

Possessives, Theta Roles, and the Internal Structure Of Bulgarian DPs*

Mila Tasseva-Kurktchieva
University of South Carolina

In the past two decades researchers have shown great interest in the syntax and semantics of the nominal domain. In generative syntax Szabolcsi (1983, 1987) and Abney (1987) suggest that the nominal structure is dominated by a higher Determiner Phrase (DP). The proposals open the door for further discussion of the (dis)similarities between determiners and possessives. Recently, work by Franks (1998), Embick & Noyer (2001) and Dimitrova-Vulchanova & Giusti (1999 a, b) on Bulgarian propose the existence of a Clitic Phrase (CLP) which holds the possessive clitic pronominals.

In semantics, research in the nominal domain has led to two streamlined theories on the argument structure and thematic properties of nouns. Some have looked at the verbal properties of nouns (Williams 1981, Rappaport 1983, Dowty 1989, Grimshaw 1990, Hoeksema 1992, Davies and Dubinsky, 2003 among others). Others have been concerned with the purely nominal domain and have investigated argument structure and thematic roles pertaining to that domain only (Barker and Dowty 1993). Both perspectives point to the same conclusion -- only certain nouns have true syntactic arguments. For the first group of researchers, those are the complex event nominals (to use the term in Grimshaw 1990). For the second group, those are the relational nouns.

* I would like to thank Stanley Dubinsky, the audience of FASL-12, and in particular Roumyana Slabakova, Steven Franks and Olga Mišeska-Tomič, as well as two anonymous reviewers, for their insightful comments. Needless to say, all remaining problems and omissions are the sole responsibility of the author.

This paper has a twofold goal. On one hand, it aims to show that, at least in Bulgarian, not all possessive structures² can be treated as determiners. I propose that the language provides evidence for a functional projection Possessor Phrase (PossP) between the lexical Noun Phrase (NP) and the top functional DP. PossP is the insertion point for the possessive (dative) clitic but not for the genitival adjectives or the PP possessives, as they exhibit different syntactic distribution and semantic properties. On the other hand, this paper looks further into the question of nominal argument structure and θ -role assignment in the particular domain of possessive noun phrases in Bulgarian. We follow Grimshaw (1990), further developed in Davies & Dubinsky (2003) (hereafter D&D), who propose that complex event nouns have true argument structure and thus can map the semantic interpretation directly to the syntactic structure in the form of a θ -role. Those nouns assign the <agent> and/or <theme> θ -roles to their arguments. We claim that the possessive semantic interpretation is external to the nominal domain in the sense that it is not assigned by the head of NP but rather by the head of PossP. Thus, the possessive relation is not applicable to the complex event nominals. On the other extreme, the concrete nouns take only the possessive θ -relation³ which is related with the head of the Possessive Phrase (PossP). Our analysis of possessives supports D&D's treatment of result and representational nouns as nominals that have participants in their Lexical Semantic Structure (LCS) but not true arguments. We propose that those nouns do not assign θ -roles, but rather participate in purely semantic θ -relations that pertain to the conceptual-pragmatic level.

² The term "possessive structures" is used to cover all types of possessive phrases, including those in which syntactic possessives do not denote the semantic relation of possession.

³ For a lack of a better way to distinguish between thematic relations that are mapped onto syntactic structures and thematic relations that cannot map to syntactic positions, I use the term θ -role to denote the former and θ -relation for the latter.

