

Weather/season expressions, existential commitment, and the genitive of negation

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents data from Russian exhibiting seemingly variable unaccusative and unergative behavior. Russian motion-verb-weather/season expressions pass several accepted diagnostics for unaccusativity yet fail the genitive of negation—the diagnostic most widely agreed to show unaccusativity in Russian. I argue this failure results from a presupposition of existential commitment, which can be canceled. Crucial to this analysis is the assumption that Neg^o is always a secondary—not obligatory—licenser and arguments communicating existential commitment exist within a small clause structure. This analysis accounts for seemingly exceptional unergative clauses and has implications for what the genitive of negation reveals about a predicate structure.

KEYWORDS

intransitive syntax · existential unaccusativity · motion verbs · weather terms · Russian

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper examines unexpected behavior found in a set of Russian unaccusative intransitive expressions. I explore the failure of the genitive of negation (GenNeg) with certain weather/season predicates (WSE) and consider what this failure reveals about unaccusativity/ unergativity, genitive of negation, and the existential commitment of arguments in intransitive clauses.

The data of interest are a small set of intransitive weather/season expressions which communicate precipitation events (specifically for *dožd'* 'rain,' *snëg* 'snow,' and *grad* 'hail') and the arrival of seasons, as in (1)–(2). These expressions are formed with a noun (precipitation type or season) and a verb of motion. While WSE can contain indeterminate (multi-directional), determinate (uni-directional), perfective, and imperfective verbs of motion, for the sake of simplicity—and with a goal of maximum clarity to the reader—the data examined in this paper will focus on the determinate, imperfective verb *idt'i* "to go" (see (1)) and a derived, perfective version of the same root *pr'ijt'i* "to arrive" (see (2)).

- (1) Še-l dožd'.
 go-3.SG.PAST rain.M.SG.NOM
 'It was raining.'
- (2) Pr'iš-lá v'esn-á.
 arrive-PAST.F.SG spring-F.SG.NOM
 'Spring arrived.'

Russian includes other weather/season expressions, which use the copula *byt'* or a weather-specific verb, such as *dut'* 'to blow' for wind, but the subset of expressions with motion verbs behave uniquely. Further mention of weather/season expressions (WSE) in this paper will specifically reference this motion-verb subset.

As I demonstrate in the subsequent section, WSE pass several diagnostics for unaccusativity in Russian (as established in Babby, 1980; Pesetsky, 1982; Babyonyshev, 1996; Harves, 2002) yet are ungrammatical with perhaps the most widely studied diagnostic of unaccusativity – the genitive of negation (GenNeg). Whereas arguments of unaccusative clauses typically allow an alternation

between nominative and genitive under negation, WSE only allow nominative arguments under negation and are ungrammatical with GenNeg, as in (3)–(6).

- (3) *N'e š-l-o dožd'-á.
NEG go-PAST-3.N.SG rain-M.SG.GEN
'There was no rain.'
- (4) N'e še-l dožd'.
NEG go-PAST.3M.SG rain.M.SG.NOM
'It did not rain.'
- (5) *N'e pr'iš-l-ó v'esn-y.
NEG arrive-PAST-3.N.SG spring-F.SG.GEN
'No spring arrived.'
- (6) N'e pr'iš-l-á v'esn-á.
NEG arrive-PAST-3F.SG spring-F.SG.GEN
'Spring did not arrive.'

Cross-linguistically, weather expressions are observed to exhibit special linguistic properties and often (seemingly) mixed unergative/unaccusative behavior. This has led to significant discussion on whether such expressions are inherently unergative or unaccusative, particularly in regard to Romance languages (see Belletti & Rizzi, 1981; Langacker, 1991; Benincà & Cinque, 1992; Bleotu, 2012, 2013; Fábregas, 2013, 2014; Levin & Krejci, 2019, among others). However, I argue the failure of GenNeg with Russian WSE is not an example of variable unergative behavior. Instead, the failure of GenNeg stems from a default presupposition of existential commitment (EC) on the part of the NP.

Numerous linguists have noted genitive NPs lack EC, while accusative objects optionally communicate EC (Chvany, 1975; Babby, 1980; Borschev & Partee, 2002; Harves, 2002, 2013; Partee & Borschev, 2004; Kagan, 2007, 2010, 2013; Borschev et al., 2007). Borschev & Partee (2002) explain existentiality involves an entity (THING) relative to a location (LOC), though the LOC need not be explicit in Russian. I propose WSE nominals communicate a default interpretation of EC when LOC is implicit. However, this presupposition can be canceled when an explicit locative phrase constrains the weather/season event to a specified perceptual space, as in (7) and (8).¹

- (7) Zd'es' n'ikogdá n'e š-l-o dožd'-éj.
here never NEG go-PAST-3.N.SG rain-M.PL.GEN
'It never rains here.'
- (8) Zaglóx-l'-i raskát-y gróm-a v gor-áx gd'e n'e
die out-PAST-PL peal-M.PL.NOM thunder-M.SG.GEN in mountain-M.PL.LOC where NEG
proš-l-ó dožd'-á.
pass-PAST-N.SG rain-N.SG.GEN
'The peals of thunder died out in the mountains, where no rain passed.'

