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The *u*+gen construction in Modern Standard Russian

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Abstract: In Modern Standard Russian (MSR), the prefix/preposition pair *u*-/*u* is peculiar with respect to other similar pairs, due to the meaning mismatch between the two. While the prefix *u*- has an ablative meaning, as shown when it is prefixed to motion verbs, the prepositional phrase *u*+gen occurs in locative constructions, and other related constructions, such as predicative possession that is expressed via the cross-linguistically common Locative Schema. Etymological considerations show that the meaning preserved by the prefix is older. The only type of occurrence which, according to the literature, preserves the ablative meaning for the *u*+gen construction is found with verbs of requesting, removing, and buying. Notably, however, in other Slavic languages putative ablative contexts are limited to verbs of requesting. Data from MSR, Old Church Slavic, Polish and Czech lead to the conclusion that the extension of the *u*+gen construction to verbs of removing in MSR is based on its use for the encoding of predicative possession. Extension to verbs of buying is better explained through the locative meaning of the construction. As a result of different developments, the *u*+gen construction has become part of the argument structure of a group of verbs including verbs of asking and requesting, verbs of removing, and verbs of buying, which are characterized by the common feature of taking human non-recipient third arguments. We argue that the different usages of the *u*+gen construction in MSR constitute an instance of constructionalization based on the merger of originally different constructions. We further argue that accounting for this development in constructional terms offers better insights in the

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relation among the various different usages of *u+gen* than simply focusing on the meaning of the preposition and its polysemy pattern.

Keywords: *u+gen* construction, location schema, possession, non-recipient third arguments, Modern Standard Russian

1 Introduction

In Modern Standard Russian (henceforth MSR), the prefix/preposition pair *u-/u* is peculiar with respect to other similar pairs, due to the meaning mismatch between the two. While the prefix has an ablative meaning,¹ the spatial meaning of the preposition is locative, as shown in examples (1) and (2) (constructed).²

- (1) *On ušel iz komnaty.*
 he **went.away** from room.GEN
 ‘He left the room.’
- (2) *On stojal u vchoda.*
 he stood **at entrance.GEN**
 ‘He was standing at the entrance.’

Etymologically, the prefix and the preposition go back to the same Proto-Indo-European (henceforth PIE) preverb,³ reconstructed as **h₂eu*, with cognates in several Indo-European languages, in which it always shows an ablative meaning, cf. Sanskrit *ava* “away, off”, Latin *au-fero* “take away” (Derksen 2008: 506; see further Vasmer 1987: 142). In Russian dictionaries, it is often assumed that the preposition exhibits ablative meaning with certain verbs, such as *ukrast’* “steal”, *vzjat’* “take”, *uznat’* “learn”, *kupit’* “buy” that take *u+gen* marked third arguments with human referents, described as indicating a source. Notably, however, a comparison with Old Church Slavic (henceforth OCS) and other Slavic languages (discussed in Sections 4, 5 and 6), seems to indicate that the

¹ We will not further investigate the meaning of the prefix in MSR. For a thorough discussion see Zaloznjak (2001) and Endresen (2015).

² We have provided lexical glosses for the examples. Grammatical glosses have been added only if relevant for our discussion.

³ Preverbs are a class of words that are reconstructed for PIE (cf. Booij and van Kemenade 2003) exhibiting the three-fold behavior of independent adverbs, verbal prefixes and adpositions. We use the term *preverb* whenever we want to imply that the distinction between prefix and preposition is not relevant.

occurrence of *u*+gen with these verbs is a Russian innovation. Thus, the idea that the preposition preserves a shade of the ancient ablative meaning sounds quite implausible.

In addition, it is well known that the *u*+gen construction in Russian has acquired the function of expressing predicative possession as in example (3) (see Isačenko 1974; Timberlake 2004: 311–316).

- (3) *U menja est' kniga.*
 at I.GEN is book
 'I have a book.'

Outside East Slavic, possessive constructions with *u*+gen are limited. They occasionally occur in Serbo-Croatian where, however, *u*+gen is on the whole quite infrequent (see Browne 1993: 370; Tolstoj 2001: 605),⁴ while in Polish they are limited to occurrences in which a possessive reading is inferable from the context (see Section 5.1). Even a cursory survey, then, points toward a much wider range of uses for constructions containing *u*+gen in MSR with respect to its Slavic cognates.

While the possessive construction, as well as other constructions related to the locative meaning of *u*+gen, have been widely studied (see e. g., Seliverstova 1973; Chvany 1975; Arutjunova 1976; Levine 1980; Krejdlin 1980; Arutjunova and Širjaev 1983; Pande 1990; Cienki 1993, Cienki 1995; Mel'čuk 1995; Clancy 2010), the *u*+gen construction with verbs is still in need of a thorough investigation that allows for a unified explanation of its meaning, and connects it to the other, better understood constructions. An attempt in this direction is Zaliznjak (2001) that we discuss in Section 7. Notably, however, Zaliznjak does not provide a comparison with the constructions of cognate verbs in other Slavic languages. Instead, we think that by setting Russian in the wider framework of Slavic languages, we will be able to highlight the peculiarity of the Russian *u*+gen construction with verbs. Indeed, apart from verbs of asking and requesting, which also took *u*+gen complements in OCS and do so in other modern Slavic languages, other groups of verbs that take *u*+gen complements do not display the same behavior elsewhere in Slavic.

⁴ All South Slavic languages routinely employ the verb “have” for predicative possession (Scatton 1993: 237; Friedman 1993: 293; Browne 1993: 369; Priestly 1993: 440). However, as the tendency of *u*+gen to extend from locative to possession is detectable in OCS (see Section 4), it is likely that the marginal role of this construction is connected with the ongoing loss of the preposition *u* across South Slavic languages, which in its turn is possibly connected with the phonological merger of this preposition with cognates of East Slavic *v*; see De Bray (1980).

Rather than investigating the meaning of the preposition taken as an isolated item, we follow a constructional approach, and consider *u+gen* as constituting a network of related constructions, whose specific meaning depends on the conditions in which they occur (e. g., type of landmark, implying co-occurrence in space, part of a verb's argument structure, and so on). We argue that the occurrence of the *u+gen* construction with different verb groups is partly based on the extension of the locative construction, and partly on the possessive construction. In this way, constructions of different origin come to participate in the same network of constructions (Torrent 2015: 208). We also show that verbs of removing tend to take dative in other Slavic languages. Because dative with these verbs was inherited from PIE, we assume that its occurrence with the same verbs instantiates an older pattern than that instantiated by *u+gen* in Russian (see Section 6).

In order to have some quantitative data on the type of landmarks that occur with *u+gen*, we performed a limited corpus study, with a random sample of 1,000 occurrences from the Russian National Corpus (<http://ruscorpora.ru/>): 500 occurrences were extracted from the main (written) subcorpus and 500 from the spoken subcorpus. All Russian examples, unless otherwise specified, were taken from the Russian National Corpus and, as far as possible, from this selection. The data from OCS were retrieved from the TOROT treebank (<https://nestor.uit.no>), and include Codex Marianus, Codex Suprasliensis, and Codex Zographensis (with occasional reference to other manuscripts available from secondary sources). The Polish examples were taken from the National Corpus of Polish (<http://nkjp.pl/>).⁵

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 we outline the theoretical framework that underlies our work. In Section 3 we describe the use of Russian *u+gen*, and discuss previous scholarship on this preposition. Section 4 is devoted to the use of the preposition in OCS. In Section 5, we briefly survey the constructions that occur in Polish equivalents of Russian *u+gen* constructions. Section 6 looks at the use of the dative case with verbs of removing in West Slavic languages. In Section 7, we offer an explanation for the extension of *u+gen* in Russian. Section 8 presents the conclusions.