1. Possessive Structures in Bulgarian

1.1. Syntax: One Side of the Problem

In Bulgarian, possession can be expressed in three different ways:

(i) with a genitival adjective (1a,b); (ii) with a dative clitic (2); and
(iii) with a N + PP construction (3):

- (1) a. Ivan-ova-ta kniga *genitival adjective*
Ivan-GEN⁴-DEF book
'Ivan's book'
- b. neg-ova-ta kniga (*pronominal*) *genitival adjective*
his-GEN-DEF book
'His book'
- (2) kniga-ta mu *dative clitic*
book-DEF his-DAT.
'His book'
- (3) kniga-ta na Ivan/?na nego⁵ *PP*
book-DEF of Ivan/ of him-DAT
'The book of Ivan's'

The examples in (1-3) show a well-known pattern of syntactic disambiguation between genitives and datives (Landau 1999, Shlonsky 1988, Vergnaud & Zubizarreta 1992) where genitive inflection appears in Bulgarian, the possessor is prenominal (1a-b), but where dative case can be used, the possessor is in postnominal position (2, and possibly 3). The first similarity holds across the board when the noun is modified by a sole possessive structure. Genitival adjectives can appear in any prenominal position within DP. They can be in [Spec, DP] (4a), in intermediate position between [Spec, DP] and head of NP (4b), but not in postnominal position (4c).

⁴ For discussion of the case of Bulgarian possessives see Pancheva (to appear).

⁵ Grammaticality judgements differ on forms like *knigata na nego* 'the book of his'. I will leave the question open for further investigation.

- (4) a. **moja-ta/Ivan-ova-ta** nova knjiga
 my-DEF/ Ivan-GEN-DEF new book
 ‘My/Ivan’s new book’
- b. njakolko-to (novi) **moi/Ivan-ovi** (novi) knigi
 several-DEF (new) my/Ivan-GEN (new) books
 ‘Several of my/Ivan’s (new) books’
- c. *njakolko(-to) novi šapki **moi/Ivan-ovi**
 several(-DEF) new hats my/Ivan-GEN
 ‘Several of my/Ivan’s (new) hats’

Consider also the definiteness in all of the examples in (4) -- possessives and determiners coexist in all three structures. This goes against Abney’s (1987) proposal that D^0 is the insertion point for both the definite article and the possessive clitic. If the other two types of possessives (the PP and the dative clitic) are examined, we are led to believe that there are syntactic reasons for the co-occurrence of a possessor and a determiner in those structures. Both the clitic and the PP possessor require (5a,b) or prefer (5c,d) the definite conditions. The genitival adjective structures do not pose such a restriction (6a, b):

- (5) a. knjiga-ta mu
 book-DEF his
- b. *knjiga mu
 book his
- c. knjiga-ta na Ivan
 book-DEF of Ivan

- d. ?kniga na Ivan⁶
 book of Ivan
- (6) a. neg-ova- ta /Ivan-ova-ta kniga
 his-GEN-DEF /Ivan-GEN-DEF book
- b. neg-ova /Ivan-ova kniga
 his-GEN /Ivan-GEN book

The dative clitic can only appear in DP-second position. Compare (7a) to (7b, c). Note also that the crucial factor here is the syntactic position, not the (in)definiteness of the DP.

- (7) a. xubava-ta **mu** kniga
 good-DEF his book
- b. ***mu** xubava(-ta) kniga
 his good(-DEF) book
- c. *xubava(-ta) kniga **mu**
 good(-DEF) book his

The occurrence of two or more possessive structures in one DP is well attested across world languages. Bulgarian also shows multiple possessives but demonstrates yet another syntactic restriction on clitic possessives. Two occurrences of possessive clitics in the same DP are ruled out (8) but not two occurrences of the other three types of possessive structures (9):

- (8) *kniga-ta mu i
 book-DEF his her
 ?‘his her book’

⁶ A reviewer suggest that some speakers accept (5d) as fully grammatical. However, the contrast in (i) is more visible. In Section 2 we suggest a solution to this problem:

(i) Vidjax šapka(?ta) na Ivan
 saw hat (-DEF) of Ivan
 ‘I saw Ivan’s hat’

- (9) Ivan-ova-ta Šekspir-ova kniga
 Ivan-GEN-DEF Shakespeare-GEN book
 ‘Ivan’s book by Shakespeare’

Finally, possessive clitics but not genitival adjectives can be raised to verbal complement position. We take raising of the modifier past the definite article *-ta* to be evidence for raising out of DP.

