

**Elena V. Paducheva**

National Institute for Scientific & Technical Information, Moscow

## *The genitive subject of the verb БЫТЬ*

### **Abstract**

Babby's 1980 monograph has introduced the idea that the genitive subject in negative sentences in Russian is characteristic of existential sentences and expresses non-referentiality. The sentences with the verb *byt'* (as, e.g., *Menja ne bylo v Moskve* 'I have not been in Moscow') are an obvious counter-example to this claim: they express location and their subject is referential. It was shown in Paducheva 1997 that the existential component is, in fact, not the only semantic prerequisite for the genitive subject — the other one is a perceptual component as, e.g., in the sentence *Mashi ne vidno* 'One can not see Masha'. The aim of the present paper is to demonstrate that the genitive in localizing *byt'*-sentences conveys the meaning of the presence of the perceiver or the subject of consciousness in the situation.

### **Key words:**

genitive subject, perception predicate, Observer, Russian *byt'*, negation

The genitive construction (i.e. the construction with a genitive subject in a negative sentence) is a sterling argument for the semantic approach to syntax initiated in the works of Anna Wierzbicka. This is an approach that uses the semantics of words and syntactic constructions in order to predict combinability and other aspects of linguistic behavior of words and grammatical constructions (Wierzbicka 1988).

As was shown in Paducheva 1997, there are two groups of "genitive" verbs in Russian (i.e. verbs allowing for a genitive subject under negation).

The first, and fundamental group (usually regarded as the only one, cf. especially Babby 1980) is made up of existential verbs, viz. verbs containing the semantic component 'X exists' (where X, a Thing, denotes the subject), this existential component having the status of an assertion (or implication), not of a presupposition. When a sentence with an existential verb undergoes negation the component 'X does not exist' is created — according to the general principle of interaction between negation and assertions.

Thanks to the semantic agreement with the existential predicate in the component ‘X exists’, the subject X of a genitive verb from the first group is, of course, non-referential:

- (1) *Сомнений* не осталось. ‘There remained no doubts.’  
*Возражений* не возникло. ‘No reservations emerged.’

However, there is a second group of genitive verbs (and predicatives), verbs related to perception. This group’s semantic invariant is the component ‘X is within the Observer’s field of vision’. In this group the subject X may be referential. Here are some examples of verbs from this group (in (2c), (2d) the subject is referential):

- (2) a. *Мороза* не чувствовалось. ‘One did not feel cold.’  
(literally: ‘There was no feel of cold.’)  
b. *Хозяйки* в доме не чувствуется. ‘The house doesn’t seem to have a mistress.’  
(literally: ‘There’s no feel of a mistress about the house.’)  
c. *Деревни* пока не видно. ‘There’s no sight of the village as yet.’  
d. *Иванова* не предвидится. ‘Ivanov is not expected.’  
(literally: ‘There is no expectation of Ivanov’).

As a rule, when a sentence with an existential verb is negated a genitive subject is obligatory. Meanwhile, verbs of perception allow for an opposition of the genitive and the nominative construction. In a context where the subject is not unambiguously referential, its non-existence may be insinuated, as in (2a), (2b). In such a context the genitive indicates simultaneous presence of the two components: a perceptual and an existential one. In the other two examples, (2c) and (2d), the genitive subject merely expresses the presence of an Observer or a Subject of consciousness in the situation.

Another verb belonging to the perceptual group is *прийти* ‘to come’, in such contexts as *Ответа не пришло* ‘No reply came’ (lit. ‘It came of no reply’), where this verb drops its meaning of intentional movement and only expresses the appearance of the Thing within the Observer’s field of vision.

Let us now return to the verb *быть*. This verb is known to take on a number of meanings, among others — existential meaning, as in (3a), and localization meaning, as in (3b) (cf. Arutyunova 1976: 210):

- (3) a. *Такая партия* была. ‘There was such a party.’ [existence]  
b. *Геологическая партия* была на базе. ‘The geological team was at the camp.’ [localization]

When existential meaning is negated the subject appears in the genitive:

- (3’) a. *Такой партии* не было. ‘There was no such party.’

which is a norm, since here both the meaning of *быть* as well as the non-referential character of the subject correspond exactly to the semantic invariant of genitive verbs belonging to the existential group.

However a genitive subject is possible also in the case of the locative *быть*:

- (3') b. *Геологической партии не было на базе.* 'The geological team was not at the camp.'

