

# The Meaning of EPCs: Possessive Dative and Possessive Locative Juxtaposed

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## 1. Introduction

Besides the internal possession construction (IPC), the external possession construction (EPC) with a dative possessor is commonly used in Slovene.<sup>1</sup> The syntactic difference between the two is that in the latter the possessor and the possessum represent two independent sentence elements, i.e. two participants that interact at clause rather than phrase levels. Pragmatically the two constructions differ in one significant respect: only the latter brings out the affectedness of the possessor by what has happened to the possessum.<sup>2</sup>

(1) a. Peter je razbil mamino najljubšo vazo.<sup>3</sup>

Peter broke Mum's favourite vase

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1 For an overview see Frančiška Lipovšek, "O zgradbah eksogene svojilnosti," *Jezik in slovstvo* 1 (2007), pp. 17–27.

2 Idan Landau, "Possessor Raising and the Structure of VP," *Lingua* 107 (1999), pp. 1–37; James S. Levine, "Remarks on the Pragmatics of the 'Inalienable Dative' in Russian," in Richard D. Brecht and James S. Levine, eds., *Case in Slavic* (Columbus: Slavica Publishers, Inc., 1986), pp. 437–451.

3 Internally Slovene expresses possession through premodifying possessive adjectives and pronouns (mamina/njena vaza "Mum's/her vase") as well as through postmodifying genitive NPs (vaza moje mame "the vase of my mother"). A genitive NP is occasionally found in premodifying function as a stylistic device (mojega očeta hiša "my father's house").

b. Peter je **mami** razbil najljubšo vazo.

Peter Mum-DAT broke favourite vase  
 “Peter broke Mum’s favourite vase.”

Sentence (1a) answers the question *What happened?* or, more specifically, *What did he break?* Sentence (1b), on the other hand, answers the question *What did he do to Mum?* This difference supports the view that (1b) presents the possessor as psychologically affected by the event.

There are four major factors contributing to the possessor’s affectedness: animateness of the possessor, inalienability of the possessum, the type of verb in the predicator, the syntactic function of the possessum.<sup>4</sup> The more intimate the relationship between the possessor and the possessum, the more likely that the speaker will adopt the possessor’s perspective and use the Possessive Dative construction (PDC):

(2) a. \*Med pretepom je Peter razbil Simonov nos.

during fight Peter broke Simon’s nose

b. Med pretepom je Peter **Simonu** razbil nos.

during fight Peter Simon-DAT broke nose  
 “Peter broke Simon’s nose during the fight.”

If we consider the affectedness of the possessor, example (2b) runs parallel to (1b). The two sentences, however, differ in the fact that in (1b) the possessum (the vase) and the possessor (Mum) represent two distinct entities whereas in (2b) the possessum (the nose) and the possessor (Simon) are in a part-whole relationship and constitute one and the same entity in the real world.

Syntactically the dative possessor contrasts sharply with the non-possessive dative object in the prototypical dative construction. The dative possessor is “free,” i.e. it does not belong to the argument structure of the verb.<sup>5</sup> Semantically, on the other hand, the two dative objects

<sup>4</sup> Martin Haspelmath, “External Possession in a European Areal Perspective,” in Doris L. Payne and Immanuel Barshi, eds., *External Possession* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999), pp. 109–135.

<sup>5</sup> Mirjam Fried, “From Interest to Ownership,” in Payne and Barshi, eds., *External Possession*, pp. 473–504; Haspelmath, “External Possession”; Landau, “Possessor Raising.”

come very close. The affectedness of the possessor in the PDC is explicable in terms of the male/benefactive role typically associated with dative arguments.<sup>6</sup> This thematic role derives from the central function of the dative, which is “to encode entities that are the target of an activity or emotion.”<sup>7</sup> Although the action in (2b) above is directed at the possessum (direct object), the speaker seems more interested in the psychological effect exerted upon the possessor. This makes the PDC ideally suited for idiomatic expressions.<sup>8</sup> In the following pair of sentences, for example, only (3b) is acceptable as yielding the interpretation “terribly pressed for time”:

- (3) a. \*V študentovo grlo je tekla voda.  
           in student's throat was running water  
       b. **Študentu** je tekla voda v grlo.  
           student-DAT was running water in throat  
           “The student was terribly pressed for time.”