- (10) Vidjax [mu₁ [kniga-ta t₁]]
 I-saw his-DAT book-DEF
 ‘I saw his book’
- (11) *Vidjax [neg-ova/Ivan-ova₁ [t₁ kniga₂-ta [t₁ t₂]]]
 I-saw his-GEN/ Ivan-GEN book-DEF
 ‘I saw his/Ivan’s book’
- (12) Vidjax [na Ivan₁ [kniga₂-ta [t₁ t₂]]]
 I-saw of Ivan book-DEF
 ‘I saw his/Ivan’s book’

While in (10) we observe that the raising of the dative clitic above the definite-marked nominal (thus, outside the DP) is grammatical, in (11) we see that the same does not hold for the genitival adjectives⁷.

1.2. *Semantics: Another side of the problem*

As was noted above, the different possessive structures can coexist in the same DP. In such case each of them plays different θ -role. As (13) shows, it is also possible that the sole possessive structure in a DP can be interpreted as holding different semantic relations -- <possessor>, <agent>, or <theme>.

⁷ For extended discussion on possessor raising in Bulgarian see Stateva (2002). Also, Dimitrova-Vulchanova and Giusti (1999a) argue briefly for the possibility that the PP possessives (as in (12)) can also raise to VP-internal positions under certain conditions.

- (13) a. portret-ət mu
 portrait-DEF his-DAT
 <poss> ‘the portrait belonging to him’
 <agt> ‘the portrait which he painted’
 <th> ‘the portrait on which he was
 depicted’
- b. portret-ət na Ivan
 portrait-DEF of Ivan
 <poss>/<agt>/<th>
- c. Ivanovi-yat/negovi-yat portret
 Ivan’s-DEF/his-DEF portrait
 <poss>/<agt>/<th>
 ‘Ivan’s/his portrait’

If both <possessor> and <agent> θ -roles are available and there are no semantic or syntactic restrictions on which possessive structure can map which θ -role, then in DPs with two possessive structures we can observe the θ -roles being freely assigned to any of the possessives. This is the case in (14). However, (15) shows that the dative clitic has strong preference for the <possessor> role. Note that the element with the <agent> role can surface as an external (15a) or internal (15c) argument of the head noun⁸:

- (14)a. mojata kniga na Ivan
 <poss> <agt>
 <agt> <poss>
 my-DEF book by/of Ivan
- b. Ivanovata moja kniga
 <agt> <poss>
 <poss> <agt>
 Ivan’s-DEF my book

⁸ The questionable grammaticality of (15c) arises from the post-nominal position of the genitival adjective, not from the semantic interpretation of the structures (cf. (15a)).

- (15)a. Ivanovata mi kniga
 <agt> <poss>
 by-Ivan-DEF my book
- b. na Ivan knigata mi
 <agt> <poss>
 by-Ivan book-DEG my
- c. ?knigata mi Ivanova
 <poss> <agt>
 book-DEF my Ivan-GEN

The restriction on the thematic role the clitics can play also holds in DPs with three possessive structures (16). It is only when the clitic is the sole possessive that it can attract other θ -roles.

- (16) Ivanovijat mu_i portret na Marija_k
 <agt> <poss> <theme>
 <theme> <poss> <agt>
 Ivan's-DEF his portrait of Maria

Clitic doubling provides the final piece of semantic evidence for the unique role the dative clitics play in Bulgarian possessive structures. Both the clitic and the doubled element refer to the same referent, so they should play the same θ -role. As we saw above, the other possessive structures do not pose restrictions on the semantics/syntax mapping. However, when any of them is doubled by a clitic, e.g. the element is coindexed with the clitic, the only possible reading for the whole doubled element is that of <possessor> (17):

