

RUSSIAN ANTICAUSATIVES WITH OBLIQUE SUBJECTS

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1. Introduction¹

This work examines the two Russian anticausative constructions in (1-2), which consist of (a) a genitive, with a preposition in (1), or in bare form in (2), (b) a nominative as logical object, (c) a verb that can participate in the anticausative alternation and agrees with the nominative, (d) and an obligatory reflexive marker *-s' / -sja*. While such constructions have not attracted particular attention in generative grammar, their equivalents in other Slavic and some Romance and Balkan languages have been discussed by Rivero (2003, 2004),² which inspires our ideas, even though we reach a different conclusion.

- (1) *U Ivana ochki slomali+s'*.
P John_{GEN} glasses_{NOM.PL} broke_{PL+Refl}
a. Possessor reading: 'John's glasses broke.'
b. Causer reading: 'John caused the glasses to break.'

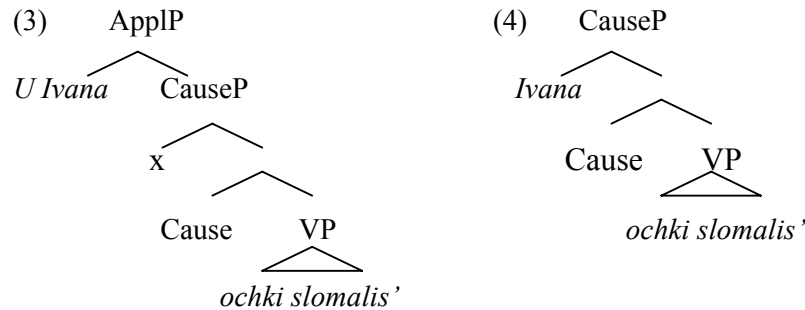
- (2) *Ivana ochki slomali+s'*.
John_{GEN} glasses_{NOM.PL} broken_{PL+Refl}
a. Possessor reading: 'John's glasses broke.'
b. Causer + Possessor reading: 'John caused his own glasses to break.'

We propose that the genitives in (1-2), interpreted as nonagentive Causers, (1b-2b), are oblique 'subjects' that differ structurally. The genitive in (1) is a 'subject' of predication, (3): i.e. a semantic topic in

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² Discussions of anticausative-like constructions with oblique subjects in other languages include (Dabrowska 1997) in *Cognitive Linguistics*, and (Kibort 2001) in *Lexical Functional Grammar for Polish*, Kallulli (1999) in *lexical semantics for Albanian*, and (Cuervo 2003, Fernández Soriano 1999) in *Minimalism for Spanish*.

the Spec of a high Applicative, as in (Rivero 2003). Within the view that anticausatives contain a Cause predicate, we locate the genitive in (2) in the ‘subject’ position of such a predicate, (4). The Applicative genitive in (3) binds an implicit argument (a variable) in the Spec of Cause.



Besides Causer, the genitive in (2) must simultaneously be interpreted as Possessor, (2b), and undergoes Bundling (Reinhart and Siloni 2003), which results in a complex Theta-role (Th-role) in a unique argument.

In our view, there are similarities and differences between Russian genitives and Polish dative subjects as in (5).

- (5) *Jankowi złamały się okulary.*
 John_{DAT} broken_{FEM.PL} Refl glasses_{FEM.PL}
- a. Possessor reading: ‘John’s glasses broke.’
 b. Causer reading: ‘John broke the glasses involuntarily.’
 c. Bene-/Malefactive: ‘John was affected by the glasses breaking.’

A similarity is that anticausatives have oblique subjects as involuntary Causers in the two languages. A difference is that oblique subjects are genitive in Russian, and dative in Polish. Another difference is interpretation; Russian genitives exhibit Possessor and Causer readings, but lack the Benefactive/Malefactive reading. The dominant reading of Russian (1-2) in (1a-2b) is with the genitive (*U Ivana*) as possessor of *ochki*. The second interpretation of interest to this paper is the Causer reading in (1b-2b), which emphasizes that *Ivan* behaved irresponsibly

when he caused the glasses to break directly or indirectly.³ Yakov Testeleets notes an interesting correlation between interpretation and the order *Ivana_{GEN} ochki_{NOM}*, which in our view supports the Causer reading. Such an order implies that *Ivan* needs to be in proximity of the possessum *ochki*, suggesting that he is responsible for the event. The nominative-genitive order *Ochki Ivana slomali+s'* implies that *Ivan* can be far away from the possessum.⁴ Such a difference suggests that *Ochki Ivana slomali+s'* is an ordinary anticausative with a Possessor role, and no Causer role for the genitive.