I adopt Irwin's (2012; 2018) small clause predicate for existence unaccusatives, combining this with Harves' (2002; 2013) analysis of GenNeg. I follow Harves in assuming Neg⁰ is the case assigner for GenNeg but will uniquely argue Neg⁰ is a secondary licenser which does not have to value case on an NP. The NPs in WSE have a default interpretation of [+EC], and, therefore, do not have an existential closure in the syntax. However, when an overt LOC participates in the derivation, the presupposition of the NP being [+EC] can be cancelled, allowing GenNeg within a limited perspectival scope.

Further, I demonstrate how this analysis can explain seemingly exceptional unergative clauses which appear to participate in GenNeg. Counter to past analyses, I do not interpret these exceptional predicates as exhibiting varying unaccusative/unergative behavior (Levin & Rappaport, 1989;

¹My thanks to the anonymous reviewer who asked how this analysis can account for the grammaticality of these two sentences.

Pesetsky, 1982; Harves, 2002). Additionally, I do not see these predicates as semantically bleached (Partee & Borschev, 2004; Harves, 2013) because they are used with existentiality. Instead, I offer a new explanation: an overt LOC can cancel the presupposition of an unergative subject's existence. In derivations where the unergative argument is [-EC], T^o is a secondary—not obligatory—licenser. As such, Neg^o, which is positionally nearer the external argument, assigns GenNeg to the argument within its c-command domain.

In section 2, I will use well-known diagnostics to prove WSE are unaccusative, not unergative. In section 3, I explore the failure of GenNeg with WSE and the relationship between GenNeg, EC, and overt locative phrases. I then provide a structural analysis of these data in section 4, building on work by Harves (2002) and Irwin (2012, 2018), before concluding in 5.

2 WSE ARE UNACCUSATIVE

Variation within intransitive syntax was first characterized by Perlmutter's (1978) Unaccusative Hypothesis which divided intransitive clauses into unergative and unaccusative, depending on the structural position of the sole argument. Translating Perlmutter's original definition from the framework of Relational Grammar into a more contemporary framework, an unaccusative clause is defined by having an internal argument, while the argument is external in an unergative clause. Thus, the nominal argument of an unaccusative structure shares properties with the direct object of a transitive verb, as both are internal arguments of verb phrase. The argument of an unergative structure, on the other hand, will share properties with the subject of a transitive clause instead of the object.

Arguments of both unergative and unaccusative clauses take on a subject role, exhibiting nominative case and agreeing with the subject in affirmative clauses. Babyonyshev (1996) explains SV is the discourse-neutral structure of unergative clauses, while unaccusative clauses are discourse-neutral with a VS structure. However, the VS order appears with unergative structures in narrative interpretations, when there is focus intonation on the nominal, or with locative inversion (Babyonyshev 1996; Bailyn 2012). Similarly, unaccusative clauses can use an SV structure to communicate nuance. As a result, Russian affirmative unergative and unaccusative clauses are often indistinguishable in surface form, despite the underlying variation in verb phrase structure. As such, diagnostics are necessary to distinguish Russian unaccusative from unergative clauses.

Harves (2002), building on work by Pesetsky (1982); Babby (1980), and Babyonyshev (1996), lays out five diagnostics to distinguish unaccusative from unergative intransitive predicates in Russian. Unaccusative clauses should “pass” these diagnostics—i.e., result in grammatical, discourse-neutral clauses when a diagnostic is applied—while unergative clauses will fail. For the sake of brevity, I will focus on three diagnostics with WSE – first conjunct agreement (FCA), discourse-neutral locative inversion, and GenNeg.