- (17) negovata_i mu_i kniga
 his.the his book
 <poss_i> <poss_i>
 * <agt_i> <agt_i>⁹

⁹ The same example is much better with the reflexive possessive. However, the reflexive clitics do not behave semantically the same way as the dative ones --

1.3. Possessive Structures in Bulgarian – Syntactic Analysis

Based on both semantic and syntactic restrictions on the dative clitics but not on the other kinds of possessive structures, we can say that there are distinct syntactic positions for the different types of possessors. The dative clitics project their own functional projection Possessor Phrase (PossP), directly dominated by DP (18). Thus, we can tentatively call the clitics syntactic possessors. The rest of the possessive structures are inserted lower in the tree as modifiers (genitival adjectives) or right adjuncts (PP possessive structures) to the head noun (19-20). As the syntactic component does not pose strong restrictions on both types, we can tentatively call them semantic possessors.

(18) [DP xubava₁ [D -ta [PossP t₁ [Poss mu [NP t₁ [NP kniga]]]]]]
 good the his book

(19) [DP Ivanova₁/negova₁ [D -ta [NP t₁ [NP kniga]]]]
 Ivan-GEN/his the book

(20) [DP xubava₁ [D -ta [NP t₁ kniga na Ivan]]]
 good the book of Ivan

In (18) the DP (overtly realized by *-ta* ‘the’) selects for a PossP. The syntactic possessor *mu* ‘his’ is base-generated in head of PossP. In such a case the highest XP below Poss⁰ can move over the head of the functional projection to its specifier position and then further raise to [Spec, DP] to check off the [+def] feature of the determiner phrase. At Spell-out the bound definite morpheme undergoes PF affixation and is pronounced as a suffix to the constituent residing under [Spec, DP]¹⁰.

The genitival adjectives (19) are base-generated as APs in the [Spec, NP] node. In this case PossP is optional, depending on the

they disallow the <theme> role at all. We will leave the question open for future consideration.

¹⁰ The possessive clitic poses a problem to the current analysis when it has the <theme> θ-role. We leave the question open for further consideration.

semantic relation between the possessive structure and the head noun. From [Spec, NP] they raise (optionally to [Spec, PossP] and then) to [Spec, DP] to check off the [+def] feature there. The θ -roles are assigned by the head noun. The other semantic possessors – the PPs -- are base-generated as right adjuncts to the head noun as in (20). Here PossP is not projected at all.

As we will see in Section 2 the syntactic realization of the semantic relations between the head noun and the possessive structures depends on the type of the head noun. Section 1 explored DPs with a head noun of the representational type only as this is the only type that can express all three thematic relations. As we will see shortly, the complex event nouns do not project PossP at all. In such case DP selects a light nP which is responsible for assigning the <agent> θ -role to the external argument of the complex event nominal (cf. (21)).

(21) [_{DP} dəlgo₁ [_D -to [_{NP} t₁ [_n mi [_{NP} t₁ [_{NP} izpitvane]]]]]]]
 long the my examination
 “the long examination which I gave”

(22) [_{DP} golemi₁ [_D -yat [_{NP} t₁ [_n mi [_{NP} t₁ [_{NP} kamək]]]]]]]
 big the my stone
 “my big stone”

Concrete nouns do not allow for any other relation but possession (cf. (21)). We further develop the distinction in Section 2.

2. Nominal Typology and Theta Roles

2.1. Grimshaw (1990) and Davies and Dubinsky (2003)

It has long been noted that one set of nominals shares with verbs some fundamental distributional properties. Grimshaw (1990) points out that both nouns and verbs take complements in the range of CP complement, infinitival complement, or locative PP complement. On the other hand, while in English subjects are obligatory at sentential level, they are optional in the nominal domain. Also, transitive verbs ask for their non-subject complements while

nouns derived from a transitive verb take non-subject complements only optionally.