2 Theoretical framework

In this section, we discuss some basic assumptions of Construction Grammar (CxG) that provide the theoretical framework for our study. In CxG perspective,

⁵ We did not perform a systematic corpus study of Polish, but simply looked up the relevant verbs in order to have examples of the constructions under discussion.

constructions are conventionalized pairings of form and meaning that range from the combination of morphemes to more complex constructions, including argument structure constructions (see e.g., Goldberg 1995, Goldberg 2006, Goldberg 2013). Crucially, in CxG no strict distinction exists between syntax and the lexicon: rather, constructions are the basic units, or building blocks of grammar, which is regarded as a structured inventory of constructions. For this reason, as stressed by Goldberg and Jackendoff (2004), constructional approaches differ from traditional lexicalist approaches: while the latter emphasize the role of lexical heads, CxG “expands this notion of the lexicon to include phrasal patterns” (Goldberg and Jackendoff 2004: 533). Hence, the meaning of a construction is conditioned by all its parts, and not only by lexical heads: this assumption is of paramount importance with regard to verbs’ argument structures, which must be viewed as complex constructions that include semantic information both from the verb and from its arguments. Importantly, CxG takes a usage-based view of language, and places special emphasis on the role of frequency in the rise of constructions and their degree of entrenchment.

Constructions do not exist in isolation: rather, they are connected in (constructional) networks (Bergs and Diewald 2008a: 2; Fried 2008). The latter are hierarchical structures, either taxonomic or meronymic (Barðdal and Gildea 2015: 23), based on relations of inheritance, polysemy or synonymy. In meronymic hierarchies, a construction inherits information from multiple parents. As we will argue further on in this section, the *u*+gen construction with verbs in MSR instantiates this type of network.

In recent years, a number of studies have tackled the issue of language change and language reconstruction in the framework of diachronic CxG (Bergs and Diewald 2008b, Bergs and Diewald 2009; Hilpert 2013; Traugott and Trousdale 2013; Barðdal et al. 2015). Focusing on the dynamics of language change, Traugott and Trousdale (2013) distinguish between constructional change, which they view as affecting one internal dimension of a construction (2013: 26), and constructionalization, that is, the rise of a new construction. They describe the latter development as follows:

Constructionalization is the creation of form_{new}-meaning_{new} (combinations of) signs. It forms new type nodes, which have new syntax or morphology and new coded meaning, in the linguistic network of a population of speakers. It is accompanied by changes in degree of schematicity, productivity, and compositionality. The constructionalization of schemas always results from a succession of micro-steps and is therefore gradual. (Traugott and Trousdale 2013: 22)

We believe that the analysis of the *u*+gen construction that we propose in this paper shows how the occurrence of *u*+gen in the argument structure of certain

verbs in MSR instantiates a constructionalization process, whereby a new construction arose from multiple sources: the locative and the possessive construction. The latter in its turn had originated from the former through reanalysis enabled by bridging contexts as we discuss in detail in Section 3.1. In order to account for the process that led to the extension of *u+gen* with specific groups of verbs, we follow the Constructional Convergence Hypothesis proposed by Torrent (2015). Torrent convincingly argues that the *para+inf* construction of Brazilian Portuguese should be viewed as a dynamic constructional network whose structure changed at different stages as a consequence of the merger of constructions with multiple origins. In Section 7, we show that convergence also accounts for the use of the *u+gen* construction with verbs in MSR.⁶

3 Types of *u+gen* construction in MSR

In this section, we describe possible uses of the *u+gen* construction in MSR. We discuss the locative construction, along with other semantically related ones, such as predicative possession and different types of experiencer construction (Section 3.1), which are not part of the argument structure of specific verbs. We then proceed to discuss the types of verbs that take an argument structure construction containing *u+gen* human third arguments (Section 3.2).

3.1 Locative and related constructions

In its concrete spatial meaning, Russian *u+gen* indicates location as we have already mentioned above. Examples are (2) and (4).

- (4) *My vošli, razdelis', seli u okna.*
 we entered took.off.clothes sat **at window.GEN**
 'We entered, took off our coats and sat down by the window.'

⁶ While other cognitive approaches to morphological change are available, it is not the purpose of this paper to engage in theoretical discussion comparing different theoretical frameworks: rather, our purpose is to provide an account of the semantics of *u+gen* and its development within a specific theoretical framework, that is, CxG. A different perspective could have been taken, for example, within the theoretical framework of Word Grammar, on which see Gisborne (2017).

We consider locative as the original basic meaning of the construction because, as we will argue, this is the meaning that it also has in other Slavic languages, including OCS.

As opposed to other prepositions in other locative constructions, such as *v+prep* or *na+prep*,⁷ which correspond to English “in” or “on”, and indicate some sort of inclusion or contact of the trajector with the landmark,⁸ *u+gen* indicates that the trajector is located in proximity of the landmark, often by one of its edges. According to Timberlake (2004: 180), “*U* ‘nearby, *chez*’ reports a relation in the neighborhood, or sphere of influence, of the locus.” For this reason, it lends itself quite naturally to indicating location at/by a human landmark, as in (5).

- (5) *Pavlja, tak davno ne byl u nas?*
 Pavlja so long.ago not were **at we.GEN**
 ‘Pavlja, you haven’t been here (at our place) for such a long time?’

The tendency for the *u+gen* construction to feature human landmarks is of crucial importance for the extension of the construction outside the domain of space, as we argue in the course of this paper. In the corpus we used for Russian, 882 out of 1,000 landmarks (88.2%) in the *u+gen* construction are animate (see Appendix A). Of these, 227 are instantiations of the locative construction. Remarkably, within the locative construction, animate landmarks occur in 78.8% of the cases (227 out of 288). As is well known, human landmarks in locative expressions often require special marking cross-linguistically, as human beings are not frequent in this role (see, e. g., Creissels and Mounole 2011). For the sake of our argument, the high frequency of *u+gen* with human landmarks is relevant because this favors its extension to other semantic roles typical of human participants, such as possessor and experiencer.

Perhaps the best-described semantic extension of *u+gen* is constituted by its use in possessive constructions, as in (6) and (7).

- (6) *A u vas est’ kakoj-nibud’ dokument, devočka?*
 but **at you.GEN** is any document girl
 ‘Do you have any document, girl?’

⁷ The abbreviation “prep” indicates the so-called prepositional case in Russian, which corresponds to the locative in OCS.

⁸ We use the terms *trajector* and *landmark* as is commonly done in Cognitive Grammar to indicate the entity which is located and the entity that serves as reference point, see Langacker (1987: 217).

- (7) *Prekrasnoe u vas imja i osobenno*
 beautiful **at you.GEN** name and especially
otčestvo, Tamara Georgievna.
 patronymic Tamara Georgievna
 ‘What a beautiful name you have, and especially your patronymic, Tamara Georgievna.’

The origin of this construction is debated, and there is no general agreement on its direct connection with the corresponding construction in the neighboring Balto-Finnic languages (see McAnallen 2011 for a survey), but in any case, it is clear that the possessive meaning is based on an extension of the locative meaning. The so-called Location Schema for expressing possession is cross-linguistically common, as highlighted in Heine (1997a: 114–115) and Clancy (2010: 140–144). According to Heine, “the syntactic structure of possessive constructions derived from this schema is such that the possessee is encoded as the subject and the possessor as a locative complement, while the predicate is a locative copula or verb.” (1997b: 92).