At first sight, namely, if we consider only the fundamental, existential group of genitive verbs, a genitive subject for locative *быть* appears to be doubly anomalous.

1) For the locative *быть* we can find neither an assertive nor an implicative (viz. negatable) variant of the component of 'X exists' "responsible" for the genitive in the negation; on the contrary: the location of an object is associated with the PRESUPPOSITION of its existence:

'The geological team was at the camp'  $\supset$  'The geological team exists'.

2) The genitive construction for verbs belonging to the existential group assumes a non-referential subject; but the locative *быть* may have a referential subject, see examples (3b) and (3'b).

The locative verb *быть* could have been a genitive verb belonging to the second group, which allows a referential subject; but this would imply that its meaning should contain a perceptual component. I shall demonstrate that this is exactly what happens. I'll show that there are two locative meanings of the verb *быть* — *быть*<sub>1</sub> and *быть*<sub>2</sub>:

- быть*<sub>2</sub> does not belong to the class of genitive verbs, viz. it always takes a subject in the nominative case;  
*быть*<sub>1</sub> allows a genitive subject in negations, viz. it belongs to the class of genitive verbs, and in a semantically justified way, since it contains a semantic component which allows it to be allocated to the perceptual group of genitive verbs. In fact, the semantics of the lexeme *быть*<sub>1</sub> includes the figure of the Observer — the perceiving subject.

I shall now give the semantic definitions for the lexemes *быть*<sub>1</sub> and *быть*<sub>2</sub>, clearly showing that *быть*<sub>1</sub> is a genitive verb which belongs to the perceptual group, while *быть*<sub>2</sub> does not. Definitions will be given for the past tense:

- (I) *X был<sub>1</sub> в Месте Y [в момент t<sub>0</sub>]* 'X was in the Place Y [at the time t<sub>0</sub>]' =  
 (1) X was located at Y at the time t<sub>0</sub>  
 (2) there is a person who  
 — either was at Y at the time t<sub>0</sub> and acted as the Observer,  
 — or imagined him/herself as being at Y at the time t<sub>0</sub>,  
 — or Y is the place where that person normally is.  
 (II) *X был<sub>2</sub> в Месте Y [в момент t<sub>0</sub>]* =  
 (1) X was located at Y at the time t<sub>0</sub>  
 (2) X was not located at Y at a time t<sub>i</sub> prior to t<sub>0</sub>,  
 (3) X's being at Y is the result of his/her deliberate action.

As can be seen from these definitions, *быть*<sub>2</sub>  $\approx$  'come', 'visit', i.e. *быть*<sub>2</sub> is an action verb (a verb of movement), and as such cannot be a genitive verb, since all genitive verbs are static.

A characteristic feature of the lexical meaning of the verb *быть*<sub>1</sub> is that this meaning denotes the Observer's participation in the situation. Either the Observer was present at Y when X was not there (see 4a), or Y is the place where the Observer usually is, and then the place where he is now ceases to be significant (see 4b):

- (4) a. Мы зашли к Ивану, но его *не было* дома. 'We went to Ivan's, but he was not at home.' [The Observer, 'We', is in the place Y at time  $t_0$ , that is a place where X is not.]  
b. Меня вчера *не было* дома. 'I was not at home yesterday.' [The Observer is 'I'; 'My normal place of residence is 'at home'].

Example (5) demonstrates the relevance of the Subject of consciousness — his/her normal place of residence as an important factor:

- (5) a. Меня не было *в Москве*. 'I was not in Moscow.'  
b. Меня не было *в Париже*. 'I was not in Paris.'

At first sight sentence (5b) seems deviant: the first interpretation of (5b) that comes to mind (with *быть* meaning *быть*<sub>2</sub>) is 'I have never been to Paris', and this meaning would require a subject in the nominative case. Meanwhile if we assume an Observer/Speaker whose normal place of residence is Paris, then sentence (5b) is just as correct as (5a) (cf. Guiraud-Weber 1984: 96).

The root of the anomaly in (6b) is clear as well:

- (6) a. Меня вчера *не было* дома. 'I was not at home yesterday.'  
b. ?Меня вчера *не было* в кино. 'I was not in the cinema yesterday.'

Home, not the cinema, is one's normal place of residence, which explains the unnaturalness of (6b); a person should be present in the cinema as the Observer while not being there as a participant.