Another major type of EPC found in Slovene is the Possessive Locative construction (PLC), in which the possessor takes over the syntactic function of the possessum (in our case that of the direct object) whereas the possessum is demoted to a non-argument position within a prepositional phrase.<sup>9</sup> Its use is more restricted than that of the PDC:

- (4) a. \*Peter je **mamo** razbil po vazi.  
           Peter Mum-ACC broke on vase  
       b. \*Peter je **Simona** razbil po nosu.  
           Peter Simon-ACC broke on nose  
       c. Peter je **Simona** treščil po nosu.  
           Peter Simon-ACC punched on nose  
           “Peter punched Simon on the nose.”

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6 Vera Lee-Schoenfeld, “German Possessor Datives: Raised *and* Affected,” *The Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics* 2 (2006), pp. 101–142.

7 Barry J. Blake, *Case* (Cambridge: CUP, 2001), p. 145.

8 Vera I. Podlesskaya and Ekaterina V. Rakhilina, “External Possession, Reflexivization and Body Parts in Russian,” in Payne and Barshi, eds., *External Possession*, pp. 505–521.

9 Haspelmath, “External Possession.”

The unacceptability of (4a) and (4b) is clear: it is not Peter's grandmother or Simon who were broken through contact with their vase or nose respectively. In (4c), by contrast, hitting Simon's nose means hitting Simon. In both (4b) and (4c), the possessum is a body part representing the place of direct contact with the possessor. But the construction is acceptable only if the whole possessor can be understood as directly affected by the action. Or, as pointed out in the literature, it is compatible only with verbs that allow a metonymic relationship in the sense that they enable identification of a body part with the whole:<sup>10</sup>

- (5) a. \*Peter je razbil **Simona**.<sup>11</sup>  
       Peter     broke Simon-ACC  
       b. Peter je treščil/udaril **Simona**.  
       Peter     punched hit Simon-ACC  
       "Peter punched/hit Simon."

If there are two distinct entities involved ((6a) below), only a PDC can be used: the possessum functions as the direct object and the possessor as the indirect object.<sup>12</sup> If there is one entity involved, the PDC is possible only if the verb can take the possessum as its direct object (6b), and the PLC only if the verb can take the possessor as its direct object (6c):

- (6) a. Peter je **mami** razbil najljubšo vazo. (=1b)  
       Peter Mum-DAT broke favourite vase  
       "Peter broke Mum's favourite vase."  
       b. Peter je **Simonu** razbil / \*treščil / \*udaril nos.  
       Peter Simon-DAT broke punched hit nose  
       "Peter broke Simon's nose."

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10 Jean Roger Vergnaud and Maria Luisa Zubizarreta, "The Definite Determiner and the Inalienable Constructions in French and in English," *Linguistic Inquiry* 23 (1992), pp. 595–652.

11 It should be noted though that in colloquial Slovene the verb *razbiti* is occasionally found with an animate object, meaning "to beat to a pulp" or "to inflict a crushing defeat against the opposing team." So (5a) above could be understood as "Peter beat Simon to a pulp."

12 The terms *direct object* and *indirect object* refer to the accusative and dative objects respectively.

- c. Peter je **Simona** \*razbil / treščil / udaril po nosu.  
 Peter Simon-ACC broke punched hit on nose  
 “Peter punched/hit Simon in the nose.”

The main difference between (6b) and (6c) is that in (6b) the possessum is the directly affected participant whereas in (6c) it merely specifies the place of contact.