Taylor (1989: 202) lists, among prototypical features of possession, the following:

- (a) the possessor is a specific human being ...;
- (b) the possessed is a specific concrete thing ...;
- (c) ... possessor and possessed need to be in close spatial proximity.

By the Location Schema, possessors are metaphorically conceived as locations (Luraghi 2014: 107–109). Clearly, the fact that the locative construction with *u+gen* specialized to indicate location with human landmarks favored the extension to possessive constructions: possessors, as noted by Taylor (1989), are prototypically human beings.

At this point, we can follow the stages in the creation of the possessive construction as an innovation. As highlighted in Barðdal and Gildea (2015: 17), the first stage in the creation of a new construction arises when a given collocation starts to be used in certain contexts with a new and not completely predictable meaning. Semantic extension necessarily entails a second stage, at which the syntax of the construction, i. e., its context of usage, also changes. In our case, the extension to possession is achieved for a locative construction only when spatial proximity is no longer a necessary condition, as in example (3). This conforms to the definition of extension as a mechanism of (syntactic) change in Harris and Campbell (1995: 114): “Extension of a rule R is limited to removing a condition from R.” We also adopt this definition for semantic extension. Most often, extension follows reanalysis: prototypical features of possession make two alternative analyses possible for *u+gen* locative

constructions.⁹ The new construction then starts existing alongside the old one, as is the case for MSR *u*+gen, which instantiates both the locative and the possessive construction.

The extension to contexts in which not all prototypical features are available is made possible by the existence of “bridging contexts” (see Heine 2002), that is, contexts that are ambiguous between the old and the innovative meaning, as in example (24). Innovative contexts include, e. g., cases in which there is no spatial proximity, or occurrences with inanimate possessors in part-whole relations as in (8), and so on.

- (8) *U stola slomalas' nožka.*
 at table.GEN broke leg
 ‘The table’s leg broke.’

U+gen constructions also indicate experiencer in two different types of context. In the first place, we find what we can consider *locative experiencers*, as in (9) and (10).

- (9) *Profilirujuščij predmet – buchčet – osobogo vostorga*
 Major subject accounting special excitement
u nego ne vzyval.
 at he.GEN not caused
 ‘He was not very enthusiastic about his major: accounting.’

- (10) *Ne menea časty slučai paralichej,*
 Not less frequent cases paralyse
razvivajuščichsja u detej po vnušeniju.
 developing at children.GEN by induction
 ‘Not less frequent are cases of paralysis developing in children by induction.’

In such occurrences, the experiencer is conceptualized as a location by which a certain emotion arises (inchoative situations: caused emotions, cf. Zolotova 2001), or where a certain experiential state is located. Spatial proximity entails affectedness: hence the human being that is indicated as close in space with the experiential situation is the one which is primarily affected. Notably, it is the type of trajector, typically a sensation or a mental or physical state, that favors an experiential interpretation. Again, the fact that the *u*+gen construction even

⁹ See Traugott and Trousdale (2013: 36) for a critical view of this concept.

in concrete locative expressions often occurs with human landmarks is of fundamental importance for its extension to this type of experiencer, as experiencers are necessarily animate (and virtually always human; see Verhoeven 2007: 55; Luraghi 2014: 111).

In addition to the occurrences discussed above, another type of experiencer construction also contains *u+gen*, as shown in (11), in which a feeling or a sensation is referred to as involving a specific body part of the experiencer.

- (11) *Togda emu skazali, začem že on priechal, esli u nego kružitsja*
 so him told why PTC he came if **at he.GEN** spins
golova, daže kogda on smotrit na takie bol'sie derev'ja.
 head even when he looks on those big trees
 'So they asked him why he had come if he feels his head spinning just
 by looking at those big trees.'

Even though the participant referred to by the *u+gen* phrase is also an experiencer, it is conceptualized differently: the focus is on a specific body part, that is, on an inalienable possession of the experiencer. The occurrence of a body part in the encoding of experiential situations is cross-linguistically frequent. As noted in Verhoeven (2007: 52) “[t]he experiencer participates through its physicalness and intellectuality in the situation which may be linguistically rendered by the use of material or immaterial body or person part nouns.” The extension here is from the possessive construction, rather than directly from the original locative meaning of *u+gen*: accordingly, we call these *possessor experiencers*. This explains why, as noted by Cienki (1993), this type of experiential construction does not occur in other Slavic languages, in which either the dative or the double accusative are used instead (see Sections 5.1 and 7).

Notably, in contexts that contain transitive verbs, in which the body part is the direct object, dative can also occur in MSR. An example is (12).

- (12) *Emu / U nego minoj otorvalo nogu.*
He.DAT / at he.GEN mine tore.off leg
 'His leg was blown off by a mine.'
 (Cienki 1993: 77)¹⁰

¹⁰ This example contains an impersonal construction, in which the inanimate agent *minoj* from *mina* is in the instrumental case, the patient *nogu* from *noga* is in the accusative and the verb shows neuter gender inflection.

Cienki (1993) describes the (mainly pragmatic) conditions under which speakers choose either the *u*+gen or the dative construction with this type of experiencer in MSR. Here, we would like to stress that the extension of the possessive *u*+gen construction to such occurrences results in a limitation in the use of the dative (see the discussion in Section 6).

3.2 Verbs with the *u*+gen construction

Verbs that take the *u*+gen construction as part of their argument structure feature human third arguments, and are often described as requiring a source complement.¹¹ In spite of this putative common feature, they can be divided into three groups, including (a) verbs of asking and requesting; (b) verbs of removing; (c) verbs of buying. As we will see in this section, this distinction captures different syntactic behaviors of the three groups of verbs, as well as different possible features of the landmark in the *u*+gen construction.

The first group includes verbs such as *poprosit* ‘ask, request’ and *sprosit* ‘ask’. They occur in two different constructions: either they take an accusative second argument and a *u*+gen third argument as in (13), or they take the accusative as in (14).

- (13) *Ran’še Svetlana prosila den’gi u nich*
 Before Svetlana **asked money.ACC at they.GEN**
tak: roditeli, odolžite do soveršennoletija!
 so parents lend until legal.age
 ‘Before Svetlana used to ask them for money this way: parents, lend me money until the legal age!’

- (14) *A utrom sprosila mamu, počemu ona doma.*
 And in.the.morning **asked mom.ACC** why she at.home
 ‘And in the morning, I asked mom why she was home.’

With these verbs, the second argument may be sentential, and either argument may be missing; variation in the choice of either construction may depend on argument realization. However, animacy of the third argument is not a possible

¹¹ A list of verbs that take the *u*+gen construction in MSR along with their frequency in our sample is given in Appendix B.

trigger of variation, as this type of verbs refers to situations that typically only involve human participants. Third arguments with such verbs are virtually always human (see Appendix A for the percentages of human vs. inanimate nouns).

The second group of verbs is constituted by verbs of removing. This group includes various verbs that indicate removal or taking away, such as *vzjat'* “take” and *otnjat'* “remove”, and verbs of stealing, such as *ukrast'* “steal”. Examples are (15) and (16).

- (15) *Kur'erom, u kotorogo on dolžen byl*
 Courier **at who.GEN** he have.to COP.PST
vzjat' gruz (...) okazalas' molodaja ženščina Zoja.
take shipment turned.out young woman Zoja
 ‘The courier from whom he was supposed to take the shipment turned out to be the young woman Zoja.’
- (16) *U menja ukrali vse moi sbereženija!*
at I.GEN stole all my savings
 ‘They stole all my savings!’