Section 2 examines subject properties in genitives. Section 3 looks at the anticausative core. Section 4 looks at Bare Genitives as Causers / Possessors. Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. Russian Genitives as Quirky Subjects

Raising and adverbial modification show that the genitives in (1-2) are obliques that resemble Icelandic and Romance quirky subjects.

2.1. Raising

Icelandic oblique subjects raise to satisfy requirements such as EPP features. The same is true of logical subjects of psych predicates in Russian. Raising verbs systematically agree with nominatives, but a nominative raises in (8), and a dative in (9).

(8) *Petr nachal uvlekat+sja lingvistikoj.*
 Peter_{NOM} began be.fascinated+Refl linguistics_{INSTR}
 'Peter began to be fascinated with linguistics.'

(9) *Petru nachala nravit+sja lingvistika.*
 Peter_{DAT} began_{FEM} liking+Refl linguistics_{NOM.FEM}
 'Peter began liking linguistics.'

Raising applies to the genitives in (1-2) with different results. Let us examine the *u* + genitive in (10).

³ Judgments on grammaticality and interpretation come from several native speakers of Russian residents of Canada.

⁴ We also thank several native speakers of Russian in the FASL-13 audience (South Carolina, February 2004) for much helpful discussion on this point.

- (10) a. *U Pavla nachal lomat+sjja compjuter.*
 at Paul_{GEN} began_{MASC} break_{INF+Refl} computer_{NOM/MASC}
 b. *?U Pavla nachal compjuter lomat+sjja.*
 at Paul_{GEN} began_{MASC} computer_{NOM/MASC} break_{INF+Refl}
 c. *U Pavla compjuter nachal lomat+sjja.*
 at Paul_{GEN} computer_{NOM/MASC} began_{MASC} break_{INF+Refl}
 d. *Compjuter u Pavla nachal lomat+sjja.*
 computer_{NOM/MASC} at Paul_{GEN} began_{MASC} break_{INF+Refl}
 e. *Compjuter nachal lomat+sjja u Pavla.*
 computer_{NOM/MASC} began_{MASC} break_{INF+Refl} at Paul_{GEN}
 Causer reading: ‘Paul began to cause the computer to break.’

The genitive can raise, (10a-b), the nominative can raise, (10e), and descriptively, both elements can raise, (10d), suggesting a double Specifier structure. The raising verb always agrees with the nominative, indicating (long distance) Agree (Chomsky 2000), and there are no intervention effects.

Russian psych verbs display similar characteristics. The dative can raise as in (9) above, and the nominative can also raise as in (11), without intervention effects. Agreement is with nominatives.

- (11) *Lingvistika nachala nravit+sjja Petru.*
 linguistics_{NOM.FEM} began_{FEM} like_{INF+Refl} Peter_{DAT}
 ‘Peter began to like linguistics.’

A technical account of how obliques and nominatives raise in (10) is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the *u* + Genitive is in a high Applicative in (3), which, if viewed as an escape hatch for raising as in (McGinnis 2004), would void intervention effects.

Russian genitives resemble Romance oblique subjects. Romance psych constructions display agreement with the nominative, and allow obliques or nominatives to raise without intervention effects, as in Spanish (12a-b). Spanish anticausative constructions with quirky subjects and raising verbs are similar, as in (13a-b).

- (12) a. *A Pedro empiezan a gustarle las matemáticas.*
 Peter_{DAT} begin_{3PL} to like the mathematics_{NOM.PL}

b. *Las matemáticas empiezan a gustarle a Pedro.*
 The mathematics_{NOM.PL} begin_{3PL} to like Peter_{DAT}
 ‘Peter begins to like mathematics.’

- (13) a. *A Pedro empieza a rompersele la computadora.*
 Peter_{DAT} begin_{3SG} to break the computer_{NOM.SG}
 b. *La computadora empieza a rompersele a Pedro.*
 The computer_{NOM.SG} begin_{3SG}to break Peter_{DAT}
 Causer reading: ‘Peter begins to cause the computer to break.’

Now let us turn to Bare Genitives, which can raise, as in (14a-b) and arguably (14c), so they are ‘subjects’. However, (14e) is deviant, suggesting that an embedded Bare Genitive is an intervener when the nominative raises to the matrix.