The genitive subject is far more natural in (7), where it may be assumed that the speaker 'identifies' with 2nd person and puts him/herself in that person's shoes, imagining him/herself to be in the second person's place at the given moment (this is a typical example of deictic projection, cf. Paducheva 1996: 260):

- (7) Жаль, что меня вчера *не было с вами* [or *с вами в кино*]. 'It's a pity I wasn't with you yesterday.' [or 'I wasn't with you in the cinema.']

In example (8) sentence (a) may at first sight seem a bit odd:

- (8) a. Неужели тебя<sub>Gen</sub> у них *не было*? 'Weren't you there at their place?'  
b. Неужели ты<sub>Nom</sub> у них *не был*? 'Have you not been to their place?'

However (8a) will be fully acceptable in the situation where the speaker was at 'their place' at a given time and believes to have seen the addressee there, who denies this. Here the Subject of consciousness is the subject of expectation presupposed by *неужели* 'really?'. Compare with further similar examples:

- (9) a. Почему Вани *не было* в школе? ‘Why was Vanya not at school?’  
 b. Почему ты, Ваня, *не был* в школе? ‘Vanya, why weren’t you at school?’
- (10) a. Я *не был* дома. ‘I’ve not been home.’  
 b. Меня *не было* дома. ‘I wasn’t at home.’
- (11) Знаешь, наших детей *не было* в цирке. ‘You know, our *children* were not at the circus.’

One of the plausible contexts for the sentence (11) is the one when the speaker him/herself was at the circus and confirmed that his/her children were not there; or he/she may be reporting the words of some other person who was a synchronous Observer of the ‘situation of their absence’. On the other hand, the sentence *Наши дети не были в цирке* ‘Our children have not been at the circus’ does not presuppose a synchronous Observer.

We may thus reach a conclusion that whenever it appears with a genitive subject in a subordinate clause, the lexeme *быть*<sub>1</sub> involves a semantic component which allows it to be assigned to one of the semantic groups of genitive verbs (cf. component 2 of the semantic decomposition of this lexeme); for *быть*<sub>1</sub> is a genitive verb belonging to the group of perceptual verbs.

We shall now compare the decompositions of the two verbs: *быть*<sub>1</sub> with a genitive subject, and *быть*<sub>2</sub> with the subject in the nominative case. We can derive a series of semantic and syntactic properties from the differences described above in the explanations.

I. Apresyan (1980: 70) describes a noteworthy phenomenon. As we know (see e.g. Itskovich 1974), an affirmative sentence, e.g.

(12') Отец<sub>Nom</sub> *был* на море. ‘Father was at sea.’

may have two corresponding negations:

- (12) a. Отец<sub>Nom</sub> *не был* на море. ‘Father has not been to sea.’  
 b. Отца<sub>Gen</sub> *не было* на море. ‘Father was not on the sea.’

Yu. D. Apresyan observes the following relationships between the case of the subject and the aspect of the verb in a negative sentence:

— for a subject in the nominative case, as in sentence (12a), the only possibility is a general-factual interpretation of the imperfective aspect:

Отец *не был* на море. ‘Father has not been to sea.’  
 [most probably he has never been to sea]

— for a genitive subject, as in sentence (12b), the durative interpretation is one: preferred:

Отца *не было* на море. ‘Father was not at the sea.’  
 [e.g. when I came].

At first sight the connection between the case of the subject and the aspect of the verb seems strange. Meanwhile this correlation has a simple explanation. If we distinguish the two different locative meanings in *быть*<sub>1</sub> viz. the lexeme *быть*<sub>1</sub>, with a genitive subject, and *быть*<sub>2</sub> with a subject in the nominative, then on the one hand the explanations of these two lexemes lead to a different choice of case for the subject in a negation, (12a) and (12b), as we have already established; on the other hand these explanations lead to different sets of allowed aspectual meanings.

We shall demonstrate that in example (12) aspectual meaning depends not on the case, but on the lexical meaning of *быть*.

1) RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE NOMINATIVE SUBJECT AND THE GENERAL-FACTUAL MEANING OF THE IMPERFECTIVE ASPECT. Since *быть*<sub>2</sub> is *быть* with the subject in the nominative case, and the lexical meaning of *быть*<sub>2</sub> marks out the points  $t_1$  and  $t_0$  in time, in a *быть*<sub>2</sub> sentence the Observer's temporal position may only be retrospective (or prospective); the Observer should be in a temporal position from which he/she can see both temporal positions at once. Thus the imperfective aspect of the *быть*<sub>2</sub> has only a general-factual meaning, and is determined by the meaning of this lexeme.

2) RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE GENITIVE SUBJECT AND THE DURATIONAL MEANING OF THE IMPERFECTIVE ASPECT. The lexical meaning of the lexeme *быть*<sub>1</sub> marks out the temporal position of the Observer: the Observer is present in a situation of X's absence. It is obvious that *быть* is used here in a durational meaning: Observer occupies a synchronous temporal position. In fact, if *быть*<sub>1</sub> is due to the Subject of consciousness who 'imagines him/herself' in a given place the general-factual interpretation of the imperfective aspect of *быть*<sub>1</sub> becomes possible:

- (13) — Как, ты ничего не знаешь? 'Well, don't you know anything?'  
 — Меня *не было* в Москве. 'I wasn't in Moscow.' [Now I am.]

This means that for *быть*<sub>1</sub>, the durational interpretation of the imperfective aspect is more frequent, but not the only one possible.

Thus, the distinction between the lexemes *быть*<sub>1</sub> and *быть*<sub>2</sub> gives an account of the two different interpretations of the imperfective aspect in (12).

**II.** The verb *быть*<sub>1</sub> (unlike *быть*<sub>2</sub>) admits the ellipsis of the deictic expression of the place meaning 'here', viz. 'the place where the speaker is'. This is not surprising if we take into account the fact that *быть*<sub>1</sub> defines the place where the speaker is; in other words, the fact that the speaker is in a 'situation of absence'.

- (14) a. Жаль, что Ивана *не было*! What a pity Ivan wasn't there.  
 \*b. Жаль, что Иван *не был*! [the subject in the nominative case indicates that this is a *быть*<sub>2</sub> sentence, therefore deictic ellipsis is inadmissible and the sentence is incomplete].

For *быть*<sub>2</sub> only anaphoric ellipsis is admissible:

- (15) Я *был* в кино<sub>1</sub>, а Иван *не был* Ø<sub>1</sub>. 'I was in the cinema, but Ivan was not [there].'

**III.** If the time adverbial is absent, the lexeme *быть*<sub>2</sub> may have a twofold interpretation: with a reference to a specified moment of time, and with a quantified time indicator; whereas *быть*<sub>1</sub> always denotes a specific moment in time, the moment of observation (Itskovich 1974: 53):

- (16) a. Кто<sub>Nom</sub> *не был* в музее Толстого? ‘Who hasn’t been to the Tolstoy Museum?’ [= ‘ever’, or ‘has not arrived at the time when a certain group of people was expected there’]  
 b. Кого<sub>Gen</sub> *не было* в музее Толстого? ‘Who wasn’t in the Tolstoy Museum?’ [= ‘at a given time’, e.g. ‘when a certain person was there’].

Hence *быть*<sub>2</sub> does not impose any constraints on the referential status of the time exponent, while for *быть*<sub>1</sub> that exponent may only be concretely referential:

- (17) a. Ваня<sub>Nom</sub> здесь *ни разу не был*. ‘Vanya hasn’t been here even once.’ [быть<sub>2</sub>]  
 b. \*Вани<sub>Gen</sub> здесь *ни разу не было*.  
 \*Вани здесь *никогда не было*. [an inadmissible interpretation of *быть*<sub>1</sub>]  
 (18) a. Я *никогда* в этом доме не был. ‘I have never been in this house.’ [быть<sub>2</sub>]  
 b. \*Меня *никогда* в этом доме не было.  
 \*Меня *ни разу* в этом доме не было. [\*‘I never was in this house’ an interpretation of *быть* as *быть*<sub>1</sub> is inadmissible.]

**IV.** Another difference between *быть*<sub>1</sub> and *быть*<sub>2</sub> involves the referential status of the localizer; *быть*<sub>2</sub> allows a non-referential localizer, while *быть*<sub>1</sub>, requires a concretely referential localizer (cf. Апресян 1995: 521).

- (19) a. Иван [никогда] не был *в таком театре*. ‘Ivan has never been to such a theatre.’ [быть<sub>2</sub>]  
 b. \*Ивана никогда не было *в таком театре* [an inadmissible interpretation of *быть*<sub>1</sub>].

