Olga Kagan. *Semantics of genitive objects in Russian.* Dordrecht: Springer 2013. xviii+186 pp. [*Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 89.]

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1. Introduction

This monograph by Olga Kagan (Ben-Gurion University of the Negev) is simultaneously an excellent introduction to the thorny topic of Russian non-canonical genitive and a promising attempt to formally capture the interpretation of genitive-marked objects of intensional verbs and under negation (developing the proposal of Neidle 1988). The author proposes to unify them by showing that direct objects so marked lack existential commitment—their existence is neither entailed nor presupposed. On the basis of this generalization Kagan forges an informal connection between irrealis genitive and subjunctive mood, showing that the former is licensed in a subset of the environments where the latter is allowed. This hypothesis represents a clear innovation in the semantic approaches to non-canonical genitive case in Russian, and the arguments Kagan offers for it further advance our understanding of this complex phenomenon. Most importantly, the insights presented in this monograph give rise to a number of interesting questions for future research—in syntax as well as in semantics.

   Besides the clear exposition, among the many merits of the book is how seriously it takes the issue of intra-speaker variation, not only relying on a larger pool of native speakers than usual and reporting finer details of the judgments, but also providing discussions into the possible causes of this variation.

2. Formatting

The book is based on Olga Kagan's PhD dissertation (2008, Hebrew University of Jerusalem) but also includes later research. Unfortunately, the form that it is presented in makes it seem more like a collection of articles: each chapter is followed by a separate list of references and no general index or general bibliography is presented. These

omissions render the book more difficult to use for the linguist who does not intend to read it from cover to cover. I also note the sloppy copyediting, with a number of typographical and cross-reference errors, inconsistent glossing, and line breaks left behind. In the references, language names are often not capitalized, while names of conferences sometimes are and sometimes aren't.

3. Individual Chapters

Chapter 1 introduces and discusses three types of non-canonical (i.e., non-possessive) genitive case in Russian: partitive genitive (conferring the interpretation of "some quantity of" to the NP it marks), genitive of negation (assigned to a non-oblique NP argument of the verb under sentential negation), and intensional genitive (marking internal arguments of weak intensional verbs). Following Neidle 1988, Kagan argues that the latter two genitives constitute different instances of a single phenomenon: the irrealis genitive. The main arguments in favor of such a unification come from the semantic properties of NPs that are marked genitive in these configurations and from their cross-linguistic patterning.

Thus both in the scope of negation and with intensional verbs, genitive is more likely to be assigned to NPs that are abstract (rather than concrete), plural or mass (rather than singular count), indefinite (rather than definite), common (rather than proper), and non-specific (taking narrow scope). Irrealis genitive differs in this respect from partitive genitive.

A further distinction between the two types of non-canonical genitive is drawn on the basis of their cross-linguistic distribution. As Kagan shows, across Balto-Slavic languages genitive of negation and intensional genitive tend to occur together: they are both obligatory in Old Church Slavonic and Lithuanian; both available in Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Latvian; and both absent in Serbo-Croatian and Czech. Exceptions to this cross-linguistic generalization (Polish and Slovenian) are discussed, as is the fact that partitive genitive does not pattern with irrealis genitive. The semantic properties of partitive genitive NPs, their incompatibility with imperfective verbs, and the availability of the alternative "second genitive" case-marking also distinguish them from irrealis genitive NPs.

Chapter 2 provides summaries of previous accounts of non-canonical genitive case (mostly genitive of negation) in syntax and in semantics. Besides offering a useful snapshot of the prior literature on non-canonical genitive, this chapter also showcases the problems to be solved, showing where and how each of the prior approaches fails. Since for most syntax-based approaches, the main issue is the failure to explain the semantic properties of genitive-marked NPs, the natural question arises whether they can be reformulated in view of the generalizations proposed in this monograph. The fact that most of these approaches do not view genitive of negation and intensional genitive as a single phenomenon might explain why such a reformulation is not attempted and the author tentatively adopts a different syntactic approach (Pesetsky 2012), which is discussed in chapter 8.