Most verbs included in this group can also have inanimate, rather than animate, third arguments. In this latter case, we find various types of construction containing source prepositions, such as *s*, *iz*, or *ot*, depending on the specific verb and on the type of landmark, as shown in examples (17)–(19).

- (17) *On vzjal s polki tolstyj illjustrirovannyj*
 he **took from shelf.GEN** thick illustrated
tom énciklopedii juvelirnogo iskusstva.
 volume encyclopedia jewelry art
 ‘He took from the shelf a thick illustrated volume of jewelry art.’
- (18) *V rezul'tate vory ukrali iz magazina spirtnoe,*
 in result thieves **stole from shop.GEN** alcohol
sigarety, produkty i daže kanctovary
 cigarettes groceries and even stationery
 ‘As a result, the thieves stole from the shop alcohol, cigarettes, groceries and even stationery.’
- (19) *My dolžny vzjat' ot prošlogo vse,*
 we have.to **take from past.GEN** everything

čto v nem bylo po-nastojaščemu cennogo.
 which in him was really valuable
 ‘We have to take from the past everything that was really valuable in it.’

The third group is constituted by verbs that mean “buy”. Similar to verbs of removing, the verbs *kupit’* “buy”, *priobresti* “acquire” and, outside our sample, compounds such as *vykupit’* “buy out, redeem”, *skupit’* “buy up”, *iskupit’* “atone, compensate”, *zakupit’* “purchase”, *razkupit’* “buy up”, *perekupit’* “repurchase” can also take human or inanimate third arguments. In the former case, however, the *u*+gen phrase is ambiguous, as locative reading is often possible, as shown in (20).

- (20) *V Pariže chozjajki uže i teper’ privykli*
 in Paris landladies already and now got.used
pokupat’ bul’on u mjasnika.
 buy broth at butcher.GEN
 ‘In Paris ladies are already used to buying the broth **at the butcher’s/from the butcher**’

Notably, in the case that the third argument is inanimate, the locative interpretation is supported by occurrences with the locative prepositions *v* and *na*, as in (21), while source prepositions do not normally occur in similar contexts.

- (21) *Mama kupila lekarstvo v apteke.*
 mom bought medicine in pharmacy.GEN
 ‘Mom bought the medicine at the pharmacy.’

To sum up, verbs of asking and requesting do not allow for comparison with constructions that contain an inanimate third argument. Verbs of removing may take an inanimate argument, in which case this is marked as source by a source preposition. In the case of the verb “buy”, the choice of a specific preposition with inanimate landmarks points toward a locative reading.

4 Semantics of the *u*+gen constructions in OCS

In this section, we discuss the use of *u*+gen constructions in OCS. We are, of course, aware of the fact that OCS, a South Slavic language, is not the direct

predecessor of Russian.¹² However, being the oldest attested Slavic language, we think that its data can shed some light on the original extent to which the use of *u+gen* was more restricted than it is in the modern languages.

In its concrete spatial meaning, OCS *u+gen* is remarkably similar to *u+gen* in MSR. It occurs most frequently with human landmarks, and corresponds to *pará+dat* in Greek, a type of prepositional phrase that specialized for locatives with human landmarks from Classical Greek onward (Luraghi 2003, 2017) as in (22). In (23) the Greek text has *prós+acc*, a locative expression that sometimes replaces *prós+dat* in the New Testament (Regard 1919: 578–580), and indicates location near a (mostly human) landmark.

(22) *priemъ otročę postavi e u sebe* (Luke 9.47)

took child placed him **at REFL.GEN**

‘He took a child and placed him close to himself.’

Greek: *par’áutōi*_{DAT} ‘by him(self)’ (locative)

(23) *u tebe sčtvorjř paschř sč*

at you.GEN make Easter with

učeniky svoimi (Matthew 26.18)

disciples POSS.REFL

‘I will celebrate Easter by you/at your place with my disciples.’

Greek: *prōs sé*_{ACC}

According to some scholars, the shift from locative to possessor can partly also be seen in OCS (see Chodova 1966: 106). A possible occurrence of a quasi-possessive construction is example (24).

(24) *ěže sřtč u nixč* (Luke 10.7)

which are **at they.GEN**

‘(The things) that they have/that are by them.’

Notably, the Greek source text contains *pará+gen*, the standard expression for human sources in Classical Greek (Luraghi 2003, 2017): *tà parà autōn* is to be interpreted as “the things that they could provide, the things (that came) from

¹² We do not discuss Old Russian for two main reasons. In the first place, it shows later attestations with respect to OCS. In addition, the possessive construction had already emerged by the time of the earliest Old Russian sources.

them”. Most likely, since *u*+gen usually translates *pará*+dat, as we remarked above, and the expression *tà par’autoîs* does in fact mean “their possessions” (Luraghi 2003: 140) in cases in which the condition of spatial proximity also holds, the Greek text has been interpreted by Slavic translators as containing a dative. McAnallen (2011: 17–21) discusses the occurrence in (24) (that she incorrectly considers comitative) and other passages, and shows that in all putative possessive constructions the locative sense is clearly detectable, as spatial proximity is also implied.

Inanimate landmarks are rare with *u*+gen in OCS, accounting for only 19 of the 94 occurrences we examined. When they occur, the preposition indicates location at an edge of the landmark, and usually corresponds to Greek *prós*+dat, “near(by)”, as in (25) and (26).

(25) *Mariě že stočše u groba* (John 20.11)

Maria PTC stood **at tomb.GEN**

‘Maria was standing by the tomb.’

Greek: *pròs tòi_{DAT} mnēmeíoi_{DAT}* ‘by the tomb’

(26) *sědježšta edinogo u glavy i edinogo u nogъ* (John 20.12)

sitting one **at head.GEN** and one **at legs.GEN**

‘Sitting one at the head and one at the feet.’

Greek: *pròs tēi_{DAT} kephalēi_{DAT} /pròs toîs_{DAT} posín_{DAT}* ‘by the head/by the feet’

The only verb that takes *u*+gen in OCS is the verb *prositi* “beg, ask”, as in (27). Occurrences for *prositi* are 20 out of 95 total occurrences of *u*+gen.

(27) *proseštjumu u tebe dai* (Matthew 5.42)

asking.DAT by you.GEN give

‘Give to him who begs you.’

Greek: double accusative

In one occurrence (John 16.23), the Zographensis has *u*+gen where the Marianus has a source construction with *otъ*+gen “from”: *prosite u otca/prosite otъ otca* “ask the father”. Note that in all occurrences of verbs of asking the Greek text always features the double accusative. The double accusative is also the normal construction with other verbs of asking in OCS, such as *vъprašati*, *vъprositi*, *isprositi* “ask”.¹³

¹³ Some occurrences with variation between *u*+gen and *otъ*+gen in different manuscripts of OCS texts are mentioned in Chodova (1966: 107). Remarkably, as Eckhoff et al. (2013) point out,

Among other verbs that take *u+gen* in Russian, only verbs of removing are attested with third arguments in OCS, in particular the verbs *vbzēti*, *otēti*, *primati* “take away”. With human landmarks, they take *otb*, always corresponding to Greek *apó* “from”, in the earliest Bible translations recorded in the Codex Marianus and in the Codex Zographensis. The younger Codex Suprasliensis contains an occurrence in which *vbzēti* takes the *u+gen* construction (Supr. 32.149). In later manuscripts, verbs of removing may occasionally take the *u+gen* construction, as argued in Chodova (1966: 110–113), who also shows that different manuscripts attest to possible variation of *u+gen* with *otb+gen* for most occurrences. Verbs of buying do not normally occur with *u+gen* in OCS, even though in one occurrence *iskupiti* “redeem” takes the *u+gen* construction (Supr. 23.552), in example (28).