Verbs that can take both the possessum and the possessor as their direct objects can be used in both constructions:

- (7) a. Po nesreči ga je udarila z loparjem in **mu** poškodovala koleno.  
 by accident him-ACC hit with racket and him-DAT hurt knee  
 “She accidentally hit him with the racket and hurt his knee.”
- b. S strehe je padla opeka in **ga** poškodovala po glavi.  
 from roof fell roof-tile and him-ACC hurt on head  
 “A roof-tile fell off the roof and hurt him on the head.”

In (7a) and (7b) the event has the same consequences for the possessor: the person gets hurt. The question arising at this point is as follows. Are we dealing with two semantically interchangeable syntactic variants or do the PDC and the PLC differ also in terms of their semantic implications?

As has been proposed within the cognitive framework, it is only the PDC that expresses mental affectedness, i.e. the psychological effect on the possessor.<sup>13</sup> Research into the EPCS in some South Slavic languages has shown that by choosing the PDC the speaker expresses empathy with the possessor whereas there should be no such implication with the PLC.<sup>14</sup> The subsequent sections present the findings of a short

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13 Bernd Heine, *Cognitive Foundations of Grammar* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Bernd Heine, *Possession: Cognitive Sources, Forces and Grammaticalization* (Cambridge: CUP, 1997); Ronald W. Langacker, *Concept, Image, Symbol: The Cognitive Basis of Grammar* (Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991); Friedrich Ungerer and Hans-Joerg Schmid, *An Introduction to Cognitive Linguistics* (Harlow, New York: Pearson/Longman, 2006).

14 Liljana Mitkovska, “On the Possessive Interpretation of the Indirect Object in Macedonian,” *Linguistica Silesiana* 21 (2000), pp. 85–101; Liljana Mit-

study that focused on the use of EPCs in Slovene. Its purpose was to find out to what extent the aforementioned difference between the PDC and the PLC can be observed in cases where theoretically both constructions are possible. Are they associated with one meaning or two?

## 2. PDC vs. PLC in Slovene

For the purposes of the study, the corpus of modern Slovene *Fida PLUS*<sup>15</sup> was used as the source of examples. The search was subject to some restrictions deriving from the fact that the PDC and the PLC differ in some crucial respects. As pointed out in the Introduction, the possessum and the possessor in a PDC may refer to two distinct entities in the real world or one, whereas in a PLC they necessarily constitute one and the same entity. If two distinct entities are involved, the possessive relationship is often far from the prototype, for example in the sentence *Knjige se mu dobro prodajajo* (“His books sell well”) the dative possessor needn’t refer either to the owner or to the author of the books.<sup>16</sup> In the case of the part-whole relationship, by contrast, the relationship is normally interpreted as that of inalienable possession. Inanimate possessors are found in both constructions, although their use is fairly restricted especially in the case of the PDC, which requires a dative object compatible with the male/benefactive role. The relationship between the possessor and the possessum also determines the type of verb that can be used in the construction. It follows from the above observations that

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kovska, “Possessive Locative Constructions in Macedonian” (paper presented at AATSEEL 2007, Chicago, IL, Dec 27–30, 2007); Liljana Mitkovska, “Why Double Marking in the Dativus Sympatheticus?” in Dagmar Divjak and Agata Kochanska, eds., *Cognitive Paths into the Slavic Domain* (Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2007); Ljiljana Šarić, “On the Semantics of the ‘Dative of Possession’ in the Slavic Languages: An Analysis on the Basis of Russian, Polish, Croatian/Serbian and Slovenian Examples,” *Glossos* 3 (2002) <http://seelrc.org/glossos/issues/3/saric.pdf>

15 Accessible at <http://www.fidaplus.net/>.

16 Cf. also Ada Vidovič Muha, “Pomenski preplet glagolov *imeti in biti* – njuna jezikovnosistemska stilistika,” *Slavistična revija* 46 (1998), pp. 293–323.

the PDC and the PLC do not choose from the same compass of verbs; both are theoretically possible only with verbs that can directly affect the possessum in a part-whole relationship, i.e. verbs that enable physical contact with the possessor through the possessum.

