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On non-compatibility of Partitive and Imperfective in Russian

In his "Beitrag zur allgemeinen Kasuslehre" Roman Jakobson paid attention to the fact that in Russian the Partitive case cannot be used in the context of a verb in the Imperfective Aspect. In fact, if in examples below (from Jakobson 1936) you substitute the Imperfective (Ipfv) for the Perfective (Pfv) you should also substitute the Accusative (Acc) for the Partitive (Part):

<i>poel</i> [Pfv] <i>xleba</i> [Part]	– <i>el</i> [Ipfv] <i>xleb</i> [Acc] 'ate bread';
<i>vzjal</i> [Pfv] <i>deneg</i> [Part]	– <i>bral</i> [Ipfv] <i>den'gi</i> [Acc] 'took money';
<i>nadelal</i> [Pfv] <i>dolgov</i> [Part]	– <i>delal</i> [Ipfv] <i>dolgi</i> [Acc] 'made debts';
<i>kupit'</i> [Pfv] <i>baranok</i> [Part]	– <i>pokupat'</i> [Ipfv] <i>baranki</i> [Acc] 'to buy rolls'.

The question is, what is the nature of this restriction: should it be accounted for as a conventional rule of grammar – a kind of agreement, or it has a semantic motivation. Arguments are adduced in favour of the latter hypothesis.

Partitives express quantity, so Partitives should be considered on the background of other noun phrases with a quantity marker – quantitative phrases (QP). A QP may include a numeral, as in example (1); a marker of indefinite quantity, as in (2); a marker of a part, as in (4), and so on. In the examples below QPs are underlined.

In Wierzbicka 1967 the issue of combinability of a QP – consisting of a numeral and a noun – with the aspectual forms was touched upon. Wierzbicka demonstrated that, in Polish, an Ipfv verb cannot be substituted for a Pfv one if its direct object is a QP. The same is true for Russian. Indeed, in examples from (1) to (5) (analogous to some of those used by Wierzbicka) a-sentences, with the Pfv, are OK, while b-sentences, with the Ipfv substituted for the Pfv, are doubtful or even ungrammatical:

- (1) a. Ja *prochel* [Pfv] tri stranicy 'I read three pages'
b. ?Ja *chitaju* [Ipfv] tri stranicy;

- (2) a. Vmesto obeda on s"el neskol'ko sliv 'Instead of dining he ate several plums'
 b. ?On est neskol'ko sliv;
- (3) a. On vypil bokal vina 'He drank a glass of wine'
 b. ?On pjet bokal vina;
- (4) a. Ja *prochital* bol'she poloviny knigi 'I read more than half of the book'
 b. ?Ja *chitaju* bol'she poloviny knigi;
- (5) a. Oni *proshli* tri chetverti rasstojanija 'They covered three quarters of the distance'
 b. ?Oni *proxodjat* tri chetverti rasstojanija.

It is remarkable that QPs with quantifiers *vse* 'all', *ves* 'whole' behave similarly, see example from Glovinskaja 1982 (a-sentence is context free in a sense in which b-sentence is not):

- (6) a. On s"el vse masliny 'He ate all the olives'
 b. On est vse masliny.

Now Jakobson's examples with Partitives form a natural continuation of this raw – (7b) and (8b) are definitely ungrammatical:

- (7) a. Ja kupil [Pfv] xleba 'I bought some bread'
 b. *Ja pokupal [Ipfv] xleba;
- (8) a. On prines drov 'He brought some wood'
 b. *On nes drov.

As was noted in Wierzbicka 1967, a noun phrase with a numeral *one* behaves as a true QP, so that (9b) is no less strange than (9c):

- (9) a. On s"el odnu grushu 'He ate one pear'
 b. *On est odnu grushu 'He is eating one pear'
 c. *On est dve grushi 'He is eating two pears'.