- (14) a. *Ivana nachali lomat+sja ochki.*⁵
 John_{GEN} began_{3PL} break_{INF+Refl} glasses_{NOM/PL}
 b. *Ivana nachali ochki lomat+sja.*
 John_{GEN} began_{3PL} glasses_{NOM/PL} break_{INF+Refl}
 c. *Ivana ochki nachali lomat+sja.*
 John_{GEN} glasses_{NOM/PL} began_{3PL} break_{INF+Refl}
 d. *Ochki Ivana nachali lomat+sja.*
 Glasses_{NOM/PL} John_{GEN} began_{3PL} break_{INF+Refl}
 e. **Ochki nachali lomat+sja Ivana.*
 glasses_{NOM/PL} began_{3PL} break_{INF+Refl} John_{GEN}

Causer reading: ‘John begins to cause the glasses to break.’

The structure of Bare Genitives with anticausatives in (4) lacks an Applicative Phrase so an escape hatch, and contains a Causer that c-commands the Theme. If (4) is embedded under a raising predicate, the Causer is closer to the matrix and should block raising by the Theme, so (14e) looks like a Minimal Link Condition violation.

⁵ Some examples in (14) are pragmatically odd, but judgments vary. This could be because *begin* requires the action described by the complement to have some duration, and *break* is eventive with the transition from one state to another without duration.

In sum, both *u* and Bare Genitives can front with raising predicates but differ as to intervention effects, which provides support for an Applicative in (3), and no Applicative in (4).

2.2. *Adverbial Modification*

Some adverbs display ambiguity with transitive predicates with a causative reading and nominative subjects, as in (15).

- (15) *Alex broke the car again.*
 a. It was the second time that Alex breaks the car.
 b. It was the second time that the car has been broken.

For von Stechow (1995), the adverb *again* can take an external argument inside its scope when it modifies an Event Phrase, or leave that argument outside of its scope when it modifies a VP. The same ambiguity is found in Russian anticausatives with genitives, (16).

- (16) *(U)Ivana ochki slomalis' opyat'.*
 (P)John_{GEN} glasses_{NOM/PL} broke_{PL+Refl} again
 a. 'It was the second time that (John's) glasses broke.'
 b. 'It was the second time that John involuntarily caused his glasses to break.'

The adverb can modify the change of state, which corresponds to the VP in (3-4), leaving *U Ivana* outside of its scope, so the genitive can be merged in a high position. Alternatively, the adverb may scope over the whole event as in (16b), which corresponds to CauseP in (4) and includes the Causer.

3. **The Anticausative core**

In this section, we adopt the idea that anticausatives contain a Cause predicate with a formally represented external argument, or Causer, and argue that (1-2) share such a core but nevertheless differ. In (1), the Causer is a variable / implicit argument that is not syntactically represented. In (2), it is an explicit / syntactically represented argument in the shape of a Bare Genitive. We modify the feature system for Theta roles of Reinhart (2003) to distinguish the genitives as Causers in (1-2)

from Agents and Experiencers. We conclude by pointing to differences between our analysis and (Rivero 2003, 2004).

3.1. *Implicit vs. Explicit Causers*

There are several views on anticausatives. Chierchia (1989) and Reinhart (1996), among others, propose a derivation from causative to anticausative. Parsons (1990) and Pesetsky (1995), among others, derive the transitive from the intransitive by adding Cause. Levin & Rappaport Hovav (1995) suggest that both transitive and intransitive forms involve Cause.

In this paper, we propose that Russian (1-2) repeated as (17a-b) contain Cause with a formal external argument or Causer, as in (3-4) repeated as (18a-b). The Causer is implicit (a variable) with the *u* + Genitive in (18a), and the (explicit) Bare Genitive in (18b). We now motivate this claim.

- (17) a. *U Ivana ochki slomali+s'.*
 P John_{GEN} glasses_{NOM.PL} broken_{PL}+Refl
 b. *Ivana ochki slomali+s'.*
 John_{GEN} glasses_{NOM.PL} broken_{PL}+Refl
- (18) a. [_{AppP} U Ivana [_{CauseP} X [Cause [_{VP} ochki slomali+s']]]]
 b. [_{CauseP} Ivana [Cause [_{VP} ochki slomali+s']]]

A sign of ‘subjecthood’ of Russian dative subjects is to antecede subject-oriented possessive reflexives, *svoj* in (19a). Such datives also antecede possessive pronouns, *ego* in (19b).

