

## The Metaconcept of the *Interested Person*

The metaterm *Dativus Sympatheticus*, (Lith. "suinteresuotas asmuo", Eng. "dative of affected person", "dative of interested person", "dative of misfortune", "dative of lucky agent", Russ. "заинтересованное лицо") has been used in linguistics for a long time. It can be traced back to the works by Havers (1911) and (Güldenstübbe (1925) at the beginning of the century; later on it was used by the Russian linguists Kreidlin, Rachilina (Крейдлин, Рахилина 1983) and by the famous semanticist A. Wierzbicka (1979); it was also tackled by the Lithuanian scholar Elzbutas (Эльзбутас 1967).

The concept of *Dativus Sympatheticus* is most often expressed by a construction that consists of three components: 1) a Verb; 2) a Noun or Pronoun in the Dative case; 3) a Noun or Pronoun in the Accusative case. The Dative usually expresses the "interested person".

Lith. ...*Ligoninėje prieš dvi savaites vienam ligoniui nupjovė sveiką koją.*\* (*donelaitis*)

...Two weeks ago a patient-DAT had a healthy limb amputated.

Russ. Он прострелил мне фуражку. (Elzbutas 1967)

He-NOM shot I-DAT cap.

Germ. Ihm starb die Mutter. (Wierzbicka 1979)

He-DAT died mother-NOM

In Lithuanian, the range of case with the Dative is much broader than in other languages (see: Ambrasas 1997: 508-509). The dative can go with:

a) the accusative case:

Lith. *numazgojo keleiviui kojas*  
washed traveller- DAT legs- ACC

b) the locative case

Lith. *man apkarto burnoje*

I - DAT have a bitter taste in my mouth - LOC

c) the nominative case

Lith. *jam mirė žmona*

His wife- NOM died on him- DAT

d) prepositional case

Lith. *trenkė man per galvą*

(they) hit me-DAT on the head (prep. + ACC)

Some linguists (Крейдлин, Рахилина 1983) claim that the idea of "feeling interested, concerned" is so important that it determines the choice of the construction. It is interesting to note in this respect that in the Russian language there are two constructions that are very often considered to be synonymous, namely:

The construction mentioned above, i.e. with the seme of "заинтересованного лица" and the other with  $U + N_{\text{род.}}$  ( $U + N_{\text{ген.}}$ ). First of all, let us look at the examples where these constructions are possible and where they are not.

Russ. Он вырвал мне зуб.

\* The data studied for this paper came from a number of sources, and I am particularly grateful to the staff working at the Centre of Computational Linguistics at Vytautas Magnus University, who compiled the Corpus of the Lithuanian language and made it available on the Internet. A great deal of the examples examined for this paper came from this corpus.

He-NOM extracted I-DAT tooth-ACC  
 Russ. *Он вырвал у меня зуб.*

He-NOM extracted U+I-GEN tooth-ACC  
 and

Russ. *Он пришьет кукле голову.*

He-NOM will fix the doll-DAT head-ACC

Russ. *Кукле оторвали голову.*

The doll-DAT had its head-ACC torn  
 off

Russ. *\*Он пришьет у куклы голову.*

\* He-NOM will sew U+ doll-GEN head-ACC

In my opinion, we can explain the usage of such sentences having in mind not the seme of "interested person", but possession and space. According to O. N. Seliverstova (Селиверстова 1990:147), the construction with the preposition U + N<sub>GEN.</sub> carries the information that 1) there is Y in the sphere of X's possessivity and 2) Y is a member of the set that X is naturally supposed to have". Consequently, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the presupposition of the sentence *У куклы оторвали голову* 'The doll had its head torn off' implies that X has Y (X has a head). If this presupposition is correct then we cannot use this model when we want to convey the information about the action during which Y is inserted into the sphere of X. In fact we cannot say:

\**Мастер пришьет у нашей куклы голову* 'The tailor-NOM will sew U+ doll-GEN head-ACC' and on the contrary when that object belongs to some other space it can be withdrawn from that space therefore the sentence: *Он оторвал у куклы голову* 'He has torn U+ doll-GEN head-ACC' is possible.