Unaccusative clauses allow optional FCA, while unergative clauses required the verb to agree with the full conjunct NP. Thus, the unaccusative clause (9) is grammatical when agreeing with the feminine singular first conjunct or the whole conjoined NP. The unergative clause (10) is ungrammatical with anything but agreement with the whole NP.²

- (9) Na stol'-é **stojála/stojál'i** **p'ep'él'n'itsa** **i** **pustój**
 on table-M.SG.LOC stood.F.SG/stood.PL ashtray.F.SG.NOM and empty.M.SG.NOM
stakán.
 glass.M.SG.NOM
 ‘On the table stood an ashtray and an empty glass.’
 (modified from Babyonyshev, 1996, 81–82)
- (10) Na v'etčer'-é ***igrál/igrál'i** **Ván'a** **i** **Kól'a.**
 at party-F.SG.LOC *play.M.SG/play.PL Vanja.M.SG.NOM and Kolja.M.SG.NOM
 ‘At the party, Vanya and Kolya played.’ (modified from Babyonyshev, 1996, 81–82)

²Unergative clauses are not discourse-neutral when a locative phrase is inverted to topic position. Thus, a sentence like (10) may sound unnatural to a native speaker, unless in response to a question like “Who played at the party?” See Babyonyshev (1996) for full discussion of these facts.

WSE are grammatical with first conjunct agreement, as seen in (11) and (12).

- (11) Na úl'its-e užé t'ěmnó i neujútno šum'-ít v'ěter
 on street-F.SG.LOC already dark and bleak blow-3.SG.PRES wind.M.SG.NOM
id'-ét dožd' i sn'eg.
 go-3.SG.PRES rain.M.SG.NOM and snow.M.SG.NOM
 'Outside it was already dark and bleak, the wind blew, and it rained and snowed.'
 (from the "Science and Life," 2006)
- (12) **Pr'iš-lá z'im-á i v'esn-á** a potóm l'et-o.
 arrive-PAST.3.F.SG winter-F.SG.NOM and spring-F.SG.NOM and then summer-N.SG.NOM
 'Winter and spring arrived and then summer.' (from an internet forum, 2011)

The next diagnostic is locative inversion. In an unaccusative clause, when a locative phrase is fronted, the sentence will be discourse-neutral with a fronted PP, (13). However, this fronting creates a marked (focused) structure in an unergative clause both with a VS, (14), and SV, (15), order.

- (13) **V sad-ú** ros-l'í tr'i róz-y.
 in garden-M.SG.LOC grow-PAST.PL three rose-F.SG.NOM
 'In the garden grew three roses.' (Harves, 2002, 37)
- (14) **#V kvart'ír'-e** sv'ist'-ít Ván'-a.
 in apartment-F.SG.LOC whistle-3.SG.PRES Vanya-M.SG.NOM
 'In the apartment, Vanya is whistling in the apartment.' (Harves, 2002, 37)
- (15) **#Na b'er'eg-ú** r'ek-í stár'ik-i tantsú-jut.
 on bank-M.SG.LOC river-F.SG.GEN old men-PL.NOM dance-PRES.PL
 'On the riverbank, some old men are dancing.' (Bailyn, 2012, 259)

Locative inversion in WSE results in discourse-neutral clauses. This can be seen both with precipitation terms (16) and with seasons (18). Further, the discourse-neutral order for unergative clauses with locative phrases—S-V-PP—does not result in discourse-neutral sentences with WSE, as in (17)–(19).

- (16) **V Moskv'-é** id'-ét dožd'/sn'eg/grad.
 in Moscow-F.SG.LOC go-3.SG.PRES rain/snow/hail.M.SG.NOM
 'In Moscow, it is raining.'
- (17) **#Dožd'/sn'eg/grad** id'-ét **v Moskv'-é.**
 rain/snow/hail.M.SG.NOM go-3.SG.PRES in Moscow-F.SG.LOC
 'It's raining in Moscow.'
- (18) **V Moskv-ú** pr'iš-lá z'im-á.
 to Moscow-F.SG.ACC arrive-PAST.F.SG winter-F.SG.NOM
 'In Moscow, winter has arrived/Winter has come to Moscow.'
- (19) **#Z'im-á** pr'iš-lá **v Moskv-ú.**
 winter-F.SG.NOM arrive-PAST.F.SG to Moscow-F.SG.ACC
 'In Moscow, winter has arrived/Winter has come to Moscow.'

These diagnostics for unaccusativity are widely accepted and are not known to have exceptions. As WSE pass these diagnostics, I conclude they are unaccusative, not unergative.

3 FAILURE OF GENNEG

Another grammatical tool used to diagnose unaccusative clauses is GenNeg. According to this diagnostic, internal arguments—unaccusative subjects (20) and transitive objects (21)—under negation should be able to take genitive case. As unergative subjects are external arguments, they

should be ungrammatical with GenNeg (22). Note, when the argument under negation is also the grammatical subject, we also expect a lack of subject-verb agreement where the verb takes default 3.n.sg inflection, as in (20)–(22).