Consequently, *On s"el grushu* 'He ate [a] pear' is not understood as 'He ate one pear'. Thus, a generalization of Jakobson's point is possible. But to make it more precise, it must be emphasized that what is excluded in the context of a QP is not the Ipfv as a whole but the Ipfv in the progressive meaning. Indeed, with other meanings the Ipfv in the context of a QP may be admissible. For example, in (6b) the Ipfv is not deviant if understood in the meaning of potentiality (with QP referring to different kinds of olives).

Sentence (10) is correct if the Ipfv is understood in the meaning of *prae-sens historicum*:

- (10) On *delaet* [Ipfv] tri shaga k stene
'He *makes* three steps towards the wall'

Sentence (11) is perfectly grammatical if the Ipfv is used in the meaning of habituality, i.e. as semantically derived from the Pfv:

- (11) Vrach *prinimaet* [Ipfv] za utro 18 bol'nyx
'The doctor *examines* during the morning 18 patients'.

Sentence (12) is OK if the Ipfv is understood in the so called general-factual meaning, i.e. as a quasi-synonym of the Pfv:

- (12) On *sazhal* [Past Ipfv] vse derev'ja v etom sadu
'He planted all the trees in this garden' (example from Glovinskaja 1982).

In the following examples, sentences where the restriction in question holds, are marked not by * but by °, which means that the Ipfv (in this context) is impossible in its progressive meaning.

Thus, on the one hand, the point made by Jakobson should be narrowed – not the Ipfv in general is excluded but the Ipfv in the progressive meaning (note, though, that this is the primary meaning of the Ipfv). On the other hand, Jakobson's point can be broadened: we may speak not only about Partitive QPs but about QPs in general; and not only about the position of the direct object, but about any argumental position of a verb; indeed, the Partitive case in Russian is only possible in the position of a direct object; but a QP may occupy different positions in the case frame of a verb, and all of them should be taken into consideration. For example, in the context of sentence (13) the Ipfv would also be out of place, though it is a prepositional phrase that contains a quantity marker, not the direct object:

- (13) On *otoshel* [Pfv] na 20 metrov 'He *stepped away* 20 meters'.

Moreover, even an adverbial with a quantitative meaning may have the same prohibiting effect on the Ipfv, see *po pojas* 'waist-deep' in example (14) (from Glovinskaja 1982):

- (14) On *pogruzilsja* v vodu po pojas.
'He *dipped* into the water waist-deep'.

Up till now I insisted upon common properties of all the QPs. But examples (1) – (14) are not completely homogeneous, and in order to find semantic explanations for non-substitutability of the Ipfv for the Pfv we must treat different contexts separately. Several relevant features of the context may be

ferent contexts separately. Several relevant features of the context may be distinguished. What follows is a list of features that may give a semantic motivation of non-substitutability of the Ipfv for the Pfv in this or that context.

Feature 1 (“subtotal”). If a QP denotes a subtotal of an activity denoted by the Pfv (i.e. an intermediate result, which was not or may not be planned beforehand) then the Ipfv will be out of place in the same context:

- (15) *Oni unichtozhili* (°*unichtozhajut*) polroty vrazheskix avtomatchikov
 'They *wiped out* half a troop of enemy forces';
- (16) *Sobrali* (°*sobirajut*) men'she centnera xlopka s gektara
 'They gathered less than one centner of cotton per hectar'.

The motivation of the non-substitutability is obvious: the Pfv in (15), (16) denotes the result of the activity, and the QP is at place, while with the Ipfv the same QP must denote the purpose of this activity; but for the activity in progress the quantitative characteristic denoted by this QP is irrelevant – the real purpose of the activity did not concern quantity. See example (17), where it is obvious that the subtotal achieved at a certain moment (which happens to be the moment of speech) does not coincide with its result, for the activity obviously will not stop at that moment:

- (17) *Ja prosmotrel* (°*prosmatrivaju* [Ipfv]) poka tol'ko polovinu vashej rukopisi
 'I *looked through* the half of your manuscript so far'.

The same is true for examples (4) and (5) above. Thus, in contexts such as these the non-combinability of the Ipfv with the QP is explained on the semantic (we can even say on the referential) level.