When we have the case where both are possible:

Russ. *Он вырвал мне зуб* 'He has extracted I-DAT tooth-ACC'

Russ. *Он вырвал у меня зуб* 'He has extracted U+ I-GEN tooth' :

the choice of the model is determined by the seme of "interested person". In other words, it is used when the possessor is in fact interested in having the action performed.

Russ. *Я сегодня пошла к врачу и он вырвал мне зуб, который меня мучил две недели* 'I went to the dentist today and he extracted the tooth which had been aching for two weeks' .

Russ. *Вы представляете он вырвал у меня здоровый зуб* 'Can you imagine - he has extracted U+I-GEN an absolutely healthy tooth!'

Here we cannot speak about a person being interested in the action being performed. The "seme of interest", as it was mentioned above, is not present in all the cases where the dative is used.\*

The concept of "interested person" is used to convey a very important semantic feature of the construction, with the dative however, the term itself does not seem to be very accurate and sufficient to interpret the semantic information of the above-mentioned construction. First, the term "suinteresuotumas" is used only as a kind of label attached without explaining what is behind it. If we take the Lithuanian sentence *Jis aukai nupjovė galvą.* 'He cut off the head of the victim' (*donelaitis*) or German *Ihm starb die Mutter* (*Wierzbicka 1979*) the term of "interested person" does not suit since we can hardly talk about the seme of "interest, of being interested in the action to be carried out" here.

Second, the statement that this construction cannot be used with inanimate

\* The difference in the usage of the constructions proves again that language is systematic and very economical. There is a correlation between the two constructions. The construction with the preposition is used when we talk about withdrawing something from the space, territory of X, or when we talk about the action taking place on that territory, while the construction with the dative conveys the information that X becomes the owner of the result of the action performed.

nouns is not accurate either. In Lithuanian, as well as in some other languages, this construction can be used with inanimate nouns, e.g. Lith. *Švarkui atiro rankovė* 'A sleeve of the jacket got ripped off'; Russ. *Он пришил кукле голову*; Eng. *The mills had their windows shattered*.

It seems that the term "affected" rather than "interested person" would be more appropriate when dealing with constructions containing the dative case since, on the one hand, "affected" is more neutral than "interested" and, on the other, it clearly implies that the action performed is directed towards the object, expressed by the dative. If we compare sentences with the dative and the possessive genitive: Lith. *Tėvas sutaisė man dviratį* 'Father has fixed me my bicycle'; Lith. *Siuvėja man pataisė suknelę* 'The dressmaker has mended me my dress' and Lith. *Tėvas sutaisė mano dviratį* 'Father has fixed my bicycle'; Lith. *Siuvėja persiuvo mano suknelę* 'The dressmaker has remade my dress' we see that the sentences with the dative convey the information that the possessor becomes the owner not only of the object, but also the action performed upon it.

The sentence *Ji persiuvo mano suknelę* 'She has remade my dress' may be understood that she did that not for me, but for herself or somebody else, while the sentence with the dative *Ji persiuvo/pataisė man suknelę* 'She has remade/mended me my dress' cannot be understood as if she performed the action of sewing for somebody else.

Speaking about the sentences with the dative, A. Wierzbicka (1988:362) introduced the term of the "Target Person", which E. Dąbrowska (1994:110) supplemented with the notion of "personal sphere - the persons, objects, and locations sufficiently closely associated with an individual that changes in them are likely to affect this individual as well. The

Target Person, then, is an individual who is perceived as affected by a change, activity or state in his or her personal sphere." The concept of Target Person supplemented by the notion of personal sphere is, in my understanding, very closely related to the concept of Possession in general. Before discussing the arguments in favour of regarding the construction with the dative of affected person as possessive, let us first have a look at the concept of possession as it is understood here.

Possession has always attracted the attention of many scientists, philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, and linguists. Some philosophers maintain that Possession is one of the modes of existence and it influences our views and our actions. Thus, Fromm (Фромм 1986) argues that our orientation towards possession determines human behaviour - man strives to make the world around him the object of his possession, regarding the world that surrounds him as his property, his ownership. This undoubtedly finds reflection in language.