- (20) Ně pr'íš-l-ó **podárk-a**.
NEG arrive-PAST-NSG gift-M.SG.GEN
'No gift arrived.'
- (21) Ánna ně kup'í-l-a **kn'ig**.
Anna.F.SG.NOM NEG buy-PAST-F.SG book.FPL.GEN
'Anna did not buy (any) books.' (modified from Harves, 2002, 34)
- (22) *N'i **odn-ój** **děvušk-i** ně pě-l-o.
not sing-F.SG.GEN girl-F.SG.GEN NEG sing-PAST-NSG (modified from Harves, 2002, 34)

We expect WSE to behave like other unaccusative clauses and allow their subjects to take GenNeg. Instead, WSE present a puzzle and are ungrammatical with GenNeg, as in (23) and (25), requiring their subjects to maintain nominative case when under negation, as in (24) and (26). Naturally, this leads us to ask why GenNeg fails with WSE.

- (23) *Ně š-l-o dožd'-á.
NEG go-PAST-3.N.SG rain-M.SG.GEN
'There was no rain.'
- (24) Ně še-l dožd'.
NEG go-PAST.3M.SG rain.M.SG.NOM
'It did not rain.'
- (25) *Ně pr'íš-l-ó věsn-y.
NEG arrive-PAST-3.N.SG spring-F.SG.GEN
'No spring arrived.'
- (26) Ně pr'íš-l-á věsn-á.
NEG arrive-PAST-3F.SG spring-F.SG.GEN
'Spring did not arrive.'

Certain semantic factors have been found to make an NP more resistant to GenNeg: definiteness, specificity/scope, animacy, agentivity, referentiality, and concreteness (Harves, 2002; Kagan, 2007, among others). Further, it has been repeatedly noted that genitive NPs have a relation to existentiality, specifically that they lack EC (Babby, 1980; Borschev & Partee, 2002; Partee & Borschev, 2004; Kagan, 2007, 2010, 2013; Partee et al., 2011, among others).³ Compare the translation of the NPs in (27) and (28). In (27), there is no presupposition that the genitive NP exists. However, in (28), the existence of the NP is not only presupposed but interpreted as referencing a specific entity—'the answer' not 'an answer.'

- (27) Ně pr'íš-l-ó **otv'ět-a**.
NEG arrive-PAST-3.N.SG answer-M.SG.GEN
'No answer came.' (modified from Babby, 1980, 71)
- (28) Ně pr'íš-él **otv'ět**.
NEG arrive-PAST.3M.SG answer.M.SG.NOM
'The answer did not come.'

Note, the verb in (27) is the same verb of motion found in our WSE examples. The only variation between (25) and (27) is the NP. Thus, while some have argued a single verb can be used in both unaccusative and unergative contexts (Levin & Rappaport, 1989; Pesetsky, 1982; Harves, 2002) or is semantically-bleached in exceptional contexts (Partee & Borschev, 2004; Harves, 2013), as the verb

³Kagan (2007, 2010, 2013) groups GenNeg and intensional genitive into "Irrealis Genitive," which differs from partitive genitive. NPs with irrealis genitive are those that lack EC.

in (25) and (27) communicates the same semantic meaning in both sentences, I look for a different explanation for the ungrammaticality of GenNeg in WSE.

I posit the semantic factors previously observed to cause an NP to resist GenNeg provide that resistance *exactly* because entities with those semantic factors are more likely to reference an entity in the real world or the set of possible worlds (see Kagan 2007 for a discussion of actual and relative EC with respect to Russian non-canonical genitive). Put differently, those semantic factors are intertwined with EC in Russian.

First, a brief definition of existentiality. Borschev & Partee (2002) and Partee & Borschev (2004) (further B&P/P&B) explain existence may be structured from the perspective of an entity (THING) or a (LOC)ation, naming this relationship the “perspective structure.” In a negated clause, the perspectival structure presupposes the existence of either the THING or the LOC. In a negated declarative, existence of the THING is presupposed, but in a negated existential clause, the LOC is presupposed to exist. B&P/P&B state the LOC in Russian is often implicit.⁴ In (27) and (28), the LOC is implicit and likely conveyed through discourse or references the position of the speaker.

Looking back to our ungrammatical WSE clauses (23) and (25), we find LOC is implicit. There appears to be something about WSE that presupposes EC on the part of the NP. A preliminary proposal for why this occurs is that WSE are interpreted as change-of-state, which has been shown to resist GenNeg (Partee et al., 2011; Harves, 2013; Kagan, 2013).

Regardless of the cause, WSE presuppose EC of the weather/season entity. This means, under negation, the default interpretation is declarative, not existential. However, when LOC is overt, as in (29) and (30), suddenly we find the presupposition cancelable. The LOC is entailed to exist, so the THING can be interpreted as lacking EC, and the NP is grammatical with GenNeg. An overt LOC limits the perspective scope of existence—for example, claiming rain is not happening in a particular location versus the phenomenon of rain not occurring at all.

