The Puzzle of Russian Ditransitives

Quantifier scope contrasts between the Prepositional Dative (1a) and the Double Object Construction (1b), noted by Lebeaux and cited in Larson (1990) as well as a parallel scope contrast between the two variants of the *Spray-Load* Construction due to Schneider-Zioga (1988), have played an important role in theories of argument structure of English ditransitives, with many (most prominently, Bruening 2001) using the scope data in these and similar examples as one of the crucial arguments for proposing distinct, non-derivational structures for these constructions resting on purported structural asymmetries between them, as arguably exemplified by the scope facts.

(1) a. The teacher gave **a book** to **every student**. (∃ > ∀, ∀ > ∃)
b. The teacher gave **a student every book**. (∃ > ∀, *∀ > ∃)

(2) a. Maud draped a cover over every armchair. (∃ > ∀, ∀ > ∃)
b. Maud draped an armchair with every cover. (∃ > ∀, *∀ > ∃)

The English scope facts suggest a picture on which there exists a binary distinction between ditransitives in the language, with both derivational and non-derivational accounts of English ditransitives relying on this distinction to propose two types of structures, either derivationally related, or independently projected. In this context the novel data from Russian, discussed here, presents an entirely unexpected view of ditransitives cross-linguistically, as the Russian scope facts, though strikingly similar to the English ones in many respects, present a much more complex picture and suggest that the distinction between ditransitive predicates is not binary, but a ternary one. The Russian data in (3)-(5) below briefly describe the facts. It turns out that with respect to scope distribution in Russian alternating ditransitives, three kinds of distinctions are found: there are predicates where scope is ambiguous when the order of internal arguments in ACC > DAT/OBL (with Dative treated as an Oblique case), while the DAT/OBL > ACC order yields a surface scope frozen interpretation, in complete parallelism with the English (1b) and (2b). Another group of Russian ditransitives, exemplified in (4), behaves effectively as a mirror image of those exemplified in (3), with ACC > DAT/OBL order yielding frozen scope. Finally, and quite unexpectedly, Russian exhibits a third class of alternating ditransitives, which yield ambiguous scope on either order of the two internal argument QPs (cf. 5a and 5b).

(3) a. Maša našla [kakuju-to knigu]$_{\mathbf{ACC}}$ (každomu studentu)$_{\mathbf{DAT}}$ (∃ > ∀, ∀ > ∃)
Masha found [some book]$_{\mathbf{ACC}}$ [every student]$_{\mathbf{DAT}}$
'Masha found some book for every student'
b. Maša našla (kakomu-to studentu)$_{\mathbf{DAT}}$ [každuju knigu]$_{\mathbf{ACC}}$ (∃ > ∀, *∀ > ∃)
Masha found [some student]$_{\mathbf{DAT}}$ [every book]$_{\mathbf{ACC}}$
'Masha found some student every book'

(4) a. Maša obeskuražila (kakim-to postupkom)$_{\mathbf{INSTR}}$ [každogo opponenta]$_{\mathbf{ACC}}$ (∃ > ∀, ∀ > ∃)
Masha discouraged [some act]$_{\mathbf{INSTR}}$ [every opponent]$_{\mathbf{ACC}}$
'Masha discouraged with some act every opponent'
b. Maša obeskuražila [kakogo-to opponenta]$_{\mathbf{ACC}}$ (každym postupkom)$_{\mathbf{INSTR}}$ (∃ > ∀, *∀ > ∃)
Masha discouraged [some opponent]$_{\mathbf{ACC}}$ [every act]$_{\mathbf{INSTR}}$
'Masha discouraged some opponent with every act'

(5) a. Maša zaveščala [*(kakoe-to imenie)]$_{\mathbf{ACC}}$ [*(každomu drugu)]$_{\mathbf{DAT}}$ (∃ > ∀, ∀ > ∃)
Masha bequeathed [some estate]$_{\mathbf{ACC}}$ [every friend]$_{\mathbf{DAT}}$
'Masha bequeathed some estate to every friend'

b. Maša zaveščala [*(kakomu-to drugu)] [*(každoe imenie)] (∃ > ∀, ∀ > ∃)
Masha bequeathed [some friend]$_{\mathbf{DAT}}$ [every estate]$_{\mathbf{ACC}}$
'Masha bequeathed to some friend every estate'

With the scope judgments being notoriously difficult, we present a number of tests that support the above classification of Russian ditransitives into three distinct groups, based on their scope distribution. We further argue that with all Russian alternating ditransitives falling into one of the three groups of predicates, schematized in (6), QP scope distribution serves to indicate deep structural differences between the three groups. Specifically, adopting the account of scope freezing in Antonyuk (2015), we argue that the specific scope fluidity-scope freezing distribution patterns, which in Russian (and Ukrainian) extend far beyond alternating ditransitive predicates, argue for a derivational account of Russian ditransitives that follows from the Scope Freezing Generalization (7).

(6) **Group 1:** V NP-ACC NP-OBL BASIC ORDER (ambiguous)
V NP-OBL NP-ACC <**NP-OBL**> DERIVED ORDER (frozen)
Group 2: V NP-OBL NP-ACC BASIC ORDER (ambiguous)
V NP-ACC NP-OBL <**NP-ACC**> DERIVED ORDER (frozen)
Group 3: V NP-CASE1 NP-CASE2 BASIC ORDER (ambiguous)
V […NP-CASE2…] NP-CASE1 DERIVED ORDER (ambiguous)

(7) **Scope Freezing Generalization (SFG):**
Scope freezing results when one QP raises over another to a c-commanding position as a result of a single instance of movement.

Specifically, we argue that using the above scope distribution facts and the SFG in (7) as a diagnostic derives important insights into the structure of Russian ditransitives. We conclude that Group 1 and Group 2 predicates, which are the mirror image of each other in terms of QP scope, also differ in important ways structurally and show that while the direct ACC-marked object of Group 1 predicates is a true direct object, what appears to be the direct ACC-marked object of Group 2 predicates is in fact not a true object. Instead, it originates low in the structure inside a PP, with a silent P head assigning it ACC case, with Group 2 predicates thus having a double oblique structure. Finally, for Group 3, which in most ways (except for scope) patterns syntactically with Group 1, we propose a derivational account on which the lower QP in a derived structure raises in a manner that disobeys (7), thus not resulting in scope freezing. The claims regarding the structural differences between Groups 1 and 2 in particular are strongly supported by the contrasts exhibited by the two Groups wrt to the distributive *po-* and the Genitive of Negation test (Pesetsky 1982), as well as by the evidence coming from middles, which suggests that Group 1 ditransitives systematically pattern with unaccusatives while Group 2 verbs systematically and unambiguously pattern with unergatives on classic diagnostics (Burzio 1986). Group 2 predicates, for instance, pattern with unergatives in their ability to take cognate objects, something that is categorically prohibited with Group 1 *or* Group 3 predicates. The latter findings reinforce our conclusion that Group 1-3 ditransitives project a structure with a true direct object whereas Group 2 predicates differ from them in principled ways, with what appears to be an ACC-marked direct object in fact not functioning as an object at all. Our findings thus provide strong cross-linguistic support for Postal's (2005) conclusion that a notion of "object" is not uniform, have important implications for other languages, exhibiting similar scope freezing patterns as well as for the analysis of ditransitive verb phrase structure quite generally.