- (28) *iskupi* *u* *stražb* *tělesě svjqtuju*
 redeemed at guardian.GEN body saint
 ‘They got back the saint’s body from the guardian.’

In this section, we have shown that the functions of *u+gen* in OCS are much more restricted than in MSR. In particular, among verbs, only those of asking and requesting take this construction. However, the distribution of *u+gen* in locative expressions shows a striking similarity to MSR, in that in both languages human landmarks predominate. Possession is not encoded by *u+gen* in OCS, but some bridging contexts are available that could provide the starting point for such an extension.

5 Semantics of the *u+gen* constructions in Polish

In this section, we compare the use of the *u+gen* construction in Polish with its use in MSR. We show that, outside the locative meaning, similarities are quite limited, as both possessive and experiential constructions are possible only in cases in which the spatial meaning is also present, and, in the case of possession, if some other spatial constituent supports a locative reading. For this reason, we cannot speak of a real extension of the construction. With verbs, too, similarities are limited, as the *u+gen* construction only occurs with verbs of asking and requesting, similar to what we found in OCS.

the OCS rendition of Greek source prepositional phrases is very independent, with *ot+gen* serving as a general default.

5.1 Locative and related constructions

As its Russian and OCS cognates, the Polish preposition *u*+gen in the locative construction also indicates location in the vicinity or at the edge of a landmark (Cienki 1989: 94–95; Bartnicka et al. 2004: 473), as in (29). As in Russian, prepositional phrases with *u*+gen represent the standard way to indicate locative with respect to a human landmark (Bartnicka et al. 2004: 473; Kokorniak 2009), as in (30).

- (29) *Niesamowitość w Nzerekore: staw u stóp*
 weirdness in Nzerekore lake **at bases.GEN**
wzgórza, na którym stał mój hotel.
 hill on which stayed my hotel.
 ‘The most amazing thing in Nzerekore: a lake at the foot of the hills, where my hotel was.’

- (30) *Drugą część ferii być może spędzę*
 Second part vacation be possible spend
z rodziną u cioci w Redzie.
 with family **at aunt.GEN** in Reda
 ‘Probably, I will spend the second part of my vacation at my aunt’s house in Reda.’

Predicative possession in Polish is expressed with the verb *mieć* ‘have’. Only in cases in which a locative reading is available do we find *u*+gen constructions, as in (31).

- (31) *Ja skończyłam zaocznie fizykę, ale u nas*
 I finished at.a.distance physics but **at we.GEN**
w szkole nie było pracy dla fizyczki (...)
 in school no was job for physicist
 ‘I finished my distance learning degree in physics, but in our school (at us in school) there was no job for a physicist (...)’

Given the fact that *u*+gen constructions are only marginally employed for possession, it is no wonder that experiencer constructions involving body parts that we have called possessor experiencers do not occur in Polish. In such cases, the double accusative or the dative are used instead, as in (32) and (33).¹⁴

¹⁴ Dąbrowska (1997: 111–115) argues that, when expressing physical experiences in which a body part is involved, some verbs, such as *boleć* ‘hurt’ (as in example [32]), require the

- (32) *Bolą **mnie** nogi.*
hurt I.ACC legs.NOM
'My legs hurt.'
- (33) *Och, jak strasznie kręci **mi** się w głowie.*
PTC how horribly spins I.DAT REFL in head
'Oh, how bad my head is spinning.'

However, locative experiencers are widely found, both in sentences referring to inchoative situations, as in (34) and (35), and with states, as in (36).

- (34) *Wielki podziw i szacunek wzbudzają **u mnie** ludzie, dla których nie są najważniejsze pieniądze (...)*
Great admiration and respect awake at I.GEN people for whom not are most.important money
'Those people for whom money is not the most important thing evoke in me great admiration and respect.'
- (35) *Jednak **u dzieci**, **u których** choroba postępuje, konieczne jest podjęcie leczenia.*
However at children.GEN at those.GEN illness progresses necessary is undertaking therapy
'However, a therapy is necessary for those children with the disease in progress.'
- (36) *„Czasoprzestrzeń” **u psychopaty schizoidalnego** Jest rozległa.*
Time-space at psychopath.GEN schizoid.GEN Is expanse
'The time-space in a schizoid psychopath is expanded.'

accusative case; other verbs, such as *ściernąć* “[of limb] go to sleep” and *zdrętwieć* “go numb”, take the dative, while other verbs can take both the accusative or the dative, as *strzykać* “crunch”. She explains the occurrence of either case as follows: “A person whose hand or arm is acted on by the agent is certainly directly affected by the action, which motivates the use of the accusative case. On the other hand, parts of the body are central elements of the personal sphere ..., and hence any process which they participate in can be given a dative construal.” Hence, she concludes, “we are dealing with conflicting motivations.” (1997: 111).

In much the same way as in the case of locative experiencers in Russian, in examples (34)–(36) too, the occurrence of a trajector which is not a concrete entity that can be located in space supports the experiential interpretation. The human landmark in spatial proximity, then, is interpreted as the person most closely affected by the situation.

5.2 Polish equivalents of verbs that take the *u*+gen construction in MSR

In Polish, only verbs of asking and requesting take third arguments marked by the preposition *u*+gen. As an alternative, the accusative is also possible. Examples of the two constructions are (37) and (38).

- (37) *Czy ktoś o to spotkanie 22 lipca wieczorem prosił*
 if who about that meeting 22 July in.the.evening asked
u premiera?
at prime.minister.GEN
 ‘Did someone ask the Prime Minister about the evening meeting on July 22nd?’

- (38) *Dziewczynka poprosiła matkę o pomoc.*
 girl asked mother.ACC about help
 ‘The girl asked her mother for help.’

All other verbs that typically take *u*+gen third arguments in Russian do not show the same behavior in Polish. In particular, verbs of removing typically take the dative when they occur with human participants (e. g., with the verbs *zabrać* ‘take away’, *ukraść* ‘steal’, and *podwędzić* ‘pinch’). We will return to the use of this case in Section 6. When the action of removing is performed with reference to an inanimate entity, we find source prepositions, in much the same way as in Russian. With the verb *wziąć* ‘take’ source prepositions can also occur with animate entities.

The verb *kupić* ‘buy’ takes a source expression with the preposition *od* when the third argument refers to the seller, or a locative preposition when it refers to a place, as in examples (39) and (40).

- (39) *Kupił od cioci porcelanowe miniatury.*
bought from auntie.GEN porcelain miniatures
 ‘He bought from his auntie some porcelain miniatures.’

- (40) *Kupiła w aptece płyn do włosów.*
bought in pharmacy.LOC lotion for hair
 ‘She bought the hair lotion at the pharmacy.’

6 The dative in West Slavic

In this section, we briefly discuss the use of the dative in Czech and Polish with verbs that take the *u*+gen construction in MSR. We chose West Slavic languages for comparison with Russian in the first place because other East Slavic languages display constructions that are closer to the Russian ones, so a somewhat more limited use of the dative than what we find in West Slavic. However, as we argue in this section, there are reasons to believe that West Slavic reflects an older situation in this respect. In the second place, South Slavic languages do not lend themselves easily to this kind of comparison, partly because of dative-genitive syncretism typical of the Balkan area, and partly because phonological developments have led to homophony of the preposition *u*+gen with cognates of the inessive preposition corresponding to the Russian *v* (see footnote 5).