(29) **Zd'es'** n'ikogdá ne š-l-o dožd'-ěj.
here never NEG GO-PAST-3.N.SG rain-MPL.GEN
'It never rains here.'

(30) **Zagl'ox-l'-i** raskát-y gróm-a v **gor-áx** **gd'e** n'e
die out-PAST-PL peal-NOM.PL thunder-M.SG.GEN in mountain-MPL.LOC where NEG
pros-l-ó dožd'-á.
pass-PAST-NSG rain-M.SG.GEN
'The peals of thunder died out in the mountains, where the rain had not passed.'

Thus, I claim certain NPs—such as those in WSE—have a default interpretation as [+EC], but that presupposition can be cancelled when an overt LOC is present. This analysis has the added benefit of also offering an explanation for previously studied examples where seemingly unergative predicates appear to take genitive on their external arguments, as in (31)–(33).

(31) V **bassén'-e** n'ikak-ógo r'eb'enk-a n'e plava-jét.
in pool-F.SG.LOC no one-M.SG.GEN child-M.SG.GEN NEG swim/float-PRES.NSG
'No child is swimming/floating in the pool.' (Pesetsky, 1982, 45)

(32) **Méždu** br'évn-am'i n'e skryvá-l-o-s' tarakán-ov.
between beam-NPL.INST NEG hide-PAST-NSG-REFL cockroach-MPL.GEN
'There were no cockroaches hiding among the beams.' (Babby, 2001, 50–51)

(33) **Užé** byl'i n'e tól'ko kvart'iry, no dáže tsélyje domá...
'There were not only flats but entire buildings...'

v **kotór-yx** n'e ži-l-ó n'i odn-ógo tčelov'ek-a.
in which-PL.GEN NEG live-PAST-3.N.SG NEG one-M.SG.GEN person-M.SG.GEN

'...in which there wasn't a single person living.' (Harves, 2013, 659)

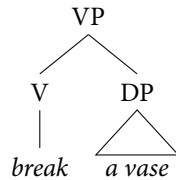
⁴LOC may be optionally overt in some languages, like Russian and English, while obligatorily overt others. See McCloskey (2014) for obligatory overt LOC in Irish existential small clauses.

Pesetsky (1982) and Harves (2002, 2013) have previously argued *plavat* in (31) must be interpreted as ‘float’ and not ‘swim’ when the NP is genitive—thereby forcing an unaccusative structure. However, native speakers do not all agree with this assertion. Further, we find examples such as (32) and (33) where the verb does not have a secondary interpretation, but the genitive NP is still grammatical. What these examples all have in common is an overt LOC. I take these seeming counterexamples of GenNeg in unergatives structures to prove a default interpretation of an NP as [+EC] can be overruled when an overt LOC is present in both unaccusative and unergative clauses.

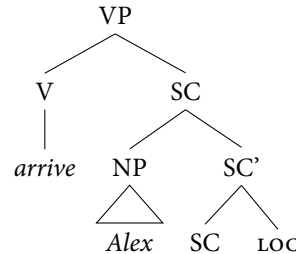
4 INTRANSITIVE ARGUMENTS AND EC

Irwin (2012, 2018) proposes two different structures for unaccusative syntax, building on Moro (1997). Change-of-state predicates which take a simple complement (34) and existence/motion predicates which take a small clause (SC) as the verbal complement (34). The SC includes a LOC element, and Harves (2013) notes predicates which participate in GenNeg tend to have the structure in (34).

(34) a. Change-of-state unaccusative



b. Existence/motion unaccusatives



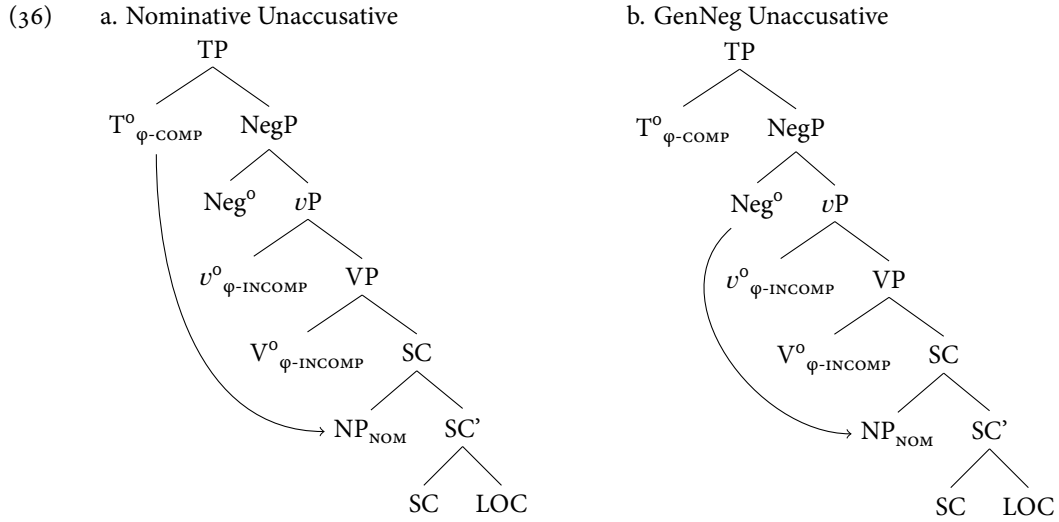
Harves (2002) proposes several key syntactic factors for Russian unaccusatives. First, an important difference between unergative and unaccusative structures is the status of v° . In an unaccusative, v° is ϕ -incomplete and, thus, does not project an external argument. Second, V° is also ϕ -incomplete in an unaccusative predicate; therefore, V° is not a licenser of accusative case and cannot assign case to the internal argument. As a result, in a declarative clause, the internal argument enters into an AGREE relation with T° , receiving nominative case.