This difference, as well as the previous one, may be deduced from the deictic nature of *быть*<sub>1</sub>. In fact, *быть*<sub>1</sub> still requires the presence of an Observer at the “situation of absence”, whereby the situation becomes concretely referential, and therefore the localizer should be concretely referential as well.

**V.** The explications of *быть*<sub>1</sub> and *быть*<sub>2</sub> also explains the characteristic differences in the combinability of these lexemes with the particles *еще* ‘still’, and *уже* ‘already’. In example (20), in sentence (a) which contains *еще* a nominative subject is at place, while in (b), with the particle *уже*, it is better to use a genitive subject, since *быть* in the contexts *уже* cannot be taken to express the meaning of *быть*<sub>2</sub>:

- (20) a. В два часа я<sub>Nom</sub> *еще не буду* в институте. ‘I won’t be at the institute by 2 p.m.’ [one of the possible interpretations is ‘I shan’t have arrived yet.’]  
 b. В два часа *меня*<sub>Gen</sub> *уже не будет* в институте. ‘I won’t be at the institute by 2 p.m.’ [= ‘I shall have left by then.’]

The same holds for contexts where the meaning of ‘still’ or ‘already’ is merely implicit:

- (21) — Давай встретимся в твоём институте. Я<sub>Nom</sub> приду в два часа. ‘Come on, let’s meet in your institute. I’ll come at 2 p.m.’  
 — Нет, в два часа я<sub>Nom</sub> не буду в институте. ‘No, I won’t be at the institute by 2 p.m.’

Here *я не буду* ‘I shan’t be’, with the time phrase *в два часа* ‘at two’ may be understood as ‘I shan’t be there yet’ or ‘I shan’t have arrived yet’, in which case the *быть*<sub>2</sub> meaning of *быть* is admissible, in compliance with the requirements of a subject in the nominative. For a genitival subject both *еще* ‘still’ and *уже* ‘already/not yet’ are admissible (see 22); while for a subject in the nominative only *еще* ‘still’ is allowed:

- (22) a. Через два дня *меня*<sub>Gen</sub> уже не будет в Москве. ‘In two days’ time I shan’t be in Moscow.’ [= ‘I shall have left already’: *быть*<sub>1</sub> with a genitive subject]  
 (23) a. Через два дня я<sub>Nom</sub> еще не буду в Москве. ‘In two days’ time I shall not be in Moscow.’ [= ‘I shall have not have arrived yet.’: *быть*<sub>2</sub> with a nominative-case subject]  
 b. \*Начиная с двух часов я<sub>Nom</sub> уже не буду в институте. ‘From two p.m. on I shall not be in the institute.’ [*быть*<sub>1</sub>; here the nominative case for the subject is inadmissible, and the correct expression is *меня уже не будет* with the genitive case, ‘I shall no longer be there.’]

We can now return to the semantic source of the genitive for a referential subject in sentences with *быть* like the ones in examples (3’b) or (20). The presence of the Observer in a *быть*<sub>1</sub> situation means that there is a perceptual component in *быть*<sub>1</sub>. It is responsible for the occurrence of a genitive subject in negative sentences with *быть*<sub>1</sub>: the Observer constitutes the same component of meaning which is the semantic invariant in the second group of verbs, the verbs of perception.

This means that the relationship observed by Yu. D. Апресян between the aspectual meaning of the verb and the case in which the subject occurs is not a unique property of the verb *быть*<sub>1</sub>: a similar effect, the genitive subject, will occur for other verbs of location if a synchronous Observer is present (with the progressive interpretation of aspect appearing as a consequence of this). Thus the genitive subject in example (24b) is much more natural than in (24a), since in (24a) the situation of absence is presented retrospectively:

- (24) a. Этот портрет здесь никогда раньше не висел. ‘This portrait never hung here before.’ [nominative: the general-factual meaning of the imperfective aspect]  
 b. Я окинул взглядом кабинет. Портрета на стене не висело. ‘I looked around the study. The portrait was not hanging on the wall.’ [genitive].



