arguments in the Russian verbs of physical contact (*tselovat’* ‘to kiss’*, obnimat’* ‘to hug’*, gladit’* ‘to stroke’, etc.). They allow different morphosyntactic expression: PossessorACC with varying Part expression (*gladit’* *rebenka* ‘childACC’ *po golove* ‘headDAT’), PartACC with PossessorGEN (*tselovat’ ruki* ‘handsACC’ *zheny* ‘wifeGEN’), PossessorDAT with PartACC (*tselovat’ zhene* ‘wifeDAT’ *ruki* ‘handsACC’).

As the corpus study shows, each of the possible argument expression models is a construction with preferred lexical filling. The model *tselovat’ X*ACC *v Y*ACC’ is preferable with the following body parts in the role of Y: head; parts of the face and head (lips, cheeks, nose, mouth, forehead, ears, crown); parts of the body (back, abdomen, neck). It is impossible or atypical with extremities: ??*tselovat’ v ruki/nogi/pal’tsy* ‘in handsACC / feetACC / fingersACC’, although it is possible ‘to kiss in the palmACC’ (*tselovat’ v ladon’*). The PossessorDAT construction is characterized by compatibility with the designations of the extremities (‘XDAT handACC / feetACC / fingersACC), while co-occurrence with the designations of other body parts is impossible or atypical: ??*tselovat’ X‑u zhivot/nos/guby/shcheki* ‘XDAT bellyACC / noseACC / lipsACC / cheeksACC’. The model with a possessive pronoun is neutral in this respect and co-occurs, moreover, with designations of shoes and clothes (*tselovat’ ee tufli* ‘her shoesACC).

Note the cognitive differences between a part of the body and a person's belongings. The head and torso are directly related to the body; they, as well as their parts, are parts of the person herself. Extremities are perceived as belonging to a person. When we kiss a part of a person, it is conceptualized as kissing a person, and mentioning the Part argument may become optional. When we kiss a person's belongings, it is conceptualized as kissing something separate from a person, and if it is a semiotic act (like kissing hands or shoes), then the Possessor becomes the Addressee of this semiotic act and, accordingly, is marked with a dative. As an implicature, an opposition of warm feelings and etiquette appears (kissing a person, one expresses warm feelings towards her, and kissing a person's belongings, one performs an etiquette action). Like any implicature, this implicature can be suppressed: *On ravnodushno potseloval ee v guby* ‘He kissed her indifferently on the lips’; *On strastno tseloval ei ruki* ‘He kissed her hands passionately’. Even ritual kisses aimed at parts of the person are described with the *v*‑construction: *potselovat’ pokoinika v lob* ‘to kiss the deceased in the foreheadACC’.

Different verbs of physical contact interact differently with the conceptualization of an object. Thus, the hugging action may be directed at the person as a whole, and stroking and clapping are directed only at a part of the person (*pogladit’ po golove* ‘on the head’, *po plechu* ‘on the shoulder’, but not \**pogladit’ Natashu* ‘to pat Natasha’). If the object is not a very large animal, then indicating a part of the body is unnecessary: *gladit’ sobaku* ‘to stroke the dog’.