When Neg° is present in the derivation, there are two possible unaccusative structures. When T° is ϕ -complete, the subject takes nominative case, as just explained. However, when T° is ϕ -incomplete, T° is not a case assigner and genitive is valued on the internal argument in situ by Neg° . This calculus for ϕ -completeness is shown in (35) (see Harves 2002, 81 for a full explanation).

- (35) $T_{\phi\text{-COMP}} + v_{\phi\text{-COMP}} \rightarrow \text{NOM}$ (transitive, unergative subjects)
 $T_{\phi\text{-COMP}} + v_{\phi\text{-INCOMP}} \rightarrow \text{NOM}$ (unaccusative subject)
 $T_{\phi\text{-INCOMP}} + v_{\phi\text{-INCOMP}} \rightarrow \text{GEN}$ (unaccusative GenNeg subject)

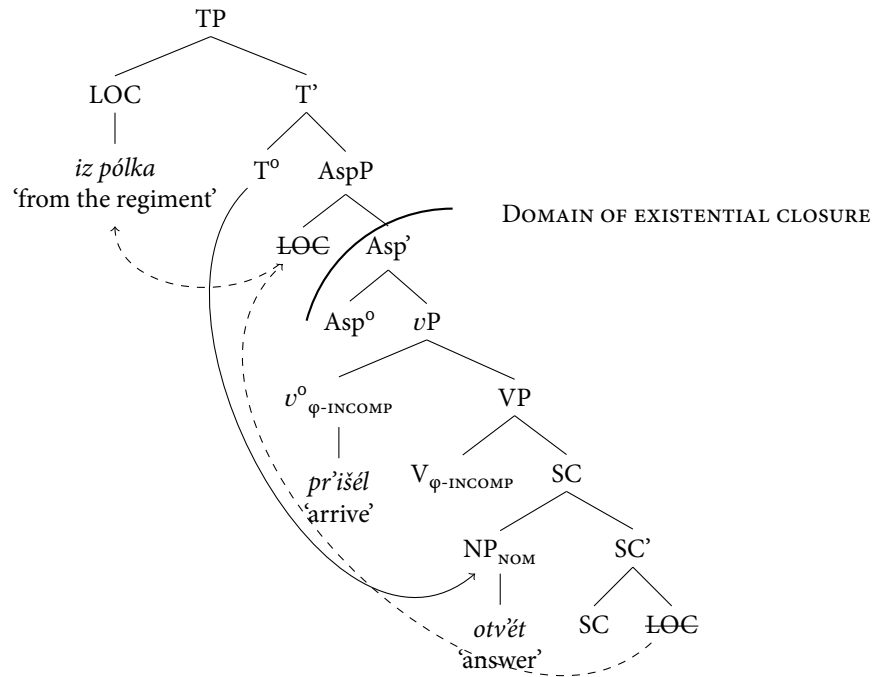
While not addressed by Harves, I contend the same Neg° is present in both structures, i.e., there are not two different Neg heads—one that assigns genitive and one that does not. Further, I view Neg° as a secondary licenser which always has the option to license genitive but need not serve as a case assigner. As Neg° is a secondary licenser, the derivation will not crash if Neg° has not valued case on an NP (see Kalin 2018 for discussion of obligatory and secondary licensers).

Combining Harves (2002, 2013) and Irwin's (2012; 2018) structures, the Russian unaccusative with a nominative subject takes the structure (36), where there T° is ϕ -complete and values nominative case on the internal argument in situ. The GenNeg unaccusative takes the structure (36). As V° and T° are both ϕ -incomplete, Neg° is the only licenser which can value case on the internal argument. I accept as fact Harves's 2002 argument that defective v constitutes a weak phase (following Chomsky, 2001; Legate, 2003), thereby allowing these long-distance AGREE relations.