There are other verbs for which a genitive subject denotes the presence of an Observer or the occurrence of a subject in the field of observation. Thus in examples (25)-(30) the genitive construction expresses the meaning ‘X has not appeared in the field of observation’; for movement in the opposite direction — away from the Observer — the subject may occur only in the nominative case:

- (25) a. *Ни одна дыня* не попала в магазин. ‘Not a single melon went into the shop.’ [nominative: view from the outside]  
 b. *Ни одной дыни* не попало в наш магазин. ‘Not a single melon got to our shop.’ [genitive: view from the inside of the shop]
- (26) a. Все ждут. Пока что *ни один человек* не ушел. ‘Everybody’s waiting. So far not a single person has come out.’ [nominative]  
 b. Мы ждем. Пока что не пришло *ни одного человека*. ‘We are waiting. So far not a single person has come out.’ [genitive]
- (27) a. Посыпали тротуар песком, чтобы *ни один человек* не упал. ‘The pavement has been sprinkled with sand, so that not a single person should fall.’ [cf. the inadmissible \*чтобы ни одного человека не упало; *упасть* is not a static verb]  
 b. Вырыли яму, чтобы ловить людей, но *ни одного человека* в нее не упало. ‘They dug a pit to catch people in it, but not a single person fell in.’ [here *упасть* means ‘to appear within the field of vision’]
- (28) a. Дома с дороги не видно. Сквозь плотные ставни свет не проникает наружу. ‘The house cannot be seen from the road. No light gets out through the tight window-shutters.’  
 b. Сквозь эти шторы не проникает *дневного света*. ‘Daylight does not get through these curtains.’ [inside, towards the Observer]
- (29) a. До него *эти звуки* не доносятся. ‘These sounds are not reaching him.’  
 b. Здесь тихо. *Уличных звуков* не доносится. ‘It’s quiet here. Street noise doesn’t get here.’ [genitive: about someone who is at a distance]
- (30) a. Механизмы отказали и *ни одна подлодка* не всплыла. ‘The mechanisms broke down and not a single submarine surfaced.’ [nominative]  
 b. Мы ждали, но *ни одной подлодки* не всплыло. ‘We waited, but not a single submarine surfaced.’ [genitive: did not appear in the field of view]

This last example is cited by Babby (1980) with this very interpretation: the genitive subject indicates the presence of the Observer.

The fact that semantically *быть* is not an exceptional verb may be shown by comparing *быть* and *оказаться* ‘to appear somewhere’:

- (31) a. Вани *не было* дома. ‘Vanya was not at home.’  
 b. Вани *не оказалось* дома. ‘It turned out that Vanya was not at home.’

In both these sentences the genitive indicates the presence of an Observer who is absent in the surface structure of the sentence (although the verb *оказаться* ‘to appear somewhere, to be somewhere’ encodes the Observer’s presence in a fairly ob-

vious way). Cf. the explanatory definition of the verb *оказаться* in the meaning in which it appears in sentence (b):

*X-a не оказалось в Y-e.* ‘It turned out that X was not at Y’ =  
The Observer expected X to be at Y  
The Observer moved to Y  
The Observer saw that X was not at Y.

As in other examples, here too the explanation requires a reservation for the case of possible non-visual perception; cf. the situation of an attempted telephone conversation.

As we have seen, for *быть* the participant responsible for the genitive subject may be not only the Observer, but also the Subject of consciousness, as in sentence (5), especially a person for whom the place in question is his/her usual residence. On the other hand *оказаться* assumes the existence of an Observer. Hence the difference in combinability of these two lexemes, as illustrated below—while (32a) is the normal statement, (32b) could only crop up in a joke:

- (32) a. *Меня не было дома.* ‘I was not at home’  
b. *Меня не оказалось дома.* ‘I turned out not to be at home.’

### *Postscript*

The present exposition reproduces, in its essential features, the article Paducheva 1992, where the verb *быть* was analyzed only in the context of animate subjects. An inanimate subject allows a generalization and a greater precision in some of the statements made earlier concerning the presence of an Observer for *быть*<sub>1</sub> and agentivity of *быть*<sub>2</sub>.

In the genitive construction, viz. for *быть*<sub>1</sub>, the Observer’s presence is felt even better for an inanimate subject than for an animate one. Thus there can be no doubt that sentence (1) presupposes a context where someone has entered a workshop and not seen his television set there:

- (1) *Телевизора не было в мастерской.* ‘The TV set was not in the workshop.’

This is even more palpable for the present tense; cf. sentence (2a), expressing the “observed absence”, and sentence (2b), which expresses merely the knowledge about something being absent (this knowledge may come from observation as well, however such observation is not reflected in the conceptualization which the speaker gives to the situation):

- (2) a. *Телевизора нет в мастерской.* ‘The TV set is not in the workshop.’  
b. *Телевизор не в мастерской.* ‘The TV set is not in the workshop.’