The restrictions were the following:

- Only animate possessors were included because the focus of the study was on the psychological effect on the possessor.
- Only those possessor – possessum combinations were included that could occur in both constructions. This means that in most cases the possessum is a body part, which is due to the part-whole relationship required by the PLC.
- Only combinations with transitive verbs were included. This means that the possessum in the PDC and the possessor in the PLC are always direct objects.
- Only verbs denoting (physical) contact were included: contact with a body part means contact with the whole.
- Only non-reflexive uses were included.

As to the “place of contact,” two types of verb – possessum relationship can be recognized:

Type 1: The possessum has a strong locative force. The prepositional phrase containing it has the function of a predication adverbial:

- (8) Peter je **Ano** poljubil *na lice*. (<< Where did he kiss her? On the cheek.)

Peter Ana-ACC kissed on cheek

“Peter kissed Ana on the cheek.”

Type 2: The locative force of the possessum is intertwined with instrumental force:

- (9) Peter je **Ano** držal *za roko*. (<< How did he hold her? By the hand.)

Peter Ana-ACC held by hand

“Peter held Ana by the hand.”

## 2-1. Type 1

## 2-1-1. PDC &gt; PLC

The analysis has shown that the PDC prevails in cases where the action results in some kind of physical change on the possessum (with verbs such as *hurt*, *injure*, *massage*,<sup>17</sup> *wash*):

(10) a. Prosim, zmasiraj **mi** hrbet.

please massage me-DAT back

“Would you massage my back please?”

b. Po nesreči ga je udarila z loparjem in **mu** poškodovala koleno.

by accident him-ACC hit with racket and him-DAT hurt knee

“She accidentally hit him with the racket and hurt his knee.” (= 7a)

Very often, however, the PLC is found in a practically identical context:

(11) a. Prosim, zmasiraj **mi** hrbet.

please massage me-DAT back

b. Prosim, zmasiraj **me** po hrbtu.

please massage me-ACC on back

“Would you massage my back please?”

(12) a. Mati je **otroku** umila obraz.

mother child-DAT washed face

b. Mati je **otroka** umila po obrazu.

mother child-ACC washed on face

“The mother washed the child’s face.”

What should also be taken into consideration is the scope of the action. In contrast to the PLC, the PDC presents the whole possessum as affected (even if the physical change occurs only on a small part of it). For illustration:

(13) a. Stroj **ga** je poškodoval po roki.

machine him-ACC hurt on arm

b. Stroj **mu** je poškodoval roko.

machine him-DAT hurt arm

“He hurt his arm operating the machine.”

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17 Relieving tension in muscles can be regarded as a kind of physical change.



The message of both sentences is “He has injured his arm,” but while (13a) implies only that there is an injury somewhere on his arm, (13b) implies that the person in question may not be able to use his arm now. In (13b) the injury is presented as affecting the whole arm, which can be further supported by the questionable acceptability of (14b) below (it is presupposed here that the injured man’s work involves using the arm in question):

- (14) a. Stroj **ga** je poškodoval po roki, a je normalno nadaljeval z delom.  
 machine him-ACC hurt on arm but normally continued with work  
 b. ? Stroj mu je poškodoval roko, a je normalno nadaljeval z delom.  
 machine him-DAT hurt arm but normally continued with work  
 “He hurt his arm operating the machine, but he continued with his work as if nothing had happened.”

The same implications can be observed with articles of clothing, the relationship between the whole and its component parts running parallel to the one between a (human) body and the body parts:

- (15) a. **Srajci** sem najprej zlikala ovratnik.  
 shirt-DAT first ironed collar  
 b. ? **Srajco** sem najprej zlikala po ovratniku.  
 shirt-ACC first ironed on collar  
 c. **Srajco** sem najprej zlikala po hrbtu.  
 shirt-ACC first ironed on back  
 “First I ironed the shirt’s collar [a-b] / back [c].”