For Grimshaw this optionality of nominal complements is only superficial. She presents extensive evidence to support the claim that nominals such as *examination* actually have two different syntactic structures: complex event nominals (CENs) have obligatory complements (23), while result nouns are mandatorily complementless (24):

(23) The **examination** of the patients took a long time.

(24) The **examination/exam** took a long time.

Grimshaw proposes a wide variety of tools to disambiguate between CENs and result nouns. The one she uses mostly is an agent-oriented modifier (such as *frequent*, *deliberate* or *constant*) which forces the event reading in ambiguous derived nouns (25).

(25) a. *The frequent expression is desirable.

b. The frequent expression of one's feelings is desirable.

A third group of nouns Grimshaw pays attention to are the simple event nominals such as *race*, *trip*, *exam*, and even *event*. Although simple event nouns denote events or processes in some ways at least, they behave as result nouns in their syntactic properties. They can take determiners other than *the*, they disallow agent-oriented modifiers like *frequent*, and, finally, they can pluralize.

Based on the outlined syntactic properties of the different nominals, Grimshaw proposes that there are differences in their argument structure. While all of them have related lexical conceptual structures (LCS), only CENs have an event structure and a syntactic argument structure like verbs. Davies and Dubinsky (2003) take and develop Grimshaw's proposal. They show that result nouns imply certain participants in their lexical conceptual structure. For example, the result noun *assignments* in (26) denotes a material entity (e.g. blue book) such that was created by X and given to Y, thus X and Y are participants in its LCS. On the other

hand, there are (non-derived) nouns such as *dog* or *stone* which do not imply any participants. Those are the concrete nouns.

(26) The assignments were long.

While Grimshaw focuses mainly on derived (from verbs) nominals, D&D look at a much broader range of nouns. In the group of result nouns, for example, they include nominals such as *victory* or *triumph* that do not have arguments (e.g. can never be modified by *frequent*) but still always have participants. The LCS of *victory* always implies that X wins over Y, yet the noun itself does not have overt arguments, just implied ones that are actually participants.

As there are nominals such as *examination* that can be ambiguous between the CEN and the result group, there are also nouns that are ambiguous between the concrete and the result group. They can never take arguments, as they are towards the lower end of the event-concrete continuum. However, they can sometimes take participants. Such a noun is *book*, which can either be the concrete object that you put on your bookshelf, or the more abstract entity that is the byproduct of somebody’s creativity as in *My book about WWII*.

The latter D&D call the “informational” reading of those ambiguous nouns. The emerging classification of the nominal types is represented in Table 1 (= D&D (29)):

I. <i>complex event nominals</i> (have argument participants)	II. <i>result nominals</i> (have non-argument participants)	III. <i>concrete nominals</i> (have no participants)
<i>examining</i> <i>examination</i> (process reading)	<i>victory</i> <i>examination</i> (result reading) <i>book</i> (informational reading)	<i>dog</i> <i>book</i> (physical reading)

Table 1. The nominal typology in D&D (2003).

2.2. *θ-roles in Bulgarian Possessive NPs and the Nominal Typology*

θ -roles are assumed to be an instance of direct mapping of semantically meaningful relations (LCS) over syntactic positions. The relation is actually bidirectional as at sentential level we talk about θ -positions and functional positions, the former being the ones in which entities can be θ -marked.

Despite the extensive literature dealing with argument structure in the nominal domain, very little attention has been paid to the issue of θ -role assignment. Among the group of researchers that look at the event structure of the nouns, the opinions are split. On one hand, Williams (1981) accepts direct realization of each θ -role to a specified position. On the other hand, Grimshaw defends the idea that nouns, as compared to verbs, are impaired in that they cannot directly θ -mark their arguments. According to her, nouns can take arguments only through the mediation of a preposition, thus they can θ -mark only indirectly, through that preposition. However, earlier in the chapter she admits that CENs can have subjects. To her, *John* in (27a) has a different syntactic role than *John* in (27b). The former is a pure modifier of the head result noun, while the latter can either be a modifier or have a subject-like role in relation to the head CEN:

- (27) a. John's examination was long.
b. John's examination of the patients took a long time.