We shall now proceed to agentivity in *быть*<sub>2</sub> (viz. *быть* with the subject in the nominative case and retrospective interpretation of the imperfective aspect). Here some amendments (as a matter of fact, very interesting ones) will be necessary for inanimate subjects.

The nominative-subject construction does not combine with most locative phrases:

- (3) a. \**Мой паспорт* не был в сумке. \*‘My passport was not in my hand-bag.’ [nominative]  
 b. *Моего паспорта* не было в сумке. ‘My passport was not in my hand-bag.’ [genitive]

In example (4), however, a subject in the nominative case is admissible, provided a retrospective interpretation for the imperfective aspect:

- (4) *Телевизор* <явно> не был в мастерской <он не работает>.  
 ‘The TV set <obviously> *hasn't been* in the workshop < it doesn't work>.’  
*Этот костюм* не был в химчистке.  
 ‘This suit *hasn't been* to the cleaners.’  
*Журнал* не был в учительской.  
 ‘The class register *hasn't been* in the staff-room.’  
*Шампанское* не было в холодильнике.  
 ‘The champagne *hasn't been* in the refrigerator.’

Here the verb’s aspectual meaning is unambiguously retrospective (general-factual): in (4), as in the sentences with agentive *быть*<sub>2</sub>, the verb *быть* means as much as ‘to be somewhere for some time’. At the same time we have the impression that behind situations like (4) there is someone’s will which has brought the Thing in question somewhere, kept it there, and then brought it back (see Flier 1985 and Paducheva 1996: 145 for the point that delimitative *по-* prefers an agentive context). The nature of the Place plays a significant role; it assumes a definite, deliberate action concerning the Thing (e.g., decorating, cleaning, chilling etc.). More precisely, only in such contexts is *быть*<sub>2</sub> admissible: (3a) is felt to be wrong and offers no opportunity for an interpretation involving a retrospective Observer.

In Paducheva 1992 only concretely referential subjects of the verb *быть* were considered. Sentences with a non-referential subject, like *На полу окурки* ‘There are cigarette stubs lying on the floor’, or *В комнате девочки* ‘There are some girls in the room’ require commentary.

A non-referential subject always occupies a rhematic position in localization sentences. Arutyunova, Shirjaev (1983: 65) even speculate that sentences with a non-referential subject do not express localization, that these are existential sentences. However in the existential meaning the present tense of *быть* is expressed by *есть*: the zero-form expressing location only is undoubtedly semantically different from the *есть* form with an ‘existential’ meaning — the form *есть* adds something to the meaning of location. For example, *На полу есть окурки* means not only ‘There are cigarette stubs lying on the floor’ but also that anyone should need them; *В комнате есть девочки* = ‘There are some girls in the room among those present’ — ‘part/whole’ relationship is added to that of location.

I shall use N. D. Arutyunova’s example in order to demonstrate the opposition between *есть* and the zero-form of *быть*. The question «Где тут есть булочная?»

‘Where is there a bakery here?’ may have two fully adequate answers, (5a) and (5b).

- (5) a. Булочная есть за углом. ‘There is a bakery round the corner.’  
b. Булочная за углом. ‘The bakery is round the corner.’

However it is obvious that in (5a) the respondent keeps the status of the subject unchanged, viz. non-referential, while in (5b) he/she is speaking about a specific bakery that he/she is familiar with and describes its location. In the context of functional nouns this distinction is unnoticeable. The question «Где мама?» ‘Where is mother?’ in which the subject is undoubtedly referential, the only admissible answer is one which complies with the (b) type, with a location meaning of *быть*.

Sentences with *быть*<sub>1</sub> and a non-referential Thing of the type *На полу окурки* ‘There are cigarette stubs lying on the floor’ avoid negation — they seem not to have any negative form at all. A negation corresponding semantically to *В комнате девочки* ‘There are some girls in the room’ might be something like *Комната пуста* ‘The room is empty’. As for negative sentences with a genitive construction (like *В классе нет девочек* ‘There are no girls in the classroom’, *На полу нет окурков* ‘There are no cigarette-stubs on the floor’ and *Окурков на полу нет* ‘No cigarette-stubs are on the floor’), they are negations of the existential *быть*.