Chapter 3 argues that Farkas's (2003) analysis of subjunctive mood provides the tools necessary to account for the distribution of irrealis genitive. While Farkas links subjunctive to the absence of commitment to either truth or falsity of the proposition expressed by the clause it marks, Kagan suggests that the irrealis genitive on an NP is associated with the absence of existential commitment of its denotatum.

Most importantly in the context of this book, Farkas separates intensional predicates into two sets according to whether the embedded proposition is asserted (or presupposed) to be true within the (world) view of the attitude holder (the set of possible worlds compatible with her beliefs for *believe*-type predicates) and the set of possible worlds compatible with her fictive perception for *dream*-type predicates. Epistemic (e.g., 'know') and fictional (e.g., 'imagine') predicates, which take indicative clauses as complements, assert/presuppose the truth of this denotatum, whereas desideratives (e.g., 'wish') and directives (e.g., 'order') introduce a ranking of possible worlds as a function of whether the denotatum of their clausal complement is true. Since the latter (a.k.a. weak intensional predicates) do not commit the attitude holder to either the truth or the falsity of their complement, subjunctive mood is licensed.

Kagan supplements this summary by a discussion of other environments where subjunctive is licensed, of which the most relevant one is negation.

In chapter 4 Kagan takes up a semantic analysis of genitive-marked objects, linking genitive case to lack of existential commit-

ment, which can be absolute (evaluated in w_0) or relative (evaluated in the worldview of the attitude holder):

A nominal phrase (NP) that appears in a sentence with propositional content p carries (relative) existential commitment iff:

p entails or presupposes $\forall w\ [w \in W^{NP} \rightarrow \exists x\ P(x)(w)]$, where

P is the property contributed by the descriptive content of the NP, and

W^{NP} is a set of possible worlds that forms the modal base relative to which the nominal is interpreted.

For non-intensional contexts $W^{NP} = \{w_0\}$

Crucial here is the assumption (p. 67) that weak intensional verbs introduce an accessibility relation to the set of worlds representing the epistemic state of some individual (typically, the subject), i.e., the modal base. Thus, for instance, the modal base of 'want' is assumed to be the same as that of 'believe': the set of possible worlds compatible with the beliefs of the attitude holder. As a result, a genitive-marked direct object in examples like (1) is predicted to lack existential commitment, which is in fact the case. Not only does (1) not entail or presuppose that 'peace' exists in the actual world w_0, 'peace' is also neither entailed nor presupposed to obtain in possible worlds that conform to Masha's beliefs.

(1) Maša   xočet   mira.
    Masha   wants   peace$_{GEN}$

    'Masha wants peace.'   (Kagan's ex. (14), p. 86)

Kagan further hypothesizes that a genitive-marked object has the semantic type of a property ($\langle e, t \rangle$ or $\langle s, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$) and that a transitive verb (semantic type $\langle e, \langle e, t \rangle \rangle$) can undergo a type shift that enables it to combine with a property rather than with an entity. Regrettably, the semantics of this type shift is not provided, which somewhat detracts from the predictive power of the approach. As a further example of the book's potential, it would be interesting to see how various proposals dealing with transitive intensional verbs (Zimmermann 1993, den Dikken, Larson, and Ludlow 1996, Moltmann 2008, among others) fare in this context.

Chapter 5 further develops the analysis suggested in the previous chapter, not only providing an extremely useful discussion of individual intensional verbs with genitive-marked objects, but also detailing the differences in the interpretation of genitive and accusative direct objects for most of them. Thus, for instance, for the verb *seek* in example (2), the direct object in the accusative is assumed to exist (a pre-existing shelter), while with the genitive case Dima wants to use the house for shelter.

(2) Dima iščet   ubežišče/ ubežišča   v   ètom dome.
    Dima seeks   shelter$_{ACC}$/ shelter$_{GEN}$ in this   house

'Dima is seeking the shelter/shelter in this house.'

