

NAMES OF CONTAINERS AS A HEAD OF GENITIVE CONSTRUCTION

This paper deals with Russian genitive constructions that denote some quantum of articles and substances. The semantics of noun phrases will be described in terms of lexical classes which can (or can not) co-occur with each other [Knorina 1985, Rakhilina 2000]. For example, it is possible to construct NPs *jaschik jablok* “a box of apples” and *mashina drov* “a car of firewood” in Russian because the head of NP may be interpreted as “containers” [Party, Borschev 1999; Borschev, Party 1999]. The quantification with the help of genitive construction is possible only if the name of container co-occurs with the mass term or with the name of homogeneous articles. And one can not count humans and animals in this way, cf.

- (1a) **komnata gostej* ‘a room of guests’;
**ulej pchol* ‘a hive of bees’.

There is a special class of “multitude” (or “bunch”) terms which serve for this purpose: *gruppa gostej* ‘a group of guests’, *roj pchol* ‘a swarm of bees’. Names of containers can be used only in the construction *polnyj X Y-a* ‘Xful of Y’, cf.

- (1b) *polnaja komnata gostej* ‘a room full of guests’;
polnyj ulej pchol ‘a hive full of bees’.

Meanwhile among NPs that quantify articles and substances some NP’s heads can be used independently, and some NP’s heads must be coupled with *polnyj* ‘full’, cf.

- (2a) *Vypil stakan vody*. ‘He drank a glass of water’;
(2b) ??*Prinios akvarium vody*. ‘He brought an aquarium of water’;
(2b’) *Prinios polnyj akvarium vody*. ‘He brought full aquarium of water’.
- (3a) *Prinios stakan vody*. ‘He brought a glass of water’;
(3b) **Prinios stakan dollarov*. ‘He brought a glass of dollars’;

Are there any obstacles in the way of metonymy “container” -> “quantity”? Example (3b) shows that there is a conflict between types of X-member and Y-member. Suppose that the semantic representation of genitive construction includes a predicate MEASURE that has 3 arguments: 1) object that is measured; 2) parameter of measurement (weight, volume etc.); 3) result of measurement (quantity). The semantic representation of lexeme includes in its turn information about prototypical form, size, mode of use etc. (see Pustejovsky 1995). Applied to the X-member of construction, this predicate reveals information about prototypical parameters and values:

MEASURE_X (glass, ?,?) => MEASURE_X (glass, volume, ≈200-250 ml)

Applying the predicate to the Y-member, we get the value of the 2nd argument and of the 3rd argument, that is not fixed:

MEASURE_Y (water, ?, ?) => MEASURE_Y (water, volume, ?)

MEASURE_Y (dollars, ?, ?) => MEASURE_Y (dollars, value (sum), ?)

Thus the value of the 2nd argument of MEASURE_X conflicts in (3b) with the value of the 2nd argument of MEASURE_Y: “volume” ≠ “sum”.

In (2b) the prototypical volume of aquarium seems to be indeterminate. Therefore, though the meaning of the NP could be interpreted, the sentence sounds unusual.

As to the adjective *polnyj* ‘full’, it joins any name with semantic property (PROTOTYPICAL) FORM: container, but in this case the result of measuring would be ‘a very large number’ rather than prototypical quantity; thus NP in sentence *On uvidel polnuju komnatu gostej* ‘He saw a room full of guests’ can be interpreted as ‘He saw guests; they were in a room; they occupied all the space inside the room; so there was a great number of guests in a room’.

References

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