

# High and Low Applicatives in Slovenian

## 1. Introduction

The work on applicatives in the recent years has largely been directed towards providing an essentially syntactic account of the phenomenon, arguing that the applicative argument is introduced by the applicative head in the syntax instead of being licensed through the verb as one of the verb's arguments, Pylkkänen (2002, 2008) and subsequent work. This paper presents how applicative construction data in Slovenian (and also in some other South Slavic languages) cannot be fully incorporated in the Pylkkänen-style approach. In these languages, the applicative head attachment in the syntax is consistent with the meanings proposed for applicative structures, while at the same time the availability of these applicative meanings depends on the inherent semantics of the verb as well. What is more, the diagnostics used to establish applicative meanings in the mentioned approach fail to work. This calls for a reexamination of the analysis of applicatives in the recent literature in order for it to account for the South Slavic data as well.

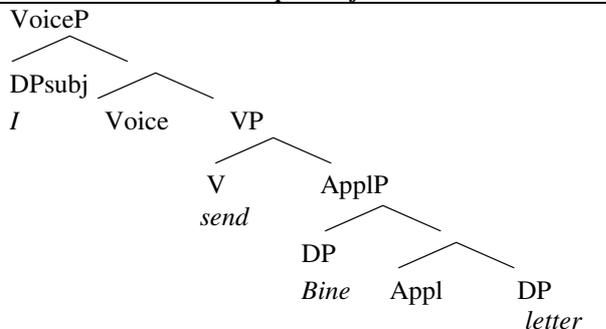
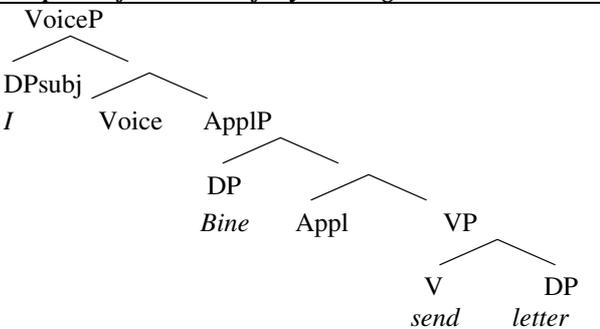
## 2. High and low applicatives

In Pylkkänen's work, the term applicative construction is used for constructions with additional indirect objects. Also, the so-called possessor dative construction is treated as a type of double object construction. The main claim is that in some languages (e.g. English, Korean, Japanese) the applicative argument is introduced by the so-called low applicative head, which attaches below the verb and semantically denotes a relation between two individuals. In other languages (e.g. Albanian, Chaga, Venda, Luganda) the applicative argument is introduced by the so called high applicative head, which denotes a relation between an event and an individual and is attached above the verb. The respective structures are given in the table below (for Slovenian).

## 3. Slovenian and South Slavic applicative constructions

There are two points about Slovenian that I would like to highlight in connection to the analysis by Pylkkänen. Firstly, the double object construction in Slovenian is ambiguous between high and low applicative readings, (1):

- (1)    Binetu            sem poslal        pismo  
        Bine<sub>DAT</sub>        AUX sent        letter<sub>ACC</sub>

| <b>Low applicative:</b> 'I sent Bine a/the letter': the possessive relation between <i>letter</i> and <i>Bine</i> ; <i>Bine is the intended recipient of the letter</i> | <b>High applicative:</b> 'I sent a/the letter instead of Bine': I sent someone Bine's letter instead of Bine; <i>Bine is the recipient of the event of my sending the letter</i> |
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No ambiguity appears with verbs such as *give* and *show* and their derivatives, suggesting that the inherent semantics of a verb cannot be entirely ignored, (2):

- (2) a. Binetu sem dal sok  
 Bine<sub>DAT</sub> AUX given juice<sub>ACC</sub>  
 'I gave Bine some/the juice', \*'I gave someone some/the juice instead of Bine'
- b. Binetu sem pokazal sobo  
 Bine<sub>DAT</sub> AUX shown room<sub>ACC</sub>  
 'I showed Bine a/the room', \*'I showed someone a/the room instead of Bine'

It cannot be argued that only the causative nature of the two verbs in (2) is responsible for unambiguity, since other causative verbs, such as *cook*, are ambiguous, (3):

- (3) Binetu sem skuhal juho  
 Bine<sub>DAT</sub> AUX cook soup<sub>ACC</sub>  
 'I made soup for Bine' or 'I made soup (for someone) instead of Bine'

Possessor dative constructions in Slovenian display an ambiguity between high and low applicative readings in the same way as double object constructions, (4):

- (4) Binetu sem ubil psa  
 Bine<sub>DAT</sub> AUX killed dog<sub>ACC</sub>  
 'I killed Bine's dog' or 'I killed a/the dog for/instead of Bine'

Secondly, one of the main diagnostics for determining low applicatives in Pylkkänen (2002, 2008) is the inability to use depictive modification of the applied argument. Contrary to this analysis, in Slovenian all types of applied arguments, be they high or low, can be modified by depictives, Marušič, Marvin and Žaucer (2008), (5):

- (5) a. Bine ji je izmučeni poslal pismo  
 Bine<sub>NOM</sub> she<sub>DAT</sub> AUX exhausted<sub>DAT</sub> sent letter<sub>ACC</sub>  
 'Bine sent a letter for/instead of her<sub>i</sub>, and she<sub>i</sub> was exhausted' (high appl.)
- b. Bine ji je bolni spekel torto  
 Bine<sub>NOM</sub> she<sub>DAT</sub> AUX sick<sub>DAT</sub> baked cake<sub>ACC</sub>  
 'Bine baked her<sub>i</sub> a cake, and she<sub>i</sub> was sick' (low appl.)

### 3.1. Applicatives in other South Slavic languages

Serbo-Croatian and Macedonian behave in a similar fashion to Slovenian. They allow ambiguity with verbs such as *bake*, *throw* or *send*, but have only the low reading with *give* or *show*. They also allow the modification by depictives with high or low applied arguments. In Macedonian, the high applicative reading is more readily obtained with definite direct objects, while in Slovenian and Serbo-Croatian definiteness does not seem to play a role. Bulgarian can display the ambiguity with some verbs, but only with definite direct objects and not as readily as other three languages mentioned. Since it does not have the option of depictive modification of the applied argument, the diagnostic using depictives can not be attested.

#### Selected References

- Marušič, Franc, Tatjana Marvin and Rok Žaucer. (2008) "Depictive secondary predication with no PRO". Zybatow Gerhild, ed. Formal description of Slavic languages: The fifth conference, Leipzig 2003. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 423-434.
- Pylkkänen, Liina. (2002) Introducing arguments. Ph.D. dissertation, MIT.
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