As we have remarked in Section 5.2, verbs of removing mostly take the dative of human third arguments in Polish. In her book on the Polish dative, Dąbrowska (1997) mentions example (41).

- (41) *Zabrał/Ukradł/Podwędził mi okulary.*
took away/stole/pinched I.DAT glasses
 ‘He took away/took/took back/stole/pinched my glasses.’
 (Dąbrowska 1997: 27)

Similarly, Janda (1993) remarks that verbs of removing and stealing take the dative in Czech, as in (42) and (43).

- (42) *Ten pán nám vzal hodně peněz.*
 that man **we.DAT took** much money
 ‘That man took a lot of money from us (he was dishonest).’
 (Janda 1993: 58)
- (43) *Někdo nám ukradl auto.*
 somebody **we.DAT stole** car
 ‘Somebody stole our car.’
 (Janda 1993: 63)

Dąbrowska (1997) describes the Polish dative as making reference to what she calls “the personal sphere”. Referring to the seemingly contradictory fact that the Polish dative occurs both with verbs of giving and with verbs of removing, she writes that “[j]ust as one’s sphere of influence grows when new items are added to it, it shrinks when one’s possessions leave it” (Dąbrowska 1997: 27). Together with example (41), she also lists a number of maleficiary datives, mirroring the frequent use of dative beneficiaries. In such cases, too, she argues, the dative does not inherently indicate benefaction or malefaction. Rather, it points toward personal affectedness of the dative participant.

Janda also notes a similar behavior of the Czech dative. Discussing example (44), she notes the ambiguity brought about by the peculiar function of the dative.

- (44) *Já jsem ti z knihovny ukradla knihu.*
 I am **you.DAT** from library **stole** book
 ‘I stole a book for you from the library.’
 (Janda 1993: 58–59)

Janda points out that the interpretation of the dative as beneficiary in that context (“I stole a book *for you* from the library”) is the least probable with respect to the other two possible readings:

- a. I stole a book from *your* library (dative of possession).
 - b. *Hey, you know what*, I stole a book from the library (ethical dative).
- (Janda 1993: 59)

Janda adds:

Examples like these indicate the presence of a cognitive bridge between the indirect object and the possessive meaning of the dative, for when one takes something from someone else, it is necessarily assumed that the object was in the possession of the dative referent. (1993: 63)

We believe that the assumption of a possessive relation prior to possible removal of an entity from a human participant also motivates the extension of the *u*+gen construction to verbs of removing in Russian, as we argue in Section 7.

Janda further remarks that the dative can be replaced by a source preposition. She argues that the two constructions have different implications, as the dative construction highlights lack of control, while the source construction only highlights the trajectory, as shown in her translations of (45) and (46).

- (45) *Ludmila nám utekla.*
 Ludmila **we.DAT** ran.away
 ‘Ludmila ran away **from us** (and we can’t do anything about it).’
- (46) *Ludmila od nás utekla.*
 Ludmila **from we.GEN** ran.away
 ‘Ludmila ran away **from us.**’
 (Janda 1993: 58)

She finally points out that “the Russian indirect object is considerably more constrained than its Czech counterpart, for it can be extended only to [...] giving [...], but not to taking.” (Janda 1993: 113–114).

7 Discussion

In her paper on the Russian prefix *u-*, Zaliznjak (2001) tries to explain how the preposition *u* acquired a possessive meaning starting from the original ablative meaning. She compares Russian *u* with the French preposition *de*, which indicates both ablative (e. g., *partir de Paris* “leave from Paris”) and possessive (e. g., *livre de Pierre* “Pierre’s book”), and writes that the semantic relation between the ablative and the possessive meaning

is based on a clear metonymic shift: in the first case [ablative], the focus is on the moment of detachment, i. e., the starting point of the movement away from something; in the second case [possessive], the focus is on the very fact that this contiguity (= the contiguous location) took place. (Zaliznjak 2001: 73)¹⁵

As attractive as this parallel can look at first sight, it is far from being compelling: indeed, if we were to understand the possessive meaning of the *u*+gen construction as connected with the original ablative meaning, this would necessarily imply that the possessive meaning preceded the locative meaning, in fact, that the latter derived from the former. Instead, as we mentioned in Section 3.1, all studies on the development of the possessive construction agree in assuming that it originated out of the locative construction. This is shown by the data from OCS that we reviewed in Section 4, which point to the extension of locative to

¹⁵ “osnovano na vpolne očividnom metonimičeskom perenose: v prvom slučae v fokuse vnimanija nachoditsja moment otdelenija, t.e. načal’naja točka dvizenija proč’, vo vtorom – sam fakt, čto éta smežnost’ (= nachoždenie rjadom) imela mesto.”

possessive through possible bridging contexts (see example [24]), but offer no evidence for a putative extension from ablative to possessive.

Discussing the use of *u*+gen with verbs, Zaliznjak further elaborates on the putative origin of the possessive construction out of an earlier ablative construction, and remarks:

One of the arguments [in favor of an ablative origin] is the absence of ablative meaning for the preposition *u*: **dal u menja knigu* (cf. *vzjal*) ('[he] gave at me the book [cf. took]'), **prikleil u kružki ručku*¹⁶ (cf. *otbil*) ('[he] glued at the mug the handle [cf. broke off]'), **soobščil u menja novost'* (cf. *uznal*) ('[he] told at me the news [cf. got to know]'), etc. The same restriction involves spatial meanings: **podošel u doma* ('[he] approached at the house') (with the meaning of 'toward the house') (Zaliznjak 2001: 73)¹⁷

Zaliznjak's remarks are correct in capturing the difference between the *u*+gen construction and constructions involving the dative or allative prepositions. However, it seems doubtful that this difference can be explained by a putative ablative meaning. Considering the data from other Slavic languages, we have argued that the meaning of *u*+gen in OCS was locative, mostly with respect to human landmarks, while in the earliest texts only the verb *prositi* took the *u*+gen construction as part of its argument structure. In Section 6, we have shown that verbs of removing most often take the dative construction in West Slavic languages. In addition, we have argued in Section 3.1 that the extension of the *u*+gen construction to possession supported a further extension to experiencer with inherently possessed body parts in MSR, and have shown that this construction does not occur in Polish where extension to possession is also marginal. In this connection, it is worth noting that in Ukrainian (East Slavic closely related to Russian, also featuring the *u*+gen possessive construction) in the case of experiencers with body parts the *u*+gen construction is not the only possible one, as it is in MSR.¹⁸ In non-standard dialectal varieties, both the dative and the double accusative are also recorded in the Atlas of Ukrainian Languages (Danylenko, p.c.). Thus, the constructions in (47)–(49) are all possible, depending on the dialectal variety.¹⁹

¹⁶ An anonymous reviewer points out that contrary to what Zaliznjak claims, it is possible to find contexts like this on the Internet, even though they remain marginal.

¹⁷ "Odnim iz argumentov zdes' javljaetsja otsutstvje v russkom jazyke daže kakich-libo namekov na suščestvovanie allativnogo značenija u predloga *u*: **dal u menja knigu* (sr. *vzjal*), **prikleil u kružki ručku* (sr. *otbil*), **soobščil u menja novost'* (sr. *uznal*) i t.p.; analogičnyj zapret dejstvuet i dlja sobstvenno prostranstvennogo značenija: **podošel u doma* (v značenii „k domu“)."

¹⁸ The use of the *u*+gen construction for predicative possession is well rooted both in Ukrainian and in Belorussian. However, in both languages the verb "have" has a more extended use than it has in MSR, see Mayo (1993: 934–935) and Shevelov (1993: 987–988).