- (19) a. *Goshe_i ochen' nravit+sja svoji dom.*
 Gosha_{DAT} very like+Refl self house
 b. *Goshe_i ochen' nravit+sja ego_i dom.*
 Gosha_{DAT} very like+Refl his house
 ‘Gosha likes his (own) house very much.’

Russian genitive subjects differ from dative subjects. On the one hand, *u* + Genitives can antecede possessive pronouns, as in (20a), but not possessive reflexives, as in (20b).

- (20) a. *U Pavla_i slomal+sjā ego_{i/*j} compjuter.*
 at Paul_{GEN} broke+Refl his computer
 ‘Paul caused his own computer to break (accidentally).’
- b. **U Pavla_i slomal+sjā svoj compjuter.*
 at Paul_{GEN} broke+Refl self computer

On the other hand, Bare Genitives cannot antecede possessive pronouns or possessive anaphors, as shown in (21).

- (21) **Ivana ego / svoi ochki slomali+s’.*
 John_{GEN} his_{GEN} /self_{PL} glasses_{PL} broke+Refl
 ‘*John’s own glasses broke.’
 ‘*John broke his own glasses (accidentally).’

We attribute such differences to (18a-b). The *u* + Genitive is a semantic topic in a high Applicative Phrase, (18a), comparable in meaning and structure to a Hanging Topic / Left-Dislocated phrase. The Applicative takes as complement CauseP with an external argument, and a VP complement with the Theme. If the external argument of Cause is implicit in (18a), namely, a saturated argument available in semantics but not syntax, then it cannot be a syntactic binder of a possessive anaphor, which correctly excludes (20b). The possessive pronoun in (20a) is a resumptive item for the *u* + Genitive in the Applicative equivalent to a structural Topic.

U + Genitives differ from dative logical subjects. A common assumption is that dative Experiencers are explicit syntactic arguments of psych verbs, and c-command the Theme. On this view, Experiencers can antecede possessive anaphors, as in (19a).

In sum, if *u* + Genitives are (a) in an Applicative as in (18a), (b) not semantic / syntactic arguments of the predicate, and (c) bind an implicit external argument of Cause, they should not display the antecedence relations of dative Experiencers usually considered the most prominent argument of psych verbs.

Bare Genitives cannot antecede pronouns or anaphors, as in (21). Inspired by (Takehisa 2001), we propose a Case-theoretic account for this restriction. A traditional idea is that reflexive markers in anticausatives indicate absence of accusative, with nominative valued with the Theme. We propose that the Bare Genitive in (17b) is the

external argument of Cause, nominative is for the Theme, there is no accusative, and the genitive case feature of the Causer is valued via the Spec position within the Theme by means of (long distance) Agree. On this view, the Spec in the Theme cannot contain an overt category because its case feature would remain unvalued, which correctly excludes (21). By contrast, the genitive in (17a) can value case via *u*, so in this instance the nominative can contain a genitive in its Spec, as in (20a). In §4, we argue against the alternative with Bare Genitive originating in the Theme and raising, as in Possessor Raising.

In sum, there is a Cause predicate in both (17a-b), and an external argument implicit in (17a), and explicit in (17b).

3.2. *Involuntary Causers vs. Agents*

As stated, in Russian anticausatives, genitives may be interpreted as involuntary / accidental Causers, roughly as in ‘John broke the glasses involuntarily’ in (18a), and ‘John broke his own glasses involuntarily’ in (18b). The semantics of Agent is inappropriate for (18a-b), and genitives as Causers should be differentiated from Agents. Consider (22a-b).

- (22) a. *Ivan razbil stakan.*
 John_{NOM} broke glass_{ACC}
 ‘John broke the glass.’
- b. *(U) Ivana stakan razbil+sja.*
 at John_{GEN} glass_{NOM} broke+Refl
 ‘John broke the glass unwillingly.’

In the nominative-accusative frame in (22a), *Ivan* may denote an Agent that willfully brings about the state of affairs defined by the verb. Such a reading is absent from *(U) Ivana* in (22b); in genitive-nominative frames, the human genitive receives an accidental reading: a causer that lacks control over the event defined by the verb. With this reading, the genitive must be human, so (23) is comprehensible but odd because it confers animacy to airplanes. Oblique subjects are nonagentive, which translates as ‘accidental’ with genitives as Causers in (22b).