Feature 2 may be called “series of separate acts” and was elaborated by Wierzbicka: if a QP denotes a set of countable objects and the activity of the subject is naturally divided into a series of acts following one another in time, each act affecting a separate element of the set, then the Ipfv is out of place in this context. Indeed, (9c) is deviant under the progressive interpretation if, as is natural, we imply that he eats one pear after the other, so that the activity is divided into separate acts. Meanwhile (9c) is a perfectly grammatical way to denote a deviant situation when he eats two pears simultaneously. If simultaneity is excluded the sentence is ungrammatical, as is (1b) or (10).

If a QP divides the activity of the subject into a series of separate acts following one another in time the syntactic non-compatibility of the Ipfv and a QP is also motivated on the referential level. Indeed, the progressive meaning of the Ipfv implies a synchronous observer placed somewhere “in the mid-

middle" of the situation (see Paducheva 1986), and this one sees the activity as affecting one element of the set, not the set as a whole (synchronicity of the progressive interpretation of the Ipfv was emphasized already in Wierzbicka 1967). To put it differently: in order to be an obstacle for the use of the Ipfv the plurality in the QP must be *distributive over time*: the activity should be distributed in time along the "raw" of elements denoted by the QP. In other words, it is the QP that should determine the limit of the activity. In fact, see example (18) (from Wierzbicka 1967):

- (18) Ona sidela za stolom i kormila [Ipfv] dvoix detej
'She was sitting at the table and *giving food to two children*'.

Here the QP does not dissect the activity into separate discrete acts because the limit of the activity is set not by this QP but, rather, by the amount of food to be eaten: the children eat simultaneously. See also (19):

- (19) Ja ne mog pozhat' emu ruku – ja nes [Ipfv] domoj dva arbuza
'I couldn't shake hands with him – I *was carrying home two water melons*'.

where the limit of the activity is its destination, namely, home, and not the object being carried.

Feature 3, "activity with accumulation of result", or, to use a term from Dowty 1989, "with an incremental theme". See examples (20), (21):

- (20) Zavod vyplavil (^ovyplavljal) 25 tys. tonn stali
'The factory *produced 25 thousand tons of steel*';
(21) Fermer rasshiril (^orasshirjaet) svoi posevnye ploshchdsi na 20 gektar
'The farmer *makes his sown area 20 hectare wider*'.

The QPs in (20) and (21) is not a subtotal of the activity, as in (15) (indeed, the achievement of a certain quantitative result is the direct aim of the Actor), so we cannot appeal to Feature 1; neither Feature 2 gives us an explanation: the action is not divided into separate acts – indeed, steel and space are uncountables. Meanwhile, at every separate moment the activity denoted by the Ipvf affects not the whole amount of the object but only a part of it. This explains the impossibility of the Ipfv (in the progressive meaning) in the context of (20) or (21).

The prohibition motivated by Feature 3 is less severe than the two previously mentioned. Still sentence (22a) is definitely preferable to (22b) in a situation where *den'gi na kvartiru* 'money for an apartment' and *50 tysjach dollarov* '50 thousand dollars' are denotationally equal:

- (22) a. On *zarabatyvaet* [Ipfv] den'gi na kvartiru
'He *earns money for an apartment*'
b. On *zarabatyvaet* [Ipfv] 50 tysjach dollarov
'He *earns 50 thousand dollars*'.

The progressive interpretation is not excluded for (23b), but only on the condition that the Ipfv does not denote an activity with a cumulative result (i.e. if all the amount of honey is supposed to be got at a time):

- (23) a. On gde-to *dostal* [Pfv] 30 funtov meda
b. On gde-to *dostaet* [Ipfv] 30 funtov meda
'He *is trying to get somewhere 30 pounds of honey*'.

Features from 1 to 3 can be subsumed under a concept of quantitative limit of the action. If the limit of an action denoted by a telic verb can be defined in non-quantitative terms then the semantics of a Pfv aspect form presupposes an activity denoted by a verb in the Ipfv, e.g.,

He ate an apple $\supset$ *He was eating an apple*.