¹⁹ We thank Andriy Danylenko who provided us with the Ukrainian examples.

(47) *u mene bolyt' holova*
 at I.GEN aches head

(48) *mene bolyt' holova*
 I.ACC aches head

(49) *meni bolyt' holova*
 I.DAT aches head
 'I have a headache.'

At this point, it is also worth remembering that the possessive construction with *u+gen* had already emerged at the time of the earliest East Slavic texts, as McAnallen shows (2011: 51). However, according to her data, this was not yet the most frequent strategy for encoding possession: the verb *imeti* “have” outnumbered the *u+gen* construction by 85/15 in her sample from the *Pověstī Vremēnīnyhū Lētū*, a composite text dating back to the ninth–eleventh century CE. The extension of the *u+gen* construction to predicative possessive construction can explain its extension to verbs of removing. Indeed, we assume that the extension of the *u+gen* construction to such verbs is based on the possessive meaning. As also noted by Janda (1993) for Czech (see Section 6), an entity that can be removed from someone must be in their possession, at least temporarily. The extension can happen once a structure such as “Someone took Y’s X” is reanalyzed as not necessarily implying possession in the full sense, but extending to temporary possession. At this point, the focus moves from possession to the removal process, and the same structure is understood as meaning “Someone took X from Y”.²⁰

We can then single out three groups of verbs that take the *u+gen* construction as part of their argument structure with human third arguments:

- Verbs of asking and requesting (originally constructed with *u+gen* in Common Slavic);
- Verbs of buying (extended from locative);
- Verbs of removing (extended from possessive).

As we have shown in the course of the paper, the three groups of verbs that take the *u+gen* construction in MSR do so for different reasons. Verbs of

²⁰ Notably, as we have shown in Section 4, in OCS, a limited number of passages attest both to a possible possessive interpretation, and to occasional occurrences of the *u+gen* construction with verbs of removing. Serbo-Croatian, a South Slavic language in which, as we remarked in Section 1, *u+gen* has become quite infrequent, retains some possessive constructions, and the verb *uzeti* “take”, which is the cognate of Russian *vzjat'*, may also take *u+gen*.

asking and requesting likely inherited the construction from Proto-Slavic, while verbs of removing and verbs of buying take the construction on account of a semantic extension from different pre-existing meanings, locative and possessive.

However, we would like to argue that in MSR on the synchronic plane we need to reckon with a single *u*+gen construction with verbs. No matter the possible semantic difference in the way in which they originated, on a synchronic plane, verbs of asking and requesting, removing, and buying all share the feature of referring to situations that involve two human beings and a transfer of some entity, concrete or not (e. g., information in the case of verbs of asking) between the two. Contrary to verbs of giving, the final possessor of the entity which is being transferred is the participant that actively initiates the action, that is, the participant encoded by the subject. The other human participant, in their turn, is the possessor of the entity which is being transferred before the transfer takes place. This difference between verbs that take the *u*+gen construction and verbs of giving also accounts for Zaliznjak's remark about the absence of allative meaning, and can be captured by characterizing verbs with the *u*+gen construction as featuring non-recipient third arguments, as opposed to verbs with recipient third arguments that take the dative.

Hence, the use of the *u*+gen construction in the argument structure of the three groups of verbs supports the Constructional Convergence Hypothesis, and shows how “historically unrelated constructions are capable of participating in the same formally and functionally motivated network through a series of changes that cause their ... meaning to merge into an already existing pattern” (Torrent 2015: 175).

It needs to be stressed that while our description of the meaning of the *u*+gen construction in MSR aims at accounting for its use synchronically, this does not mean that the ancient ablative meaning is not responsible for its occurrence in any of the specific contexts that we have examined. In particular, it may well be that the use of the *u*+gen construction with verbs of requesting that, as we have seen, can be reconstructed for Common Slavic, preserves a reflection of that meaning. In this case, one must reconstruct a pre-literary extension of the ablative construction to locative. While such a reconstruction remains outside the scope of the present paper, we would like to call attention to the fact that this type of change, known as “ablative-locative transfer”, is reported from several, genetically unrelated languages. Ablative-locative transfers consist in the shift of an ablative construction to locative, and in the subsequent loss of the earlier ablative meaning (Mackenzie 1978; Luraghi 2009, Luraghi 2014; Luraghi et al. 2017). Such

a process could account well for the semantic change undergone by the *u+gen* construction in pre-literary Common Slavic.²¹

Figure 1 represents the semantics of the *u+gen* construction in MSR as a network of related constructions.

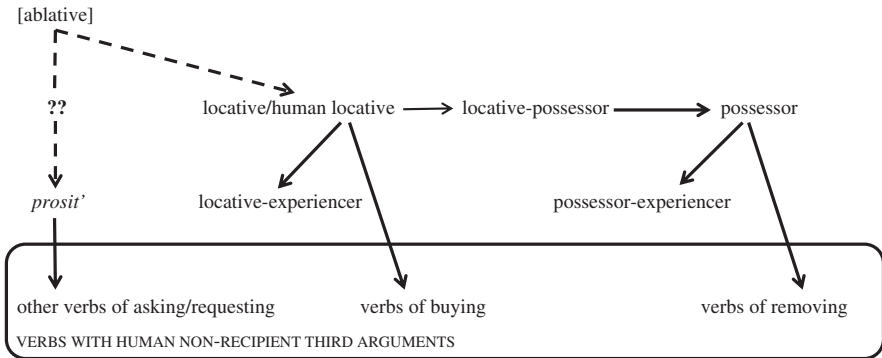


Figure 1: The semantics of the *u+gen* construction in MSR.

In Figure 1, the arrows account for semantic extension from constructions that are not part of verbs' argument structure to constructions that occur as third arguments of different groups of verbs. The dotted arrows suggest a possible Proto-Slavic shift from ablative to locative, which in the case of the third argument of verbs of requesting is uncertain as indicated by the question marks.

The semantics of the *u+gen* construction in MSR can be contrasted with the semantics of cognate constructions in OCS and Polish, as we show in Figure 2.

As Figure 2 shows, OCS, Polish and MSR agree in the use of the *u+gen* construction with verbs of requesting. Outside verbs' argument structure, the three languages encode locative with human landmarks with the *u+gen* construction, while extension to possession remains marginal, and crucially dependent on a possible contextual interpretation favored by the locative meaning. In Polish, the construction has further extended to locative experiencers.

²¹ Figure 1 accounts for the synchronic meaning of the *u+gen* constructional network in MSR while incorporating diachronic information. This is a frequent feature of meaning representations, which mostly emerges in semantic maps, see the discussion in Van Der Auwera (2008, 2013), Luraghi and Narrog (2014), Georgakopoulos and Polis (2018).

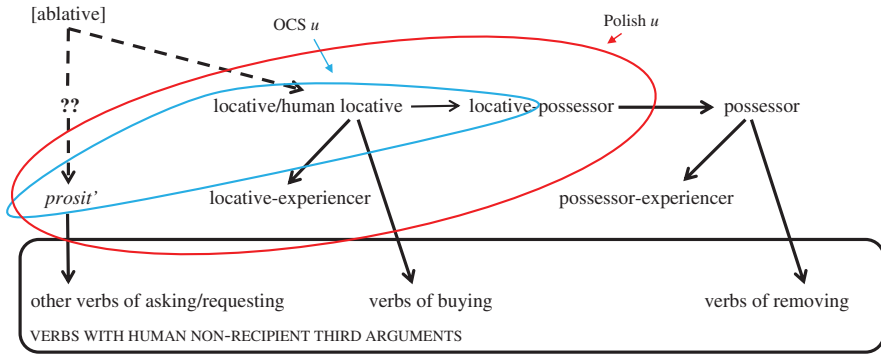


Figure 2: Semantics of the *u*+gen construction in MSR against OCS and Polish.