- (23) *??U samoljota slomal+sja dvigatel’.*
 at airplane_{GEN} broke+Refl engine_{NOM}
 ‘?The airplane caused the engine to break.’

Let us see if accidental causation can be accommodated in the feature system of Reinhart (2003) in (24), where *m* stands for mental state, and *c* for cause.

- (24)
- a. [+c+m] - agent
 - b. [+c-m] - instrument
 - c. [-c+m] - experiencer
 - d. [-c-m] - theme / patient
 - e. [+c] - cause (Unspecified for *m*); consistent with either (a) or (b).
 - f. [+m] - ?
 - g. [-m] - (Unspecified for *c*): subject matter /locative source
 - h. [-c] - (Unspecified for /*m*): goal, benefactor typically dative (or PP).

No cluster in (24) captures genitives as involuntary Causers in Russian, or dative equivalents in other languages in (Rivero 2003, 2004). (24c) for Experiencers of class II verbs such as *fascinate* comes close to describing genitive subjects but does not mention cause, so is not appropriate. Reinhart unifies Goals and Experiencers of class III verbs such as Italian *piacere* ‘appeal’ under (24h), which is unsuitable for Causers. The [+c] feature in (24e) is insufficient because if paired with [+m] to reflect that genitives are nonvolitional results in Agent in (24a). One possibility is a new feature *Volition* [*v*], with genitive subjects in anticausatives specified [+c], and [-v], which could imply [+m], or be subsumed under [+m]. In sum, Russian anticausatives with genitives have an argument with [+m] and (non)volitional features in Cause.

3.3. Comparing our analysis with (Rivero 2003, 2004)

Rivero (2003, 2004) develops an analysis for West, South Slavic, Balkan, and Romance languages with anticausative constructions of the type in Polish (5), proposing that the dative is a subject of predication in a high Applicative Phrase. In this paper, we have adopted the same idea for the Russian genitive in (17a), as in (18a). The crucial difference between Rivero’s analysis and our proposal resides in the anticausative core. We assume that anticausatives contain a formally represented Causer. Rivero assumes that anticausatives undergo Argument Suppression in the lexicon (Reinhart 1996), which means that the

anticausative core in (5) lacks a formally represented Causer both in syntax and semantics. For Rivero, the three interpretations of (5) result from an inferential procedure dubbed ‘Ethical Strategy’ that will not conflict with the reading assigned in semantics to formally present arguments. On this view, the dative in (5) is inferentially interpreted as an accidental Causer because it is a subject of predication that combines with *Zlamaly się okulary* ‘The glasses broke.’, which has no Causer due to Argument Suppression, and an oblique ‘subject’ with a nonagentive dimension.

In this paper, we assign to anticausatives a formally represented Causer, without Argument Suppression. On this view, the Russian genitives in (18a-b) derive their readings from formal grammar, not inference. There is an implicit Causer bound by the *u* + Genitive in an Applicative, and an explicit Causer as Bare Genitive, also interpreted as Possessor. The interpretation of the Russian constructions in (18a-b) seems compositional, with the Benefactive / Malefactive reading with unclear formal characteristics absent. Argument structure, then, is the core ingredient in the interpretation of Russian genitives with anticausatives.

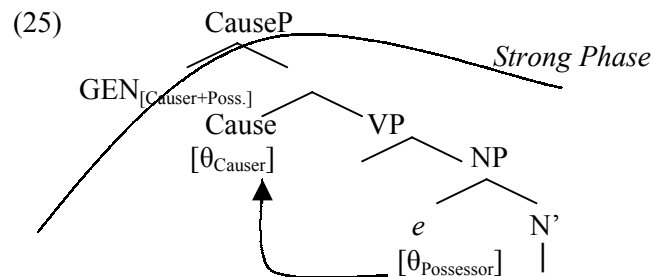
4. Bundling and the Bare Genitive

The last task in this paper is a preliminary account of why the Bare Genitive in (2=17b) is a Causer and a Possessor. We propose that this results from Bundling (Reinhart & Siloni 2003), a noncanonical Th-assignment that combines two roles in a unique argument.