Next, we examine how EC interplays with these structures. Harves (2002), building on Heycock (1995) and Den Dikken (1995), argues an NP may only receive an existential interpretation when a predicate PP (the LOC from B&P/P&B) raises through SpecAspP, closing off the nuclear scope at Asp⁰, as shown in (37). In so doing, the PP also satisfies the EPP feature on T⁰.

(37) Existential closure in unaccusative
 “An answer arrived from the regiment.”

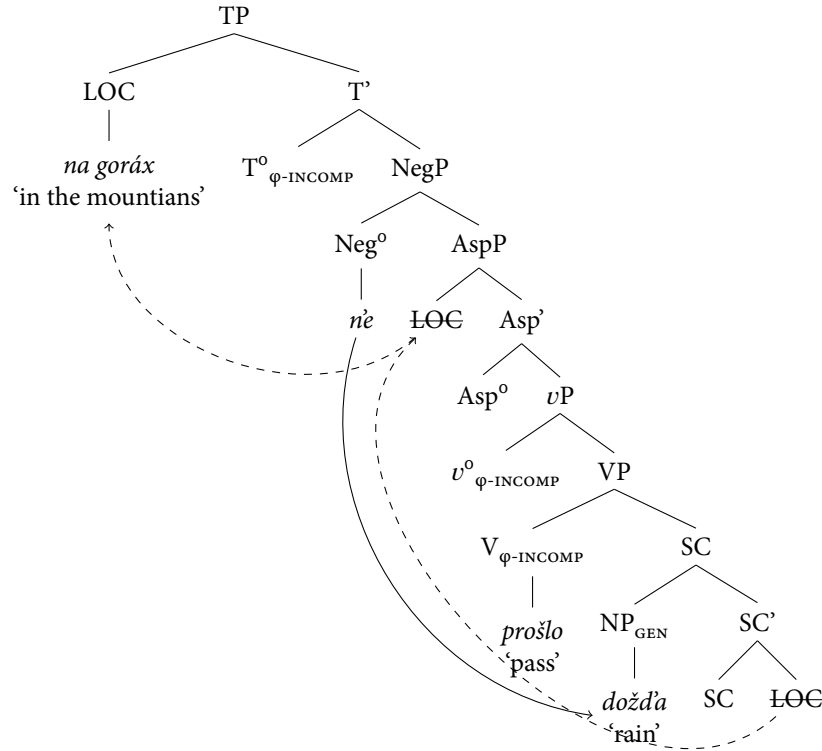


As both the LOC and NP are within the small clause, they should be considered equidistant from T⁰ á la Chomsky (2000, 2001). When the NP is [+EC], we can expect both the PP-V-S and V-S-PP word orders in an unaccusative clause. However, when the NP lacks EC, there seems to be a strong preference for locative inversion in intransitive clauses (as can be found in the examples

throughout this paper), suggesting a lack of EC makes an NP less capable of satisfying the EPP feature on T°.⁵ We know an NP lacking EC is unable to enter an AGREE relationship with T°. Thus, I posit a [-EC] NP is defective—meaning it has an incomplete φ-set—and unable to satisfy the EPP requirement of T°.

Standard WSE are either a type of change-of-state unaccusative and take the structure in (34) or they have a non-defective T° and take the structure (36). In either case, WSE can only take the (36) structure when there is an overt PP, limiting the scope of existence to a particular LOC (as seen in (38)). In this structure, T° must be defective and, therefore, does not assign nominative case. This provides Neg° the opportunity to assign GenNeg to the internal argument.

(38) “It does not rain in the mountains.”



How does this help explain our problematic unergative clauses with GenNeg in (31)–(33)? Remember the main structural difference between unaccusative and unergative clauses, beyond the position of the sole verbal argument, is the status of v°. In unergative clauses v° projects an external argument because it is φ-complete. Further, if v° is φ-complete, T° must also be φ-complete (Harves, 2002, 81). Thus, the question to answer is this: if T° is φ-complete, why does it not assign nominative case to the external argument?

