

The case for Russian Genitive case reopened

The theoretical concern of this paper is a further development of the formal model of Russian genitive proposed in a series of articles by Barbara Partee and Vladimir Borschev (1998, 1999, 2000). The point of their model is to give a uniform analysis to the Genitive constructions with relational nouns, as *brat Ivana* ('Ivan's brother'), and to the non-relational, like *stakan* ('glass') in constructions like *stakan vody* ('glass of water'). The latter are treated as type-shifted: according to the model, the context of the Russian genitive construction coerces them to shift from CN to TCN (see Partee 1983 / 1997), cf. the similar approach proposed by Jensen & Vikner 1994 for English and Danish genitive constructions.

In other words, P&B's model implies that the presence of an argumental (or quasiargumental) relation in the nominal constructions is enough for the Russian Genitive to be able to encode it in the Russian sentence.

Such a statement should be supported by a lexicographical research in order to answer the following two questions:

- (1) Is it true for Russian that in all the cases of argumental relations implied, Genitive is possible as a surface marker?
- (2) Is it true for Russian that every noun of the type CN introduced into a standard Genitive construction (say, the so called Genitive-of-measure-construction, like *stakan vody* 'glass of water') and following the general restrictions of the construction (e.g., being a container) will undergo type-shifting, i.e. will be attested as forming an acceptable Russian phrase?

Positive answers to these questions would support P&B's model. The answers, however, are both negative. We will show that a study of the counterexamples leads to an improved generalization.

First, there are cases, where argumental relations are not encoded by Genitive. Thus, there is no possibility to use Genitive in **vor staruški* 'thief of the old woman' or in **rasskazčik reběnka* 'story-teller of the child', cf. the acceptability of *pomošnik prezidenta* 'assistant of the president'.

Second, phrases like **košelëk deneg* 'purse of money', **karman kljucej* 'pocket of keys', **reka vody* 'river of water' are impossible (if not supported by special adjectives like *celyj* 'entire, whole' or *polnyj* 'full'), so the corresponding CN ('purse'/'pocket'/'river') do not shift their type.

The present paper, like P&B, aims to integrate formal semantics with lexical semantics in the tradition of Moscow semantic school (cf. Apresjan 2000, among others). We show that the existence of counterexamples of the sort cited, however disappointing they may seem for P&B's formal model, does not, nevertheless, refute the main point of the theoretical approach of P&B.

For the present study, lexical restrictions on Russian Genitive nominal constructions were thoroughly analyzed. I studied Genitive in the contexts of: nomina agentis, like *ucitel' Petra I* 'teacher of Peter I' (cf. Rakhilina 2001), "images", like *portret Puškina* 'portrait of Pushkin', and also Genitive denoting measures, like *stakan vody* 'glass of water', time-terms, like *pesnja goda* 'song of the year', spaces, like *životnye tundry* 'animals of tundra' and wholes, like *nožka stula* 'leg of the table'. The paper argues that there is a special restriction, the same for all these contexts, which could be called "condition of stability of the relationship". The Russian Genitive must encode only the stable or permanent relationship and ignore temporal or casual ones.

This restriction makes some of the "argumental" Genitive phrases ungrammatical, because they do not denote permanent relations (cf. **vor staruški* 'thief of the old woman': a thief cannot steal twice from the same place). On the other hand, it's this very restriction which makes it possible in case of stable permanent relation (cf. *stakan vody* 'glass of water') to use Genitive for non-argumental relations. At the same time, in case of non-stable relations (cf. **reka cistoj vody* 'river of clear water': rivers do not permanently contain a fixed amount of the same water, because water flows all the time) Genitive construction is prohibited as well.

This situation seems quite natural as seen in the light of P&B's model, if we construe them as holding that the Russian Genitive encodes <prototypically> argumental relations: it's well known that, prototypically, the argumental relations do reflect the idea of stability of the relationships between the entities denoted by corresponding nouns, as in *Ivan's brother*.

References

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