Meanwhile, if the result of an action (as in (21)) or a process (as in (20)) is given by means of a quantitative phrase then the corresponding implication does not hold: (20') does not entail (20''):

- (20') The factory *produced* 25 thousand tons of steel;
(20'') The factory *is producing* 25 thousand tons of steel.

Analogously, (21') does not entail (21''):

- (21') The farmer *makes* his sown area 20 hectar *wider*
(21'') The farmer *is making* his sown area 20 hectar *wide*¹.

Feature 4, "indefinite quantity". See example (24):

- (24) a. On *kupil neskol'ko zhurnalov* 'He bought several magazines'
b. °On *pokupaet* [Ipfv] neskol'ko zhurnalov.

¹ In Bulygina, Smelev 1989 sentence (a) is compared with (b):

(a) On *vypil* [Pfv] tri chashki kofe 'He drank three cups of coffee'
(b) Oni *reshili* [Pfv], chto na konferenciju poedet Petrov

In both cases the Ipfv (in the meaning of the progressive) cannot be used instead of the Pfv. The reason is that "in both cases the situation can be identified as such only post factum" (p.38). On the other hand, "the result of the process of composing a symphony is to a considerable degree predetermined" (ibid.), and this is why (c) *sochinit* [Pfv] *simfoniju* 'compose a symphony' has an Ipfv counterpart: *sochinjat* *simfoniju*. We would rather say that in (c) the result coincides with the purpose, while in (a) and (b) this is not the case.

Neither of the factors mentioned before is at work here: the action is planned beforehand (so that the QP describes the final result and not merely a subtotal of the activity, cf. Feature1); the set is countable but the activity is not divided into separate acts (Features 2 and 3): all the magazines are bought simultaneously. The inappropriateness of (24b) is of purely pragmatic nature: there is no point in saying "several magazines" if you can simply say "magazines". Indeed, sentence (25) is OK because *neskol'ko* 'several' is pragmatically motivated:

(25) Ona *pokupaet* [Ipfv] *neskol'ko* kvartir 'She buys several appartments'.

Markers of definiteness always turn an impossible Ipfv into an appropriate one:

(26) a. Ivan *provel* [Pfv] polgoda v Parizhe 'Ivan spent half a year in Paris'

b. °Ivan *provodit* [Ipfv] polgoda v Parizhe

c. Ivan *provodit* [Ipfv] eti polgoda v Parizhe
'Ivan spends this half a year in Paris';

(27) a. Ona *vypolnila* [Pfv] polovinu vashego zadaniia
'She fulfilled a half of your task'

b. °Ona *vypolnjaet* [Ipfv] polovinu vashego zadaniia

c. Ona *vypolnjaet* [Ipfv] pervuju polovinu vashego zadaniia
'She fulfills the first half of your task';

(28) a. On *rassadil* [Pfv] dobryx polсотni studentov v svoej gostinnoj
'He seated some 50 students in his drawing-room'

b. °On *rassazhivaet* [Ipfv] dobryx polсотni ljudej v gostinoj

c. Eti pjat'desjat chelovek on *rassazhivaet* [Ipfv] v gostinoj.

In pairs such as *dva – para*; *shestero – poldjuzhiny* the second member is marked as indefinite, and it resists the context of the Ipfv even more stubbornly than the first does.

The marker of definiteness makes appropriate both (28), where the indefiniteness is the only obstacle for the Ipfv, and (26), (27), where the activity is distributed over the elements of the QP in time, so that the Ipfv-prohibition is motivated by Feature 1.

Feature 5, non-referentiality of the QP. Let us look at example (3). Sentence (3b) is ungrammatical because *bokal vina* 'a glass of wine' is a non-referential noun phrase: it can only be understood as denoting a quantitative

measure of the stuff; it does not refer to the stuff itself. For example, you cannot say

Daj mne etot stakan vody 'Give me this glass of water'

Instead, you should say

Daj mne etot stakan s vodoj, lit. "Give me this glass with water"

Here, *stakan* becomes referential and can be used.