(Kagan's ex. (17), p. 102)

More generally, genitive case-marking is shown to correspond to the attitude holder wishing, waiting, demanding, etc., for the property denoted by the object NP to be instantiated, while accusative case-marking with such verbs is more likely to entail a change in location for an object already assumed (by the attitude holder) to exist. As a result, genitive case-marking is correctly predicted to mostly appear on abstract nouns; apparent counterexamples headed by concrete nouns are convincingly argued to result from coercion (section 5.3.3.1).

Chapter 6 turns to genitive case-assignment under sentential negation. It demonstrates a lack of existential commitment with genitive-marked direct objects and also argues that accusative-marked direct objects, which are compatible with both existential commitment and its absence, constitute the elsewhere case. Kagan also shows that the ease with which a direct object can appear in the genitive is strongly correlated with the lexical semantics of the predicate: creation verbs, for instance, have intensional objects that are neither entailed nor presupposed to exist under negation and, as a result, genitive of negation is readily available. An insightful discussion of the interpretational differences between genitive and accusative in a number of environments, as well as of the interpretation of genitive-marking on proper names, makes this chapter an excellent summary of the major semantic issues pertaining to the genitive of negation.

Supporting the second major thesis of the book, this chapter also shows that the availability of genitive-marked objects correlates with the availability of subjunctive mood: subjunctive relative clauses are

only possible with NPs that lack existential commitment (though not all such NPs are marked with genitive, once again demonstrating that subjunctive is licensed in a wider range of environments than genitive).

Chapter 7 addresses the interaction of the genitive/accusative alternation with verbal aspect and plurality. The relative reluctance of genitive-marked objects to combine with perfective verbs is shown to be due to the fact that in a negative environment the use of perfective indicates that the event is expected to have occurred, has in fact started, but was not completed. As participants in a specific event are likely to be presupposed to exist (i.e., are less likely to lack existential commitment), genitive becomes less likely. Once this is controlled for, genitive objects are shown to be available with negative perfective verbs.

The general infelicity of genitive of negation when the direct object is singular and count is also explored. Kagan proposes to explain it in terms of the semantically default nature of the plural: the use of a singular count noun gives rise to a strong likelihood that the speaker had a specific object in mind. Unfortunately, homogenous (plural or mass) direct objects can also appear in the partitive genitive, which interferes with the interpretation of some examples in this chapter.

Chapter 8 examines the implications that the proposed analysis has for the broader issue of cross-linguistic case alternations. It is demonstrated that the genitive/accusative alternation in Russian fits into a more general category of Differential Object Marking: less "referential" or "individuated" objects are also less likely to bear accusative case. Kagan proposes to rely on the recent proposal by Pesetsky (2012), where genitive is the default case that surfaces on a noun phrase in the absence of a determiner. Kagan argues that this proposal can account not only for irrealis genitive, but also for genitive complements of Russian intensive reflexive verbs (see below), while acknowledging that additional stipulations are necessary in order to deal with genitive-marked proper names.

This chapter also introduces genitive complements of Russian intensive reflexive verbs, i.e., verbs that contain the accumulative prefix *na-* and the intransitivizing/reflexive marker *-sja*, drawing on the prior work by Kagan and Pereltsvaig 2011a, 2011b. The author convincingly argues that such genitive objects should be distinguished from irrealis genitive on the basis of both their syntax and their semantics, even though they are also property-denoting.

4. Evaluation

The book follows the rich tradition of associating genitive-marked objects under negation with indefinite, nonspecific interpretation, claiming that the same generalization can also account for genitive case-marking on objects of intensional verbs. The analysis is presented in a clear, concise manner, much new data is provided, and the intuitions underlying the interpretation of even the most complex cases are easy to follow (at least, for the Russian speaker). Given how complicated non-canonical genitive is, the effort invested into obtaining the judgments and the care taken to provide the relevant contexts cannot be praised highly enough. A minor methodological issue that I would like to raise is the unfortunate selection of direct objects in a number of cases. The use of plural or mass-denoting NPs should be avoided to ensure that a grammatical genitive object is not licensed by a partitive interpretation. Also, the syncretism of genitive and accusative forms for plural and second-declension animate nouns necessitates a further restriction on the choice of test cases. I note, however, that I have no record of any examples in the book where adjusting the choice of the direct object to prevent confusion led me to disagree with the reported judgments.