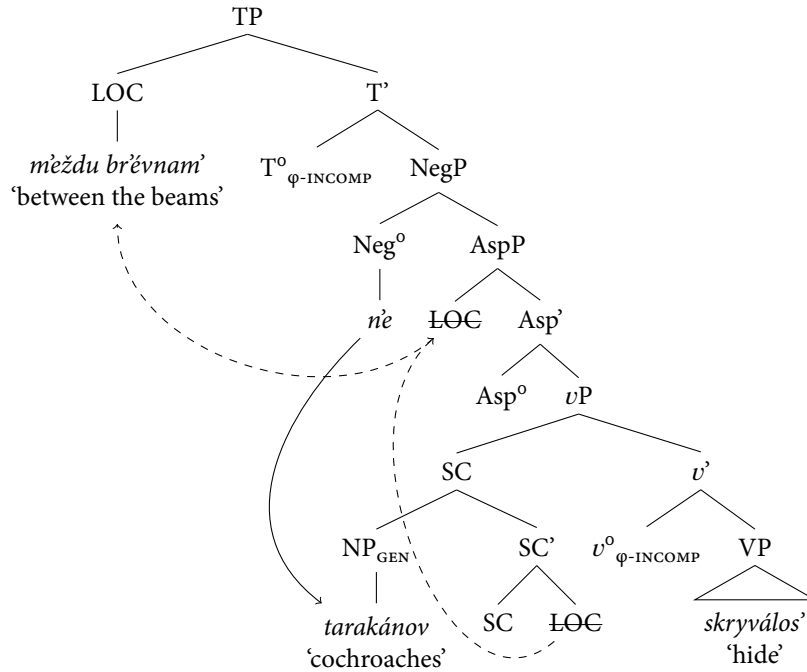
To answer this question, we must first look to an outstanding question highlighted by Harves (2013). Harves acknowledges her analysis, where GenNeg is assigned by Neg°, does not explain why external arguments cannot participate in GenNeg, as the external argument is within the c-command domain of Neg°. My explanation for the unequal participation in GenNeg between external and internal arguments is that Neg° is always a secondary licenser, meaning Neg° may always license genitive case but need not obligatorily do so. Thus, in the standard unergative, where T° is φ-complete and an obligatorily licenser, there are no NPs left in the derivation requiring case

⁵This preference is not seen in negated copula BE existential clauses, but as there are other particularities of BE existentials, I leave that puzzle for future research.

licensing from Neg^0 .

Therefore, my solution to the seemingly exceptional unergative clauses is, when the external argument NP is [-EC], a different T^0 participates in the derivation—one that is still ϕ -complete but a secondary licenser. This means there is no obligatory licenser present in the structure. As Neg^0 is closer to the NP requiring case, it has the opportunity to value GenNeg before an AGREE relation with T^0 is formed. However, T^0 still has an EPP feature to satisfy. As I argue these rare unergative clauses participate in existentiality, I assume the external argument is a SC structure with an overt LOC. As such, the external argument and LOC phrase are equidistant from T^0 . As the NP has already been valued for case, when the probe on T^0 seeks to satisfy its EPP feature, it is the PP which raises to SpecTP, see (39).

(39) “There were no cockroaches hiding among the beams.”



In summary, I propose Neg^0 is always a secondary licenser and intransitive syntactic structures are sensitive to the presence or lack of EC on the NP within an SC argument. The sole arguments of some intransitive clauses—unaccusatives like WSE and most unergatives—have a default interpretation of [-EC]. However, the presupposed existence of the NP—the THING—can be canceled when an overt LOC is present in the derivation, limiting the scope of existence to a specific perspective space. This LOC raises to SpecTP to satisfy the EPP feature on T^0 .

5 CONCLUSION

I have explored seemingly variable unaccusative and unergative behavior in a subset of Russian WSE, arguing these expressions’ failure to participate in GenNeg is caused by a default interpretation of the internal argument as [+EC]. I propose the presence of an overt locative phrase within the derivation allows the presupposition of existence to be canceled, limiting the scope of existence in the actual world and allowing the NP to partipate in GenNeg. From this same perspective, I reexamine seeming counterexamples from previous literature where GenNeg appears in unergative clauses. Subjects of unergative clauses also seem to carry a default interpretation of [+EC], yet all of the counterexamples contain an overt locative phrase. Thus, I contend the presence of the overt LOC can cancel the presupposition of existence, allowing an unergative subject to participate in

GenNeg without a semantic bleaching of the predicate.

Following Harves (2002), I view Neg^o as the case assigner of GenNeg, but I further classify Neg^o as a secondary licenser. Thus, when an obligatory licenser, such as ϕ -complete T^o is present in the derivation, Neg^o will not value case on the sole argument NP. It is only when T^o is defective or not an obligatory licenser that Neg^o has the opportunity to value case in an intransitive clause.

This analysis has implications for GenNeg as a diagnostic of unaccusativity. It implies GenNeg is not a true unaccusative diagnostic but rather a diagnostic of EC. As most unergative and transitive subjects are [+EC], it is mostly unaccusative subjects and transitive objects which participate in an alternation with GenNeg and grammatical cases. However, the semantic factors previously observed to cause a nominal argument to resist GenNeg are all tied to referentiality and, thereby, EC.

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