

Russian Genitives, Non-Referentiality, and the Property-Type Hypothesis

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Note: We presented this work at FASL 16, Stony Brook, May 2007; the written version is awaiting referee reports before final editing in December. Feedback will be most welcome. The written draft is available online: https://udrive.oit.umass.edu/partee/FASL16_BorschevEtAl_FINALAugDraft.pdf

Abstract: Dahl (1971) observed that the same contexts often license Genitive and Subjunctive in Russian, so that the semantic contrast between Gen and Acc may be similar to that between Subjunctive and Indicative. The parallels are clearest in a paradigm due to Kagan (2005) (her paradigm, our examples):

- (1) a. Ja ne zametil, čto jubilej GAI prazdnovali voditeli.
I NEG noticed **that** anniversary GAI celebrated drivers.NOM
'I didn't notice that drivers were celebrating the anniversary of the road police.' (factive)
- b. Ja ne zametil, čtoby jubilej GAI prazdnovali voditeli.
I NEG noticed **that.SUBJUNC** anniversary GAI celebrated drivers
'I didn't notice that any drivers were celebrating the anniversary of the road police.' (non-factive)
- c. Ja ne zametil vodku na stole.
I NEG noticed **vodka.ACC** on table
'I didn't notice the vodka on the table.' (presuppositional)
- d. Ja ne zametil vodki na stole.
I NEG noticed **vodka.GEN** on table
'I didn't notice any vodka on the table.' (non-presuppositional)

The similarity between non-veridicality in the sentential domain and non-specificity in the nominal domain has been explored by Kiparsky and Kiparsky (1970), Dahl, Farkas, Giannakidou, and others. We suggest that both Subjunctive and the Russian Gen often signal the *absence of a presupposition or entailment*: of truth, and of existence, respectively. Their licensing conditions are similar but not identical. A caveat (to be discussed): we do not believe that our proposed semantic generalizations apply to all cases of Object Gen Neg, which may be semi-syntacticized.

Kagan (2005) and [Partee & Borschev \(2004\)](#) propose to treat Russian alternating Genitive NPs as “property type”, the type attributed to opaque objects of intensional verbs in Zimmermann (1993) and Van Geenhoven and McNally (2005), to ‘subjects’ of existential sentences by McNally (1992), Landman (2004), and Paducheva (1985:99), to incorporated nominals in Van Geenhoven (1998), and to Russian ‘small nominals’ in Pereltsvaig (2006). In all those cases, the authors argue that such NPs lack e-type reference and bear no referential index. Arguments for and against this hypothesis for Gen Neg NPs have been given in [Partee & Borschev \(2007\)](#). Here we argue in favor and answer most of the arguments against.

* This talk represents a paper in progress for FASL 16 whose co-authors are Vladimir Borschev, Elena V. Paducheva, Barbara H. Partee, Yakov G. Testelelets, and Igor Yanovich. Comments will be most welcome.