One major innovation of the proposal is the hypothesis that irrealis genitive and subjunctive mood are licensed in a similar manner, reflecting the speaker's commitment, with the former signaling a lack of commitment to existence and the latter indicating lack of commitment to truth. While the idea is highly intriguing, the formal accounts proposed for the two phenomena (in terms of dynamic semantics and constraint ranking for the subjunctive and in the traditional truth-conditional semantics for the genitive) do not make their association transparent. On the empirical side, the fact that even in Russian itself, subjunctive is licensed in a wider range of environments than irrealis genitive poses a clear challenge for the unification view, which renders a formal unification a *sine qua non* for future research.

The ambitious attempt at reducing subjunctive and irrealis genitive to the same factors would have been impossible without reanalyzing genitive of negation and intensional genitive as a single phenomenon. Some problems for this unification arise from the fact that the treatment of existential commitment under negation as detailed in chapter 6 does not seem to properly extend to genitive under intensional

verbs. As noted in chapter 6, with perception predicates and in existential sentences genitive case can appear on definite NPs, including proper names, as in example (3):

(3) Ja ne   videl tam   Erielly.
    I   NEG   saw   there Eriella$_{GEN}$

'I didn't see Eriella there.' (K. Kurtz, *The Chronicles of the Deryni*)
(Kagan's ex. (18a), p. 130)

To explain this effect, Kagan invokes the hypothesis that existence is always relativized to a location (Borschev and Partee 1998, 2002, Partee and Borschev 2002, Borschev et al. 2008). If the (non-)existence of the denotatum of a definite object is evaluated only for the location of the speaker or of the attitude holder, genitive case-marking can still be seen as forcing lack of existential commitment.

The question that is unfortunately not investigated is why relativization to a location does not enable the licensing of definite genitive objects under intensional verbs. As noted by Kagan (p. 99), desiderative and directive verbs only appear with genitive-marked objects when the embedded content requires the instantiation of an (abstract) property, as in (1). If the wish is for the denotatum of the direct object (especially when it denotes a concrete entity) to come to share location with the attitude holder, only accusative case-marking is possible:

(4) a. Dima ždet   Lenu/   *Leny.
       Dima   waits Lena$_{ACC}$/ Lena$_{GEN}$

    'Dima is waiting for Lena.'

    b. Kollekcioner iščet/ prosit starinnye   monety/
       collector   seeks/ asks   ancient$_{ACC.PL}$ coins$_{ACC}$/

       *starinnyx   monet.
        ancient$_{GEN.PL}$ coins$_{GEN}$

    'The/a collector seeks/asks for ancient coins.'
(Kagan's ex. (11a) and (11d), p. 99)

The question arises why existential commitment can be evaluated relative to a location with negated perception predicates and existential sentences, but not with intensional predicates or, more generally, with

other transitive verbs. An answer to this question is needed all the more because it should also be able to account for the fact that, barring coercion, genitive objects of intensional verbs all denote abstract entities, thus forming a subset of possible denotations for genitive objects under negation. While not necessarily evidence against the unification of the two phenomena, this definitely requires an explanation if this approach is to be pursued.

The imperfect correlation between the cross-linguistic availability of intensional genitive and that of genitive of negation, discussed in chapter 1, also stands out as an issue worthy of more research. Kagan presents two cases of such imperfect correlation in Balto-Slavic languages: Polish (where intensional genitive can be replaced with accusative only with two verbs, while genitive of negation is only optional with subjects) and Slovenian (where intensional genitive is optional whereas genitive of negation is obligatory). Given the strong probability that in Balto-Slavic the correlation between the two instances of genitive is historically motivated, it would be interesting to examine some unrelated languages for the existence of the same pattern. One potential candidate is Finnish, which has semantic partitive, intensional partitive, and partitive of negation, in addition to aspectually conditioned partitive (see Kiparsky 2001). Another is French, which uses the preposition *de* to express partitivity and also for indefinite non-specific objects under negation, but seems to have no equivalent of intensional genitive.

