

“(Relativized) Modality: Datives and Reflexive Suffixes in *mne ne čitaetsja*”

This paper deals with the impersonal Russian structure in (1). (1)’s main characteristics are: (i) the verb shows up in the (default) 3rd person singular with the obligatory presence of the reflexive suffix *-sja*; (ii) what seems to be the subject shows up in the Dative (instead of the Nominative); (iii) the presence of an adverb (or negation) is normally required and (iv) the expression carries modality in its meaning: it expresses “disinclination or incapacity to perform an action” (Borras and Christian 1971, p.203)

In this paper I intend to present a comprehensive analysis for (1) that ties together, and accounts for, all the (superficial) properties in (i)-(iv). The backbone of such approach is the Modality carried by (1). The analysis relies on the notion of ‘relativized modality’ of Kratzer (1991, and previous) and on the extensions thereof in Brennan’s (1993) work.

1. First of all, I will establish the kind of modality involved in the cases of (1). According to Kratzer, modal words are ambiguous: their modal force has to be evaluated with respect to some ‘conversational backgrounds’ [CB], contextually provided (e.g.: ‘can.[in view of x’s physical abilities]’ or ‘can.[in view of the available evidence]’, where the material inside the brackets makes explicit the additional information, or CB, involved. Cf. (2)a. and b.). Modals, in general, may specialize for the (relevant) kind of circumstances involved in the CB. Following that direction, I will propose that, according to the interpretations available for expressions like (1), the modality involved is specialized for psychological circumstances. The modality in (1), thus, is interpreted as ‘possibility.[in view of (x’s) psychological circumstances]’.

2. Next, I will show that although the Dative NP behaves as a subject (e.g., potential antecedent of the anaphoric *sebjä* and *svoj*: controller of PRO. Cf. Greenberg & Franks (1991) for similar cases of Datives), it does not respond to agentivity tests. Given that the external argument of verbs like *čitat’*, ‘to read’, in (1) is associated with an agent interpretation, we can conclude that the Dative NP is not the external argument of the verb itself. On the other hand, the Dative NP is interpreted as denoting the individual whose psychological circumstances are relevant for the interpretation of the modality in (1) [cf. §1.]. Here I will resort to Brennan’s theory, who draws the difference between modal operators and modal predicates: modal predicates select an external argument and denote relations between individuals and properties.

From the evidence in 1. and 2., I will conclude that in (1) there is an empty modal head that takes two arguments (thus, a modal predicate): an external (subject) NP<sub>dat</sub> (denoting the individual) and V-*sja* (denoting the property). Under this view, (1) means “Given my psychological circumstances, I can’t read”. In this way, and in the sense that the Dative is the argument of the modal, we also accomplish to unify (1) with other modal constructions in Russian that show an overt modal word

[(3)a.], or again a null modal [(3)b.] selecting a Dative argument (but note that the syntax of the property argument in (3) is different from (1)).

3. In order for V-*sja* to denote a property, I will use Heim and Kratzer's Rule of Predicate Abstraction ["For any variable assignment  $g$ : if  $\alpha$  is a branching node whose daughters are an index  $i$  and a node  $\gamma$ , then  $[[\alpha]]^g$  is that function  $f$  such that, for any  $x \in D$ ,  $f(x) = [[\gamma]]^{g \cup \{i/x\}}$ "] and assume a split Infl (as in Chomsky (1993) and after). Specifically, I will propose that the suffix *sja*, carrying an index, occupies the head position of Agr<sub>S</sub>P; assuming a VP-internal subject hypothesis, a *pro* is generated in the VP as the external (agentive) argument of V, and raised to Spec-TP, where Nominative Case is checked out. This configuration is precisely the right input for the above mentioned Rule of PA, motivated for reasons totally independent of these data, to apply. The specific result is that the Agr<sub>S</sub>P is interpreted as a property, as desired. Crucially, if the suffix *sja* is not present, no index is present and the rule cannot apply. This accounts for the absolute need of the suffix *sja*, for the interpretation in (1) to obtain.

The resultant structure will be the following:

(2) [MP NP<sub>dat</sub> [M'  $\emptyset$  [AgrSP [AgrS' (V)*sja*<sub>i</sub> [TP *pro*<sub>i</sub> ...

4. Finally, the presence of the adverb [(4)] will be integrated by appealing to the two types of CB (Modal Bases and Ordering Sources) within the idea of relativized modality in Kratzer (1991).

(1) **mne** ne čitaetsja

me:Dat not read:3sgPres-Rfl 'I don't feel like reading', 'I'm not in the mood to read'

(2) a. I can lift this box.

[can.in view of my physical abilities]

b. Jonas can be the person we are looking for.

[can.in view of the available evidence]

(3)a. vam nuzhno poexat' v sanatorij.

you.Pl:DAT necessary:MOD-PRED go:INF to hospital:ACC 'You need to go to the hospital'

b. mne uxodit'. [from G&F (1991), their (6)]

me:DAT leave-INF

'I have to leave'

(4) mne čitaetsja xorosho

me:Dat read:3sgPres-Rfl well:ADV

## References

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