Ironing a shirt’s collar obviously does not imply ironing the whole shirt, as opposed to ironing its back, which represents the “main body” of the shirt. What is particularly interesting about this example is that the PLC is questionable with *collar* even if the context is such that ironing the collar is understood as the final step in ironing the shirt:

- (16) a. ? **Srajco** sem nazadnje zlikala še po ovratniku.  
 shirt-ACC last ironed also on collar  
 b. **Srajci** sem nazadnje zlikala še ovratnik.  
 shirt-DAT last ironed also collar  
 “At the end I ironed the shirt’s collar.”

Although it can be easily inferred from (16a) that the whole shirt was ironed, the sentence sounds rather unnatural. Conversely, sentence (15c) above is perfectly acceptable although the shirt's back was ironed before any other parts. The two examples prove the relevance of the relationship between the possessor and the possessee. A part-whole relation does not suffice; it has to be a metonymic relation as well: the part has to be identifiable with the whole.

This, of course, depends largely on the type of event. If we replace the verb *zlikati* ("to iron completely and thoroughly") with *polikati* ("to iron quickly, not thoroughly"), or with its imperfective counterpart *likati* ("to iron"), the part-whole relationship will normally be felt as a metonymic one:

- (17) a. **Srajco** sem polikala samo po hrbtu / ovratniku.  
 shirt-ACC ironed quickly only on back collar  
 "I ironed quickly only the back / the collar of the shirt."  
 b. **Srajco** je najlažje likati po hrbtu / ovratniku.  
 shirt-ACC is easiest to iron on back collar  
 "The back / The collar of a shirt is easiest to iron."

### 2-1-2. PLC > PDC

The PLC prevails with actions that do not result in a physical change (e.g. with the verbs *kiss*, *caress*, *stroke*, *pat*). In fact, the PDC is rarely used in such cases, although the context may be such that it implies a psychological effect on the possessor.

- (18) a. Nežno **jo** je poljubil na lice.  
 gently her-ACC kissed on cheek  
 "He gently kissed her on the cheek."  
 b. Nežno **mu** je poljubila lice, potem nos.  
 gently him-DAT kissed cheek then nose  
 "She gently kissed his cheek, then his nose."  
 (19) a. Obrisal ji je solze in **jo** pobožal po laseh.  
 wiped her-DAT tears and her-ACC stroked on hair  
 "He wiped away her tears and stroked her hair."

- b. »Zdravo, ljubica,« jo je pozdravil in **ji** pobožal lase.  
 hello honey her-ACC greeted and her-DAT stroked hair  
 “‘Hello, honey,’ he said in greeting and stroked her hair.”

The only exception in this respect is the combination *kiss + hand*: there were 234 examples of the PDC and only 4 examples of the PLC found in the corpus. It should be noted though that in the case of the PDC kissing one’s hand is almost invariably understood as a form of greeting or as a sign of respect or gratitude:

- (20) a. Poljubil **ji** je roko kot pravi gospod.  
 kissed her-DAT hand like true gentleman  
 “He kissed her hand like a true gentleman.”
- b. Ozdravljeni fant **mu** skuša poljubiti roko, nič drugega mu ne  
 cured boy him-DAT tries to kiss hand nothing else him not  
 more dati v zahvalo.  
 can give in gratitude  
 “The cured boy is trying to kiss his hand; this is the only way he can express his gratitude.”

In the following example the PDC is used to indicate annoyance or surprise:

- (21) Že tretjič si **mi** poljubil roko, odkar sva tu. Kaj te je pa obsedlo?  
 already third time me-DAT kissed hand since be.PRES here what you-ACC obsessed  
 “You’ve kissed my hand three times already! What’s got into you?”