In contemporary linguistic theory there exist two tendencies in the interpretation of the notion of possession. On the one hand, possession is understood as ownership proper (Hawkins 1981) in other words, only sentences meaning 'having, being in possession of sth.' are considered possessive. Such a view, however, is not widely spread and the majority of scholars give a broader interpretation of this category. It should also be mentioned that some linguists give an extremely broad interpretation and claim that possession is a relationship between two substances (Seiler 1983). Such an interpretation, however, is too broad and leads to the fact that the concept of possession loses its specific character and gets lost in the sea of various relations that exist between two substances. E.g.

in *He is throwing the ball* – we can speak about the relationship between two substances, nevertheless, it is quite obvious that there is no possessive relationship here. True, there exists even broader interpretation of possession where all the relations between a feature and its owner/carrier, an action and its performer are considered possessive. Thus, Warren (1984) claims that phrases like 'professional ladies' are possessive as they can be understood as 'ladies having professions'. I, however, think that these expressions cannot be regarded as possessive, because here we have a relation between an object and its feature. I adhere to the opinion that not any relation between the two substances can be regarded as possessive. The sphere of possession can be understood as the sphere of the influence of X, i.e. to say that a subject (X) has an object (Y) is simply to say that the object falls within the sphere of influence, power (moral, physical, spiritual) of the subject X or that it contains at least an element of (part of X) that is dependent on X, derivative from X (cf. Селиверстова 1990; Григальонене 1989;). This concept is quite indefinite, but indefiniteness is in the character, nature of the phenomena described. Possession belongs to the kind of concepts that tend to be described as being inherently vague or fuzzy (Heine 1997). It is a concept that is realised through a definite list of variants. Possession is not a homogenous concept, however, it is fairly united and cohesive. It seems likely that when we speak about possession, the owner is always at the centre of attention. The idea is connected with the concept of assimilation, with the idea of trying to assimilate the world that surrounds him to his own schemata, to make his own. That is why we can say:

*'My bus, my crow, my hill, my lake', 'my world' or*

*"He owns the world – it's always his blackbird that's singing, his spider that has made a web in the corner"* (Murdoch).

A distinction should be made between the two types of possessive relations: central and peripheral (cf. Григальонене 1989, Heine 1997). In other words, there exist relations like the whole-part relation, kinship relations and others which are usually understood as possessive. Besides, there are cases of occasional usage, i.e. they get such an interpretation only occasionally – in such cases we can speak about the periphery of the possessive relationship.

Summing up, it can be stated that possession is the relation between two substances, things, however, not every relation between two substances but only the relation where X has some power, influence, control over Y, or is a part of X. The peculiarity of the concept of possession is that at the basis of it there is no grammatical category, but a semantic invariant, uniting all the elements of the field. The centre is associated with the most typical relations: the whole-part relations, the relations of ownership, some kinship relations. At the periphery there are other relations which can be interpreted as possessive only under certain definite circumstances (cf. Григальонене 1989).

Bearing in mind the concept of possession presented here, let us now discuss the arguments in favour of claiming that in the sentences under consideration can be regarded as possessive.

First, there is a possibility of treating the relation between the object and the action performed upon it as possessive, i.e. it is possible to establish a logical connection that unites the main cases of possession (possession proper) and peripheral ones. We can assume that a period of existence of a subject X belongs

to his sphere of possession i.e. this period is part of his life. This allows us to treat this particular moment as belonging to his sphere of possession. Therefore, it is possible to bridge the gap between the object and everything that is going on with him. Of course, such a potential opportunity should not necessarily exist in language and find its expression in language and not every relation can be treated as possessive. On the contrary, just because it is only a peripheral relation, there should be some other factors that enable us to interpret them as possessive.

Firstly, the construction is used only when the result of the action has an effect on X, s/he uses the result of the action, the effect might be both positive and negative.

Lith. *Jis man išmušė dantį. (donekaitis)*  
'He broke me-DAT a tooth-ACC'.