Generally, there are two questions to be asked when we deal with syntactic mapping of semantic relations: (i) where do the θ -roles come from, and (ii) what assigns them, and when? In the nominal domain, the emerging answer to the first question is that θ -roles come from the LCS of the head noun. When the noun is a CEN, the verb from which it was derived still has its θ -roles and needs to assign them. With concrete nouns there is no embedded verb, so there are no θ -roles to be distributed. The intermediate case of result and representational nouns (in their informational sense) is more complicated. As we will see shortly, there are θ -

relations in their LCS, but those θ -relations cannot be syntactically mapped to argument positions and remain purely semantic relations up until the level of conceptual-pragmatic structure.

To test the proposed distinction I will turn back to Bulgarian. As we saw in Section 1, all Bulgarian possessive structures can in principle play any of the three thematic roles: <possessor>, <agent>, or <theme>. Some (e.g. the dative clitic) have stronger preferences in structures with two or three possessives, but still all three θ -roles are available. The next question to ask is if there will be any differences in the availability of the three thematic roles relative to the nominal typology sketched in Section 2.1.

Consider first the ends of the nominal typology continuum in respect to the θ -roles in possessive NPs. In (28) we see a concrete nominal:

- (28) *negoviyat kamək*
 <poss>/*<agent>/*<theme>
 ‘his stone’

Note that the only possible θ -role is that of a <possessor>; both <agent> and <theme> are disallowed. This behavior is expected if we subscribe to the theory of nominal typology outlined in Section 2.1. The pure non-derived nouns have only a physical reading. With no verb involved in the derivation or implied in the LCS, they lack the source for verbal θ -roles such as <agent> or <theme>. <Possessor>, however, is not a verbal semantic relation, nor is it an NP internal relation. The possessive θ -relation has its independent source in the head of PossP, thus possession is the only relation that is available for concrete nominals.

At the other end of the continuum are the event nominals. Bulgarian shows a wide variety of nouns that are derived from verbs and thus are potential candidates for CEN status, the most obvious of those being the “deverbal nouns”, as they are called by traditional grammarians of Bulgarian. Those are derived from either perfective or imperfective forms of the verbs in present tense. Compare the examples in (29a and b):

- (29)a. izpitvam (V, imperfective) → izpitvane
 ‘examine’ ‘examination (testing),
 examining’
- b. izpitam (V, perfective) → izpitanie
 ‘examine’ ‘examination (testing)’

If the nominals in (29) are presented outside any semantic or syntactic context, the first intuition is to say that the imperfective form (29a) expresses a process while the perfective one (29b) denotes a result. In some (but not all) cases there are other nouns that are derived from the same verb roots but without any reference to the perfective/imperfective distinction. Such a form is *izpit* ‘exam’ which Grimshaw classifies in the simple event nouns and D&D put in the result nouns category. Although it can have some kind of temporal sense (the time during which the examination is given), this is not the event (or process) of examination but rather the exam (the blue book).

If the nouns that are derived from the verbal forms marked for perfectiveness are the CENs and those that are derived from the verbal roots are the result nominals, then Grimshaw’s syntactic test should confirm the differences. As we see in (30-31) this in fact is the case:

- (30) Ivanovoto mi izpitvane (stavaše često)
 <poss>/<th>/<agt> <theme>
 Ivan’s.the my examination (happened frequently)
 ‘Ivan’s examination of me happened frequently’
- (31) Ivanovijat izpit (*stavaše često)
 <poss>/<agt>/<th>
 Ivan’s.the exam (happened frequently)
 ‘Ivan’s exam happened frequently’

Note also the thematic roles that the possessive phrases can play in those examples. As we subscribe to the nominal typology in Section 2.1, we should expect that the <possessor> θ -role will be un-

available in a possessive structure headed by a CEN. CENs, as it was shown, have verbal properties and true argument structure. The verbal properties imply that the <possessor> role will be unavailable, as an action (and thus an activity too) cannot have an owner. The argument structure will predict overtly expressed verbal θ -roles such as <agent> or <theme>¹¹. As we see in (30), the <possessor> θ -role is unavailable. The <theme> complement is obligatory with CENs so the genitival adjective cannot take the <theme> role either.