## 2-2. Type 2

With verbs like *grab, seize, hold, pull* the PLC is used when the possessum is not only the place of contact but can be understood as a kind of instrument. Besides body parts, articles of clothing are often found in this construction. The PP containing the possessum is not purely locative in meaning; it also expresses manner:

- (22) a. Zgrabil/Prijel/Držal **jo** je za roko.  
 grabbed took held her-ACC by hand  
 “He grabbed/took/held her by the hand.”

b. Zgrabil **ga** je za ovratnik.  
 seized him-ACC by collar  
 “He seized him by the collar.”

c. Pocukala **ga** je za rokav.  
 tugged him-ACC at sleeve  
 “She tugged him at the sleeve.”

The action affects the possessor as a whole; the possessum can be omitted:

(23) b. Zgrabil **me** je (za roko) in me potegnil bliže.  
 grabbed me-ACC by hand and me-ACC drew closer  
 “He grabbed me (by the hand) and drew me close to him.”

c. Zgrabil **ga** je (za vrat) in ga začel daviti.  
 grabbed him-ACC by neck and him-ACC started to strangle  
 “He grabbed him (by the neck) and started to strangle him.”

If the PDC is used with such verbs, the meaning is different; the focus is on the possessum:

(24) a. Stroj **mu** je zgrabil roko in zmečkal dlan.  
 machine him-DAT grabbed hand and crushed palm  
 “The machine grabbed his hand and crushed his palm.”

b. **Dojenčku** držimo glavico in vrat.  
 baby-DAT support head and neck  
 “One should support the baby’s head and neck.”

Especially interesting are the following examples from the corpus, where the focus is shifted from the possessor in the first part of the sentence to the possessum in the second part (as opposed to (23) above):

(25)a. Zgrabil **ga** je za roko in mu jo krepko stisnil.  
 grabbed him-ACC by hand and him-DAT it-ACC firmly squeezed  
 “He grabbed him by the hand and squeezed it firmly.”

b. Zgrabil **me** je za roko in je ni izpustil.  
 grabbed me-ACC by hand and it-GEN did not let go  
 “He grabbed me by the hand and would not let go of it.”

- c. Zgrabil **jo** je za roko in ji poskušal izpuliti denarnico.  
 grabbed her-ACC by hand and her-DAT tried to pluck wallet-ACC  
 “He grabbed her by the hand and tried to pluck the wallet out of it.”

In (25a) and (25b) the possessum moves from a non-argument position in the first clause to an argument position in the coordinate clause, which is a clear sign of a shift in focus. Some explanation is needed on (25c) though. The possessum is overtly expressed only in the first clause, but this shouldn't suggest that it is not brought into focus. To pluck a wallet means to pluck it out of somebody's hand, so it is in fact the hand which is “under attack,” i.e. directly affected by the action.

### 3. Discussion

The analysis has shown that there is a perfect parallel between the prevalent construction and the semantics of the verb in the predicator. The PDC prevails with verbs denoting damage (e.g. *hurt*, *injure*), and those verbs denoting surface contact that entail some kind of change in the state of the possessor (e.g. *wash*, *massage*). The PLC, conversely, prevails with “touch verbs” (e.g. *kiss*, *caress*) and “hold verbs” (e.g. *hold*, *grab*), which denote either momentary or prolonged surface contact with the possessor but do not entail any change of state.<sup>18</sup>

The view that the PDC entails a psychological effect on the possessor is supported by the following restrictions on its use:

1. The PDC prevails if the action effects some kind of physical change in the state of the possessum. It is more likely that the speaker will express empathy with the possessor if something “concrete” happens to him.
2. If there is no physical change involved, the PDC prevails only if the action has a specific pragmatic function (a greeting, sign of respect etc) which psychologically affects the possessor.

However, a question arises at this point if mental affectedness is found with the PDC only. If we, for example, consider the pair of sen-

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18 For classification see Beth Levin, *English Verb Classes and Alternations: A Preliminary Investigation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

tences in (18), repeated below as (26), no big difference in meaning can be observed between (a) and (b).