Lith. *Šitą skarą ji man numezgė. (donekaitis)*

'She knitted this scarf-ACC for me-DAT'.

Secondly, this construction is very often used when the action has a direct impact on the object, or its part.

Lith. *Jam nupjovė kojas (donekaitis)*

'He-DAT had his legs amputated'.

Lith. *Jis vienai moteriai lėkšte praskėlė galvą. (donekaitis)*

'He fractured a woman-DAT her skull'.

Thirdly, this construction is quite often used when the action has already been completed and the result is reported. Although this condition is not mandatory, the data studied in the *donekaitis* corpus shows a clear statistical preference for the verbs in this construction to be used in one of the past tenses:

Lith. ... *tvojo jai per veidą...* 'Hit she-DAT on the face...'

... *pakštelėjo jai į skruostą...* 'kissed she-DAT on the cheek...'

... *kažkas paplojo jam per petį ...* 'smb. patted he-DAT on the shoulder...'  
(*donekaitis*)

Thus, we can speak about the sentences with the dative and the accusative as possessive, although belonging to the periphery of the sphere of Possession.\*

\* The concept of possession cannot subsume all datives (all constructions with the dative case), although it does apply to a wide range of constructions with datives. A much more detailed study of the Lithuanian dative is needed to reveal the true nature of the dative case and shed more light on the problem of whether all Lithuanian sentences with an accusative and a dative object are instances of the same construction, or whether they should be treated as superficially similar instances of different underlying structures".

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#### ABBREVIATIONS

Germ.	- German	Dat.	- Dative
Lith.	- Lithuanian	Acc.	- Accusative
Russ.	- Russian	D L K G	- Dabartinės lietuvių kalbos žodynas. Vilnius, 1973
Nom.	- Nominative		

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#### DĖL METATERMINO „SUINTERESUOTAS ASMUO“

##### S a n t r a u k a

Straipsnyje kalbama apie semantikoje dažnai vartojamą terminą „suinteresuotas asmuo“. Lingvistinėje literatūroje jis sutinkamas įvairiais pavadinimais: Eng. "dative of interested person", "dative of affected person", "dative of lucky agent", "dative of misfortune", Russ. "zainteresovanoje lico", Lat. "Dativus Sympatheticus", etc. Ši sąvoka dažnai reiškia konstrukcija, susidedančia iš trijų elementų: veiksmožodžio, daiktavardžio arba įvardžio naudininko linksniu bei daiktavardžio arba įvardžio galininko linksniu. Straipsnyje teigiama, jog kai kuriais atvejais „suinteresuotumo“ sema gali vaidinti svarbų vaidmenį sakinio semantinėje struktūroje ir nulemti konstrukcijos pasirinkimą. Kita vertus, pats terminas nėra tikslus ir nepadaeda atskleisti tikrosios konstrukcijų, turinčių „suinteresuotumo“ sema, semantinės informacijos. Todėl straipsnyje pateikiama kitokia minėtų

konstrukcijų interpretacija, teigiama, jog jas galima paaiškinti remiantis posesyvumo koncepcija. Lingvistinėje literatūroje egzistuoja dvi pagrindinės posesyvumo interpretacijos: posesyvumas siauraja ir plačiaja prasme. Pirmuoju atveju posesyvumas suvokiamas tik kaip nuosavybės santykių išraiška, antruoju posesyvumas – tai plati nevie-narūšė sąvoka. Posesyvumas suprantamas kaip didžiulė erdvė, kurios centras susijęs su tipiniais posesyviniais santykiais (dalies ir visumos, giminytės, nuosavybės ir t. t.), o jos periferijoje yra tokios struktūros, kurios įgauna posesyvinę reikšmę tik tam tikrais atvejais. Pastarajai grupei priklauso ir straipsnyje nagrinėjama struktūra su naudininko linksniu. Pateikiami argumentai, įrodantys tokių konstrukcijų posesyvinį pobūdį. Duomenys kalbinei analizei paimti iš VDU lietuvių kalbos tekstyno.

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