In recent years research has thrown light on the unexpected co-occurrence of a static meaning (as in *быть*<sub>1</sub>) and a dynamic meaning (as in *быть*<sub>2</sub>) in one and the same word. The fact that existential meaning is associated with the meaning of movement has been observed on many occasions. The derived static meaning has been discovered (in Paducheva 1999), for example, in verbs of movement such as *входить* ‘to enter’, *следовать* ‘to follow someone’, *нести* ‘to carry’ and many others. However the verb *быть* demonstrates a semantic shift in the opposite direction from a static meaning to a dynamic one. At first sight it might seem that the semantic shift from *быть*<sub>1</sub> to *быть*<sub>2</sub> is exceptional. However, let us have a look at the verb *касаться* ‘to touch’. Its basic meaning is static (*Ветки сирени касаются подоконника* ‘The lilac branches are touching the window-sill’); however, in its derived use it becomes an agentive verb of movement (*коснулся ее руки* ‘he touched her hand’); cf. Guiraud-Weber, Mikaelian 1999. Thus, we are obliged to acknowledge that the semantic relationship between *быть*<sub>1</sub> and *быть*<sub>2</sub> is an example of regular polysemy. The meaning change concerns two parameters: the thematic class changes from existence towards movement (or at any rate towards a change of location), and the taxonomic category of the verb changes from the passive state to <intentional> activity.\*

---

\* The material presented in “Postscript” was discussed at the seminar which is being led by Barbara Partee at the Institute of scientific and technical information in Moscow and connected with the project entitled “The Russian Genitive of Negation: Integration of Lexical and Compositional Semantics.” The project is supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. BCS-0418311 to Barbara H. Partee and Vladimir Borschev.

## References

- АПРЕСЯН, Ю.Д. (1980): *Типы информации для поверхностно-семантического компонента модели «Смысл ↔ Текст» (= Wiener Slawistischer Almanach. Sbd. 1).* — Wien: Gesellschaft zur Förderung Slawistischer Studien.
- АПРЕСЯН, Ю.Д. (1995): *Избранные труды. Т. II: Интегральное описание языка и системная лексикография.* — Москва: Языки русской культуры.
- АРУТЮНОВА, Н.Д. (1976): *Предложение и его смысл.* — Москва: Наука.
- АРУТЮНОВА, Н.Д., ШИРЯЕВ Е.Н. (1983): *Русское предложение: Бытийный тип.* — Москва: Русский язык.
- ВАВВУ, Л.Н. (1980): *Existential Sentences and Negation in Russian.* — Ann Arbor: Caroma Publishers.
- FLIER, M. (1985): The scope of prefixal delimitation in Russian. — [In:] M. FLIER, A. TIMBERLAKE (eds.): *The Scope of Slavic Aspect*; Ohio: Slavic Publishers.
- GUIRAUD-WEBER, M. (1984): *Les propositions sans nominatif en russe moderne.* — Paris.
- ГИРО-ВЕБЕР, М., МИКАЭЛЯН, И.Л. (1999): Семантика глаголов прикосновения во французском и русском языках: *toucher, касаться, трогать.* — [In:] Н.Д. АРУТЮНОВА (ed.): *Логический анализ языка: Языки динамического мира*; Москва: ИЯ РАН, 18-35.
- Ицкович, В.А. (1974): Очерки синтаксической нормы. — [In:] Г.А. ЗОЛотова (ed.): *Синтаксис и норма*; Москва: Наука, 43-106.
- ПАДУЧЕВА, Е.В. (1992): О семантическом подходе к синтаксису и генитивном субъекте глагола *быть.* — *Russian Linguistics* 16, 53-63.
- ПАДУЧЕВА, Е.В. (1996): *Семантические исследования: Семантика времени и вида в русском языке. Семантика нарратива.* — Москва: Языки русской культуры.
- ПАДУЧЕВА, Е.В. (1997): Родительный субъекта в отрицательном предложении: синтаксис или семантика? — *Вопросы языкознания* 2, 101-116.
- ПАДУЧЕВА, Е.В. (1999): Глаголы движения и их стативные дериваты (в связи с так называемым движением времени). — [In:] Н.Д. АРУТЮНОВА, И.Б. ШАТУНОВСКИЙ (eds.): *Логический анализ языка. Языки динамического мира*; Дубна, 87-107.
- WIERZBIЦКА, A. (1988): *The Semantics of Grammar.* — Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.