Another potential issue, albeit a minor one, arises from the particular formal implementation of existential commitment, as it incorrectly predicts the ungrammaticality of genitive-marked direct objects in examples like (5):

(5) Nora   ne   videla devuški.
    Nora   NEG   saw   girl$_{GEN}$

   'Nora didn't see a girl.'

If Nora herself is a girl, the direct object in (5) is incorrectly predicted to not lack existential commitment, since there exists an individual (*Nora*) that has the property (*girl*) that the direct object denotes.

Even more complicated are genitive-marked NPs denoting a subset of a bigger set (partitive NPs), as in the following attested example:

(6) Ja ne   čitala **odnoj iz   ljubimyx knižek**
    I NEG read*PAST* one*GEN* out.of [favorite   books]*GEN*

detstva   Andreasa.
childhood*GEN* Andreas*GEN*

'[It turns out] I have not read one of Andreas's favorite
childhood books.'   (http://plasmo-tanya.livejournal.com/4434.html)

Genitive-marked partitives can also appear as a complement of an intensional verb:

(7) Ja ot   ispolnitelej ždal   **odnoj iz   trex veščej**:…
    I from performers   expected one*GEN* out.of [three things]*GEN*

'I expected one of three things from the performers:…'
(pushnoy-ru.livejournal.com/32666.html)

That the effect is not limited to the cardinal 'one' is shown by the attested example (8), from http://mannowar.livejournal.com/1963.html, the author of which reports having recently looked at the list of educational institutions of Yakutsk on the network *Odnoklassniki* ('Classmates') with the following result:

(8) Ne   našel **dvux iz   trex moix škol**.
    NEG found two*GEN* out.of [three my   schools]*GEN*

'I have failed to find two out of my three schools.'

While in (8) genitive case can be accounted for by relativizing the verification of existential commitment to the location of the search, example (6) does not seem to allow such a way out. My personal intuition suggests that the use of genitive in (6) has to do with the fact that the speaker did not know the contents of the book in question (not having read it; the fact that the speaker is aware of its identity is shown by the fact that it is named in the later text), but the formal implementation of this hypothesis and its verification seem to me nontrivial.

As a final data point, a corpus analysis by Graudina, Ickovič, and Katlinskaja (1976: 35) claims that "functional" direct objects, such as the quantifier *vse* 'all', the demonstrative *èto* 'this', the wh-word *čto* 'what', etc., tend to be marked genitive under negation. Given that

some of these do not lack existential commitment, the matter requires additional investigation.

All further research into the topic would be incomplete without a deeper investigation into the syntax of irrealis genitive. As noted by Kagan, a simple lack of existential commitment is not enough to license genitive marking on the direct object:

(9) *Lena   ne   xotela   čitat'   knig.
      Lena   NEG   wanted   read$_{INF}$ books$_{GEN}$

     intended: 'Lena didn't want to read books.'

                                        (Kagan's ex. (34c), p. 115)

While postulating the existence of syntactic constraints on the assignment of irrealis genitive, Kagan does not delve into the matter any further. For a syntactician however, the mechanism of imposing semantic constraints on case-assignment is an issue of importance. Given that existential commitment or lack thereof is not straightforwardly a property of an NP, whereas the semantic type $\langle e, t \rangle$ or the absence of higher NP layers does not automatically entail genitive marking, more research is clearly needed.

The book's potential for further investigation at the syntax-semantics interface can also be seen in the brief discussion of verbs like 're-read', which normally trigger existential presupposition (section 6.2.1.2): when denoting a stereotypical activity, such verbs allow genitive objects. While the author does not consider the possibility of extending to such verbs the treatment in terms of semantic incorporation, invoked for genitive complements of intensive reflexives (chapter 8), I find this a possible option.

To summarize, I have found this monograph a highly stimulating read, where clear exposition highlights the innovative nature of the main proposal. While a number of issues remain open, the challenges that they pose also represent potential directions of development.

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