(26) a. Nežno **jo** je poljubil na lice.

gently her-ACC kissed on cheek

“He gently kissed her on the cheek.”

b. Nežno **mu** je poljubila lice, potem nos.

gently him-DAT kissed cheek then nose

“She gently kissed his cheek, then his nose.”

A similar problem is presented by idiomatic usage. As was pointed out in the Introduction, the dative argument with its male/benefactive role makes the PDC ideally suited for idiomatic expressions:

(27) a. Sponzorji so **ji** dihali za ovratnik.

sponsors were her-DAT breathing down collar

“The sponsors were breathing down her neck.”

b. Tožba **mu** je popolnoma izpraznila žepe.

lawsuit him-DAT completely emptied pockets

“The lawsuit completely emptied his pockets.”

Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the psychological effect on the possessum in (28) below, the two idioms with the Possessive Locative conveying practically the same message as (27a) and (27b) respectively:

(28) a. Za vrat so **jo** držali sponzorji.

by neck her-ACC held sponsors

“The sponsors were holding her by the neck.”

b. Tožba **ga** je pošteno udarila po žepu.

lawsuit him-ACC severely hit on pocket

“The lawsuit severely hit his pocket.”

The answer to this puzzle is that the PLC is not incompatible with mental affectedness, the difference is only that in the PLC the meaning arises from the context (i.e. the hearer speculates about the effect on the possessor on the basis of the context) whereas in the PDC it is the very construction that presents the possessor as psychologically affected.

The possessor’s mental affectedness, however, does not bring the possessor into focus. By substituting the PDC for the IPC the focus

remains on the possessum, and it is always the whole possessum that is presented as affected (see (13b) in 2-1-1). In the PLC, on the other hand, the focus is on the possessor. This is reflected in the fact that in the PLC the possessum can be omitted without considerably affecting the meaning.

Additional evidence for the special function of the PDC is the existence of a PDC with a demoted possessum, which is used with verbs denoting mental contact. Verbs of mental contact are not compatible with the PDC prototype because mental contact entails contact with the possessor as a whole, and this places the possessor in focus rather than the possessum. With the possessum in a non-argument position, however, this special type of PDC makes it possible for the speaker to present the possessor in the same way as in the case of the PDC prototype (i.e. as psychologically affected), yet without focusing on the possessum.

(29) Pogledal **ji** je globoko v oči.

looked her-DAT deep in eyes

“He looked her deep into the eyes.”

(30) a. Pogledal **jo** je (globoko) v oči.

looked her-ACC deep in eyes

“He looked her deep into the eyes.”

b. \*Pogledal **ji** je oči.

looked her-DAT eyes

“He looked at her eyes.”

It should be noted that sentence (30b) would be acceptable only if the intended meaning was that of somebody (e.g. a doctor) examining the girl’s eyes, i.e. if there was no mental contact implied.

The existence of the PDC with a demoted possessum is yet another proof that the need to present the possessor as indirectly, psychologically affected by the action is a key factor conditioning the speaker’s choice between the two constructions: if the PLC could perform this function, there would be no need for a PDC in such cases.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The analysis of Slovene examples has confirmed the cognitivist view that the PDC and the PLC are not just two syntactic alternatives but represent two different constructions with two distinct meanings. In cases where a metonymic relationship between the possessor and the possessum can be established, both are theoretically possible but not generally interchangeable. The PDC prevails with verbs that entail a change of state through physical contact whereas the PLC prevails with verbs of surface contact that do not entail any change of state. It can be concluded that the PDC and the PLC are used in Slovene to express two semantic alternatives, the choice between the two reflecting the speaker's perspective of the event: the PDC brings the possessum in focus and presents the possessor as the indirectly, psychologically affected entity whereas the PLC brings the possessor in focus and uses the possessum merely to specify the place of contact.