On the other hand, result nouns (31), according to Grimshaw, do not have argument structure. Thus, they should not project arguments in thematic positions and we should not see neither <agents> or <themes>. The situation is not so puzzling if we take in account D&D's proposal that result and representational nouns (in their informational reading) do not have true arguments but do have participants. To extend what D&D say, those participants still have some semantic θ -relations in their LCS, but as they are not arguments, they cannot map directly to the syntactic structure.

If we are on the right track positing that semantics-over-syntax mapping of θ -roles is different from semantics-only existence of θ -relations, then we should be able to find some syntactic distinction between the realizations of the former versus the latter. As semantics-over-syntax mapping implies transferal of a semantic θ -role to a particular syntactic position, any variability in the assignment of thematic roles to this position should be disallowed. On the same track, if θ -relations are purely semantic, they should not be tied to particular syntactic positions and we should see variation in the semantic interpretation. This is exactly what we observe when we compare (30) and (31). The CEN in (30) has a thematic argument which maps onto a particular syntactic argument. Thus, the <theme> can appear in complement position only and the <agent>

¹¹ The availability of the <theme> θ -role depends on the transitivity of the base verb. If the base verb has internal arguments then the <theme> may be present; if it only has an external argument then that θ -role will be unavailable.

in subject position only. Compare the grammaticality of (30) to the ungrammaticality of (32) and recall that nothing in principle prevents any of the types from playing any of the roles.

- (32) Ivanovoto mi izpitvane (stavaše često)
 **<theme>* *<agent>*
 Ivan's.the my examination (happened frequently)

With result nouns we see quite the opposite. The example in (33) is equally grammatical with the possessive being the *<agent>* or the *<theme>*. Similarly, in (33) where we see possessive structures with two possessors the thematic relations are interchangeable regardless of the syntactic position:

- (33) a. Ivanoviyat i izpit
<agent> *<theme>*
<theme> *<agent>*
 Ivan's her examination
- b. Ivanoviyat izpit na Mariya
<agent> *<theme>*
<theme> *<agent>*
 Ivan's examination of Maria

Note that this was not the case in (30) where the CEN had to assign the θ -roles to particular syntactic positions. We can conclude then that we have syntactic reasons for positing the θ -role/ θ -relation distinction: θ -roles are the thematic relations which are mapped to syntactic argument positions and θ -relations are the thematic relations which remain visible throughout the derivation up until the conceptual-pragmatic level but are not mapped to syntactic argument positions.

If we go back to the syntactic analysis of Bulgarian possessive DPs offered in Section 1.3, the following proposition emerges. When a morphologically possessive construction with a concrete or a result noun enters the Numeration no θ -roles are assigned NP-internally. The verbal thematic roles *<agent>* and *<theme>* remain at the conceptual-pragmatic level. Otherwise, when a CEN enters

the Numeration with a possessive structure, the head noun assigns the verbal θ -roles NP-internally. In this case PossP cannot be enumerated. If the LCS suggests a possessive reading, a PossP is projected and it assigns the <possessor> θ -relation to the dative clitic generated in Poss0 or to the genitive adjective when it raises from [Spec, NP] to [Spec, PossP].

