

TOWARDS AND EXPLICIT DESCRIPTION OF POSSESSIVITY

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Any grammar must account for the category of possessivity. As far as we know this category is not yet exhaustively described for any language. In this paper we want to demonstrate an explicit approach to this complicated language phenomenon. The functional generative grammar proposed by Sgall and worked out in the group of Faculty of Mathematics and Physics, Charles University, is chosen for this description.

Distinction between the ontological notion of possessivity and the language counterpart of it is drawn and distinction between meaning of possessivity and forms of its expression is shown. These distinctions are exemplified on the notion of so-called possessive dative, which is not an expression of possessive meaning. Arguments for establishing this meaning of dative are shown as based on ontological criteria.

Various constructions and expressions used for expressing the possessive meaning are enumerated and their syntactic and semantic character is discussed.

Three main meanings of the verb to have are described: 1. full lexical meaning - a possessive one connected with active - passive transformation, 2. copulative meaning₁ connected with be-construction transformation, 3. copulative meaning₂ connected with any of these transformations. Some differences between copula to be and copulative to have are shown. In the be-sentences the subject member of the class is

named in the predicate. In the have-sentences the object as a single element is attached to the subject.

Similarly different meanings of the verb to belong are stated: 1. location, 2. appurtenance, 3. possession. Classification is rejected as meaning of this verb and is shown as a content phenomenon. Other expressions for possessivity as genitives, possessive pronouns and possessive adverbs are partially discussed and compared with results obtained for verbal expressions of possessivity. Finally a list of important meaning distinctions (e.g. possessivity versus appurtenance) is given and a tentative table of homonymy (and synonymy) of forms of their expressing is outlined.

In addition some simplifications of the complete linguistic description are shown for applications in question-answering systems and some special treatments adjusted to a given purpose are suggested. We suppose that from the point of view of various kinds of applications certain simplifications of the theoretical linguistic conclusions are not only acceptable but in some cases even necessary. It seems for example that in certain sublanguage in a limited area of texts some content regularities are met with such a high probability, that we can accept them in these texts as valid arguments for a change in a description of meaning. It seems also better to use in q-a systems the genitive construction as a basic expression of the meaning of possession and appurtenance rather than have- or belong to-constructions, which seem to be the best underlying structure in a general theoretical description of grammar.