

Weak case modifiers: Russian instrumental nominals as a counterpart of bare nominals in Romance

In the course of time different points of view have been expressed in the study of syntax and semantics of bare nominals. Since Chierchia's (1998) claim that common nouns in Romance languages are categories of type $\langle e, t \rangle$ and can appear in argument position only under a DP projection (Longobardi 1994), it has been shown by many linguists (Dobrovie-Sorin & Laca 2003; Munn & Schmitt 2005; Dobrovie-Sorin et al. 2006; among others) that within the Romance family the distribution of bare nominals differs considerably. More recently, it has been proved (Espinal & McNally 2007, 2011; Espinal & Mateu 2011) that, in Catalan and Spanish, bare nominals can appear in object position of *have*-like verbs, a position where they denote properties and are not referential, but never in specifier position. Semantically, not being arguments in a full sense of the term, they have been analyzed as *predicate modifiers*.

The goal of this piece of research is to show that there is a counterpart for Romance bare nominals in a structurally different language like Russian. Russian, a Slavic language that does not have articles, relies on nominal Case marking to express different referential possibilities of the Noun. I will show the structural correspondence between Romance bare nominals and Russian nominals in instrumental (INSTR) case. In order to account for these instantiations of INSTR, in this presentation I will (i) expose the syntactic and semantic properties associated with nouns in INSTR case in Russian; I will (ii) show the extent to which these properties correspond to those of bare nominals in Romance; and I will (iii) make a proposal for the syntactic structure of nominals in INSTR case that correspond to semantic predicate modifiers.

I will focus on predicate position since this is the position where all Romance languages admit bare nominals. In Russian a predicative nominal bears INSTR case not only when the copula verb is explicit (1), but also in secondary predication (2) (Geist 2007; Pereltsvaig 2007).

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| (1) Moj brat byl inženerom.
My brother was engineer.INSTR
'My brother was an engineer'. | (2) On voobrazil sebja geroem.
He imagined self.ACC hero.INSTR
'He imagined himself a hero'. |
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It turns out that nominal predicates in INSTR case have a lot in common with bare nominals in Romance: they are property-denoting and non-referential. Furthermore, they cannot be replaced by a personal pronoun, unlike the nouns in argument position, as shown in (3); and their modification possibilities are restricted to adjectives denoting subcapacities, as illustrated in (4 a,b). (This fact was first proved for Romance bare nominals by Espinal 2010):

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| (3) Ivan byl voditelem. / *Ivan im byl
Ivan was driver.M.INSTR / Ivan he.INSTR was
'Ivan was a driver / *Ivan was him' | (4) a. On zdes' <i>generalnym</i> direktorom.
He here general.INSTR director.INSTR
He (is) here (as a) general director.
b. *On zdes' <i>trebovatel'ny</i> m direktorom.
He here exigent.INSTR director.INSTR
He (is) here (as an) exigent director. |
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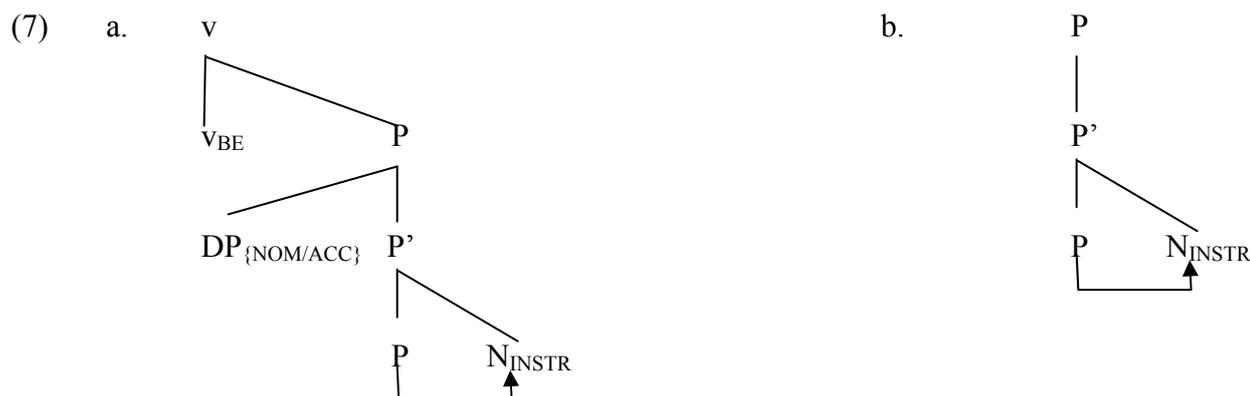
In order to better understand the status of nominal predicates in INSTR case, I will also consider the case of adverbial nominals, that is, nouns that have associated a spatial (a), a temporal (b), and an instrumental (c) meaning. See (5).

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| (5) a. Oni pošli polem.
They went field.INSTR
'They went through a/the field' | b. Vremenami ya zahožu v staruju školu.
Times.INSTR I go-in old school
'Sometimes I visit the old school'. |
| c. Rebenok risujet karandašom.
Kid is-drawing pencil.INSTR
'A/The kid is drawing with a pencil' | |

Cognate objects in Russian represent another instantiation of INSTR nominals. As it was shown by Pereltsvaig (1999), they are marked with ACC or INSTR, but these two types of cognate objects differ in their syntactic behavior. Only cognate nominals in INSTR case (6a) behave like predicative nominals and adverbials. Consequently, they can be coordinated with manner adverbials but not with nominal objects in accusative case. Furthermore, they are incompatible with strong determiners (cardinal numerals, demonstratives etc.), as shown in (6b). INSTR cognate objects cannot be pronominalized (6c), whereby they pattern with predicative nominals.

- (6) a. On ulybnulsja ščastlivoj ulybkoj.
He smiled happy.INSTR smile.F.INSTR
'He smiled a happy smile'
- b. *On ulybnulsja etoj ulybkoj.
He smiled this.INSTR smile.INSTR
'He smiled this smile'
- c. *On ulybnulsja ej.
He smiled she.INSTR
'He smiled it (=a happy smile)'

Assuming de Hoop's (1992) distinction between strong and weak cases and Espinal and Mateu's (2011) analysis of the position of bare nominals in argument structure, I will argue that, parallel to the fact that bare nominals in Romance can only occur in object position of *have*-like predicates and in object position of relational P-like structures, bare nominals in INSTR case in Russian can only appear in object position of an abstract P-like structure that assigns INSTR case to the nominal. This P-like functional projection is either part of the argument structure of the verb (as in (7a)), or it is a mere adjunct (as in (7b)).



The first structure will account for the data in (1)-(4), and the second structure will account for the data in (5)-(6). In both cases the structure assigned to the instrumental nominal constrains its interpretation as a predicate modifier.

Selected References

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