3. Conclusion

Data in the foregoing discussion have shown evidence for the existence of a functional projection between NP and DP, namely a Possessor Phrase. We saw both syntactic and semantic reasons to conclude that the possessive clitic is unique in the sense that it shows properties of a strong syntactic possessor under head of PossP. While the adjectival and PP possessors have a freer distribution, do not require a definite environment, and can serve as possessor, agent or theme within the DP, the dative clitic requires a definite environment, occurs in DP-second position only, plays only the possessor role in constructions with two or three occurrences of possessives, and can express agentivity only in structures where it is the single possessor.

On the other hand, in the discussion of the thematic role assignment in the nominal domain the tentative conclusion was bipolar: complex event nominals have true syntactic arguments, thus the thematic relations they show can be mapped to syntax as θ -roles; result and concrete nouns do not have true syntactic arguments, but rather participants in their lexical semantic structure. Participants remain at the level of semantics and can never map to syntactic positions. The thematic relations which are visible at conceptual-pragmatic level are θ -relations rather than θ -roles.

Selected References:

- ABNEY, STEVEN. 1987. *The English noun phrase in its sentential aspect*, MIT.
- BARKER, CHRIS and DOWTY, DAVID. 1993. Non-verbal thematic Proto-Roles. Paper presented at NELS.
- DAVIES, WILLIAM and DUBINSKY, STANLEY. 2003. On extraction from NPs. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*, 21.1-37.
- DIMITROVA-VULCHANOVA, MILA and GIUSTI, GIULIANA. 1999. Possessors in the Bulgarian DP. *Topics in South Slavic Syntax and Semantics*, ed. by Mila Dimitrova-Vulchanova and Hellan Lars, 163-92. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- . 1999. Fragments of Balkan nominal structure. *Studies on the determiner phrase*, ed. by A. Alexiadou and Ch. Wilder, 333-60. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- DOWTY, DAVID. 1989. On the semantic content of the notion of 'thematic role'. *Properties, types and meanings II*, ed. by Barbara Partee & Raymond Turner Genarro Chierchia, 69-129. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
- EMBICK, DAVID and NOYER, ROLF. 2001. Movement operations after syntax. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 32.555-95.
- FRANKS, STEVEN. 1998. Clitics in Slavic. Paper presented at *Comparative Slavic Morphosyntax*, Spencer, Indiana.
- GRIMSHAW, JANE. 1990. *Argument structure*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- HOEKSEMA, JACK. 1992. Categorical morphology and the valency of nouns. *Morphology now*, ed. by M. Aronoff, 83-106. Albany, NY: SUNY Press.
- LANDAU, IDAN. 1999. Possessor Raising and the Structure of VP. *Lingua*, 107.1-37.
- PANCHEVA, ROUMYANA. to appear. Balkan possessive clitics: The problem of case and category. *Topics in Balkan Sprachbund Syntax and Semantics (provisional title)*, ed. by Olga Tomic: John Benjamins.
- RAPPAPORT, MALKA. 1983. On the nature of derived nominals. *Papers in lexical functional grammar*, ed. by M. Rappaport L.

- Levin, and A. Zaenen. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Linguistics Club.
- SHLONSKY, UR. 1988. Government and binding in Hebrew nominals. *Linguistics*, 26.951-76.
- STATEVA, PENKA. 2002. Possessive clitics and the structure of nominal expressions. *Lingua*, 112.647-90.
- SZABOLCSI, ANNA. 1983. The possessor that ran away from home. *Linguistic Review*, 3.89-102.
- . 1987. Functional categories in the noun phrase. *Approaches to Hungarian: Theories and Analyses*, ed. by Istvan Kenesei. Szeged: JATE.
- VERGNAUD, J. - R. and ZUBIZARRETA, M. L. 1992. The definite determiner and the inalienable constructions in French and English. *Linguistic Inquiry*, 23.595-652.
- WILLIAMS, E. 1981. Argument structure and morphology. *Linguistic Review*, 1.81-114.

Mila Tasseva-Kurktchieva
Linguistics Program
University of South Carolina
Columbia, SC 29210
tassevak@gwm.sc.edu