Let us introduce Bundling. Syntax receives as input items from the lexicon, and cannot modify their content. If a role is part of the Th-grid of a predicate, it must either be merged as an argument, or have a residue in syntax or interpretation. Reduction of Th-roles is banned in syntax, while bundling / combination of Th-roles is not excluded. Reinhart and Siloni propose that French *Jean se lave* ‘John washes himself’ indicates Bundling, with two Th-roles residing in a unique argument. Within the minimalist view where structure is built bottom-up, the choice of morphology (*se*) reduces a case. An internal Th-role is not mapped onto its canonical position due to lack of case. The unassigned role is kept on the verb until the external argument is merged. Upon merge of the external argument, the unassigned role is discharged. Bundling retains an unassigned Th-role on the verbal projection until the

relevant merge determined by the cycle (or phase), coupled to the Extended Projection Principle (EPP). Merge as canonical Th-assignment is not available for predicates with case-reducing morphology, so noncanonical Th-assignment as Bundling applies, and must be morphologically marked. In GB, the Theta Criterion prevents Bundling of this type, but this Criterion is not part of the view of reflexivization since (Chierchia 1989), nor a minimalist principle (Hornstein 1999).

As to anticausatives in Russian, the genitive in (17b) in the Spec of Cause is simultaneously interpreted as Causer / Possessor due to *Bundling*, as shown in (25). The Possessor role associated with the Spec of the logical object remains stored and unassigned in the lower NP, a weak phase in the sense of (Chomsky 2001). Upon Merge of the external argument at the level of the strong higher phase, which is CauseP, Possessor is bundled with Causer, and both are assigned to the Bare Genitive as external argument.



One technical implementation of the above idea follows. When the NP is formed, a Specifier for *ochki* is projected but remains empty (*e*), so the Possessor Th-role is not assigned, stays on the noun, and can be carried along the derivation. Such an empty Spec nevertheless contains an unvalued uninterpretable feature (i.e. genitive case). When the VP is formed subsequently, reflexive morphology (*-sja*) reduces the verbal ability to check/value accusative Case, so Nominative on *ochki* will be valued subsequently in the derivation via Agree. If we close the cycle/ phase at the level of the VP, the derivation would crash for two reasons: first, VP is not a cycle/ phase (while CauseP is); second, there is no host to be assigned Possessor. Reinhart and Siloni suggest that the proper domain for the derivation is a cycle (or phase), which requires the Extended Projection Principle to be satisfied too. According to Chomsky

(2001), there are strong and weak phases. Roughly, strong phases are potential targets for movement, carrying an optional EPP-feature, while weak phases are not targets for movement, and do not carry an EPP-feature. Our claim is that the proper cyclic domain or strong phase for the derivation of Russian anticausatives with genitives is CauseP. At that stage, two Th-roles need assignment: the unassigned [Th_{Possessor}] of the noun, which has been retained, and [Th_{Causer}] of the verb. Upon merging of [Th_{Causer}], Bundling applies, that is, [Th_{Possessor}] unifies with the assigned [Th_{Causer}] so that both are discharged on the Bare Genitive in the Spec of CauseP, which is thus necessarily interpreted both as Causer and Possessor. In addition, we proposed in §3 that the Bare Genitive case feature values the uninterpretable feature on the empty Specifier of the lower NP.

An alternative to the above analysis would consist in generating the Bare Genitive in the Spec of the nominative constituent with the role of Possessor, and subsequent movement to the Spec of Cause for the Causer role (see Lee-Schoenfeld 2003 on German datives possessives), reminiscent of Possessor Raising (PR) (Landau 1999, among others). PR in Russian identifies the familiar situation where the raised possessor is marked dative and not genitive, as in (26):

- (26) *Ivanu v drake slomali rebro.*
 Ivan_{DAT} in fight broke_{3PL} rib_{NOM}
 ‘They broke John’s rib in a fight.’

Russian PR is restricted to inalienable possession as in (26), (Šarić 2002). Given that Bare Genitives in anticausatives do not display the semantic or formal properties of PR, we reject the idea that the Possessor moves to the Causer slot in (17b).

5. Conclusion

This paper develops a preliminary analysis of Russian anticausative constructions with two types of genitives, *u* + Genitives and Bare Genitives, which have not received particular attention in the literature. We argued that such genitives are oblique subjects, with similarities with quirky subjects in Icelandic and Romance. The *u* + Genitive in (17a) and the Bare genitive in (17b) differ in structure while sharing an involuntary Causer reading. The *u* + Genitive is a subject of predication in an

Applicative Phrase, and binds an implicit Causer in the Spec of Cause. The Bare Genitive is located in Spec of Cause, and bundles two Th-roles, Causer and Possessor.

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