Now we return to Jakobson's problem with the Partitive in the context of the Imperfective. In (29) the incompatibility of the Ipfv with the Partitive is motivated by the incremental theme. In fact, drinking is an activity with accumulating result; the amount of object is changing as the activity goes on and, thus, should not be mentioned:

- (29) a. *Ja vypil* [Pfv] vody [Part] 'I *drank water*';
 b. **Ja pju* [Ipfv] vody [Part].

But in (30) and (31) there is no accumulation of result; and a numerical QP in the context of a verb in the Ipfv is acceptable. Why then the Partitive case is not?

- (30) *On neset* [Ipfv] dva arbuza 'He carries two water melons' –
 **On neset drov* [Part] 'He carries wood'

- (31) *Ja varju* [Ipfv] dva jajca - 'I cook two eggs' —
 **Ja varju borshcha* [Part] – 'I cook some borshch'.

My claim is that the semantic obstacle for the use of the Partitive with Imperfective verbs may lie in the inherent indefiniteness of the Russian Partitive. In example (32) Partitive of a noun phrase including a demonstrative pronoun is excluded even in the context of the Pfv, because definiteness contradicts partitivity²:

- (32) a. *Ja svarila* [Pfv] borshcha [Part] 'I cooked some borshch'
 b. *Ja svarila* [Pfv] etot borshch [Acc] 'I cooked this borshch'
 c. **Ja svarila* [Pfv] etogo borshcha [Part].

Thus (30) and (31) have the same semantic motivation as (24): the Partitive case does not combine with the Ipfv on pragmatic grounds – because of its implication of indefiniteness.

² In Kleiber 1995 NPs with a partitive article (such as French *du vin*) and NPs with a numeral (such as *trois maisons*) are considered non-definite - on the same level as NPs with an indefinite article, such as *un maison, des maisons*.

Another solution may be – that the Partitive is not simply indefinite but non-specifically indefinite, i.e. non-referential. In fact, the utterance *Ja svarila borshch* is appropriate for a person holding a saucepan in hands, while (32a) would be unnatural in this situation. The result expressed by a Pfv verb may concern the quantity, while the activity expressed by the Ipfv affects the object and should apply to something referential. In this case examples (30), (31) have the same explanation as (3) and (4).

In examples (33)–(35) the context is created that cancels non-referentiality of the Partitive, so that it becomes acceptable in the context of an Ipfv verb:

- (33) a. **neset* [Ipfv] jablok [Part] ‘carries some apples’
 b. – Cto eto u tebj a sumke? – Da vot, nesu *zhene* [Dat] jablok;
 (34) a. **pokupaet* [Ipfv] mjasa [Part] ‘buys some meat’
 b. – Chto ty zdes’ delaesh? – Da vot, pokupaju mjasa *nam* [Dat] na obed;
 (35) a. **varit* [Ipfv] borshcha [Part] ‘cooks some borshch’
 b. varju *im* [Dat] borshcha na obed.

An objection may be raised of the following kind: if the incompatibility of the Partitive with the Imperfective in Russian is semantically motivated then the same incompatibility should hold for other languages. Meanwhile ungrammatical Russian (29b) is translated into French as (29’); and ungrammatical (3b) is translated into English as (3’); cf. also (29’’) where *some water* is a rough equivalent of the Russian *vody* [Partitive]:

- (29’) Je boit de l’eau;
 (3’) He is drinking a glass of wine;
 (29’’) He is drinking some water.

I suggest that French and English sentences, though being used in the same situations as Russian sentences with the Partitive, are not semantically synonymous to them: Russian (29b) puts emphasis on quantity, which is absent in French (29’) and in English (29’’). The same semantic difference distinguishes the Russian *stakan vina* in (3b) from the English *a glass of wine* in (3’).

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