

# Core and peripheral inalienable nouns in Russian

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## Introduction

This research focuses on the problem of inalienable nouns in Russian. Inalienable noun is a noun that refers to something understood as necessarily possessed. Syntactically it allows less marked possessive form.

## Main goals

- > Investigate main properties of 'candidate' categories of inalienable nouns
- > Define core and peripheral categories of inalienable nouns in Russian.

## Basic definition

Inalienable noun – a noun that refers to something understood as necessarily possessed.

Syntactically it allows less marked possessive form.

(1) zero possessive marker in Dogon

*U ba*

you father

'your father'

(2) zero possessive marker in Kayardild

*dangkaa thukanda*

man chin

'man's chin'

(3) implicit possessive in Russian

*Petya pozvonil mame.*

Peter.NOM called mother.DAT

'Peter called his mother.'

*Petya pocheshal ruku.*

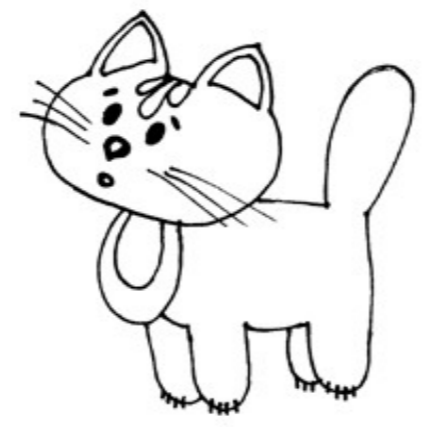
Petya.NOM scratched hand.ACC

'Peter scratched his hand.'



## Possible subcategories

- > Kinship terms
- > Body part nouns
- > Spatial relations
- > Items of personal domain
- > Implements of material culture
- > Human characteristics



## Inalienability and relativity

**Inalienability** correlates with **relativity**.

Relational noun = binary relation <correlate, referent> (e.g. possessive relation)

Correlates of inalienable nouns presuppose their referents; slots for potential referents are added to the discourse model with actualized correlates.

Inalienable nouns, possible properties:

- > **surjective**: for any potential referent there is an actual correlate (*son, daughter*)
- > **everywhere defined**: for any possible correlate there is an actual referent (*father, body*)

## Inalienable nouns in Russian

I examined different categories of inalienable nouns in Russian in terms of their semantic and syntactic properties.

**CORE of inalienable nouns:** kinship terms and human / animal body part nouns.

**PERIPHERY of inalienable nouns:** nouns denoting clothes and parts of items (*nozhka* 'leg', *kryshka* 'lid').

Below different candidate subcategories of inalienable nouns are introduced with their main properties.

**Human and animal body part nouns:**

- > surjective and everywhere defined
- > correlates are well defined (human / humanlike being)
- > possessive relation between referent and correlate is practically unambiguous and obligatory and should be less marked due to language economy
- > implicit possessive is required.

**Kinship terms:**

- > either surjective or everywhere defined
- > correlate and referent domains are well defined
- > possessive relation is less obvious
- > explicit possessives are allowed in ambiguous contexts.

**Nouns denoting clothes:**

- > non-surjective but usually everywhere defined
- > existence of possessor is not obligatory
- > explicit possessives are preferable.

**Parts of items:**

- > non-surjective and not everywhere defined
- > semantic link between possessor and possessed is very weak
- > explicit possessives (genitive construction) are used if necessary.

**\*Attributes (ves 'weight', rost 'height'):**

- > surjective and thus require possessor
- > correlate domain is practically equal to the whole universe of existing entities
- > possessive relation is ambiguous
- > possessives have to be explicit.

I argue that attributes should not be considered as inalienable nouns.

## Referents

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