Notably, the process outlined above shows that the meaning of the *u*+gen construction with verbs, though having developed out of different sources, is no longer associated with them synchronically. In this connection, it is worth highlighting that we have refrained from providing a description of the meaning of the preposition *u* based on polysemy. This would, of course, be a possible alternative analysis, and one that is often pursued for the semantics of prepositions in Cognitive Grammar since Brugman’s (1988) account of the various uses of *over*. However, we think that an analysis that takes constructions, rather than single lexical items, as its units provides a more compelling account of the data, as it shows how semantic extension operates diachronically resulting in different synchronic configurations of a dynamic constructional network at different language stages. This is especially relevant if one tries to account for the occurrence of the *u*+gen construction with verbs of removing, buying, and asking/requesting as, following a constructionalization approach, one does not only focus on the meaning of *u*+gen, but also on the process of convergence by which these three groups of verbs end up constituting a single group, sharing the distinctive feature of taking human non-recipient third arguments.

In her account of the English *be going to* construction, Traugott (2014) argues that in a constructionalization perspective the diachronic process is understood as a change that encompasses the whole construction consisting of the verb *go*, the ending *-ing*, the occurrence of a verb immediately after *to*, associated with an “increase in the accessibility of the temporal implicature arising from the purposive *to*-clause.” The implicature, based on a pragmatic inference that places a purpose in the future with respect to the time of utterance, becomes part of the semantics of the whole construction, not only of the

verb *go*. Traugott (2014: 8) uses this example to highlight the difference between an approach based on grammaticalization, which focuses on a single item, in this case the verb *go*, and one that takes a whole construction as its focus. We would like to argue that this is similar to the difference between the constructionalization approach that we have proposed and an approach based on the semantics of the preposition *u*. Indeed, our analysis does not only account for the meaning of the preposition and its semantic extension, but also accounts for the emergence of the unified group of verbs that we described above out of three groups of formerly somewhat disparate verbs.

It is further worth noting that the constructionalization approach has allowed explaining the usage of *u+gen* not only in MSR but also within the more comprehensive picture of Slavic languages, by comparing its usage in Polish, Old Church Slavic, and (although less extensively) in Czech and Ukrainian. The wider use of the *u+gen* construction in MSR with respect to cognate constructions in other Slavic languages has largely resulted from the wider extension of the possessive construction in MSR, which has often led it to replace the original dative: this has happened with several of the verbs that take the *u+gen* construction, as well as in part of the experiencer constructions, in which its extension seems to be an ongoing process.

8 Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed the semantics of constructions containing *u+gen* in MSR. We have surveyed its use as a locative (most often with human landmarks) and as a possessive expression, as well as an expression denoting two types of experiencer that we have defined locative and possessor experiencer respectively. We have then analyzed the use of the construction as part of the argument structure of verbs that take human third arguments. Based on their semantics, these verbs belong to three different groups: verbs of asking and requesting, verbs of removing, and verbs of buying. The second two groups of verbs can also take inanimate third arguments. Interestingly, in this case they show different syntactic behaviors with verbs of removing taking constructions involving source prepositions, while the verb “buy” takes locative prepositions. Only the first group of verbs took the *u+gen* construction in OCS, and does so in other modern Slavic languages. We have then widened our view to Polish, and have found that verbs of removing often take dative third arguments, while the verb “buy” takes a source preposition with human landmarks. Notably, in Polish, the *u+gen* construction has not extended to possession, and accordingly, experiencers are only of the locative type. Verbs of

removing also take the dative in Czech, thus pointing to an innovative character of the extension of the *u*+gen construction to such verbs in MSR. We have explained the extension of the construction with verbs of buying as due to its locative meaning, while in the case of verbs of removing we have shown that the extension is based on the possessive meaning, as the participant encoded by *u*+gen is the possessor of the entity which is being removed. Finally, we have argued that, in spite of different origins, all verbs that take the *u*+gen construction in MSR constitute a coherent group characterized by their property of taking non-recipient human third arguments.

The data we discussed show that the occurrence of *u*+gen with verbs of buying and removing is not connected with the original ablative meaning reconstructed for the Proto-Indo-European preverb from which the prefix and the preposition *u* derive. Moreover, they also point toward a larger extension of the *u*+gen construction in MSR than in other Slavic languages, both when functioning independent of specific verbs, and when making part of verbs' argument structure. Crucially, it is the extension of the *u*+gen construction to predicative possession that accounts for its extension to verbs of removing and for the wider use of the construction in MSR.

The extension of the *u*+gen construction in MSR and other Slavic languages outside the spatial domain, for example to locative experiencers, was made possible in origin by its tendency to occur with human landmarks. Indeed, as the preposition *u* indicated location in the vicinity of a referent, rather than coincidence in space of two referents, it could easily be used for human locatives. Note that this particular locative meaning might have arisen on account of an ablative-locative transfer, a type of semantic shift attested elsewhere cross-linguistically.

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Abbreviations

ACC	accusative
COP	copula
DAT	dative
GEN	genitive
LOC	locative
NOM	nominative
POSS	possessive
PST	past
PTC	particle
REFL	reflexive

Appendix A. Types of *u*+gen constructions in MSR and animacy

	Animate	Inanimate	Total
Locative	227 (78.8%)	61 (21.2%)	288
Possessive	477 (91.2%)	46 (8.8%)	523
Locative Experiencer	103 (97.2%)	3 (2.8%) (metonymical)	106
Possessor Experiencer	21 (100%)	0	21
Asking and Requesting	24 (92.3%)	2 (7.7%) (metonymical)	26
Removing	20 (80%)	5 (20%)	25
Buying	10 (90.9%)	1 (9.1%) (metonymical)	11
All meanings	882 (88.2%)	118 (11.8%)	1000

Appendix B. Verb list and frequency

	Verbs	Tokens in our sample
Asking and Requesting	<i>sprosit'</i> "ask"	15
	<i>poprosit'</i> "ask, request"	7
	<i>zaprostit'</i> "ask, inquire"	2
	<i>uprostit'</i> "persuade sb to do"	1
	<i>vyprostit'</i> "obtain sth by begging"	1
		tot = 26
Removing	<i>vzjat'</i> "take"	5
	<i>otnjat'</i> "take away, take off"	3
	<i>otobrat'</i> "take away, select"	3
	<i>ukrast'</i> "steal"	3
	<i>otletet'</i> "fly off"	1
	<i>otrezat'</i> "cut off"	1
	<i>otvoevat'</i> "regain"	1
	<i>podvorovat'</i> "steal"	1
	<i>pozaimstvovat'</i> "borrow"	1
	<i>speret'</i> "steal"	1
	<i>vychvatit'</i> "snatch, pull out"	1
	<i>vykrast'</i> "steal"	1
	<i>vyrvat'</i> "snatch from"	1
<i>zabrat'</i> "take away"	1	
<i>zavoevat'</i> "conquer"	1	
		tot = 25
Buying	<i>kupit'</i> "buy"	8
	<i>polučit'</i> "get, obtain"	1
	<i>priobresti</i> "gain"	1
	<i>vytorgovat'</i> "obtain by bargaining"	1
		tot = 11

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