

1. Locative and existential sentences

The problem of locative vs. existential BE was discussed in Lyons 1968. Sentences (1a) and (1b) have different structures, but only slightly differ from one another semantically:

- (1) a. Coffee will be here in a moment 'Кофе будет здесь через минуту';
b. There will be coffee here in a moment 'Через минуту здесь будет кофе'.

Meanwhile this semantic opposition is crucial for Russian (as well as for some other Slavic languages), for it is connected with the use of Genitive vs. Nominative subject in negative sentences. The genitive of negation is claimed to be correlated with existential sentences:

- (2) a. Здесь есть волки [Nom] 'there are *wolves* here';
b. Волков [Gen] здесь нет 'there are no *wolves* here'.
(3) a. У них возникли затруднения [Nom], lit. "before them stood up difficulties";
b. Затруднений [Gen] у них не возникло 'difficulties didn't stand up before them'.

Still sentence (4a), expressing location, has (4b) (presumably also expressing location) as its negative counterpart, with the genitive of negation:

- (4) a. Петя [Nom] дома 'Petja is at home';
b. Пети [Gen] нет дома 'Petja is not at home'.

The genitive of negation is associated with existentiality by N.D.Arutjunova (Арутюнова 1976) and by L. Babby: "it is only the subject of existential sentences that is regularly marked genitive when negation is introduced" (Babby 1980: 101). Referring to N.D.Arutjunova, Babby says that for existential *byt'* genitive marking is semantically motivated, while "genitive marking in sentences with the verb *byt'* is an automatic syntactic rule <...> if the sentence contains a locative adverbial" (Babby 1980: 124).

I shall demonstrate that **the genitive of negation is not limited to existential sentences**, and the genitive construction in a locative sentence, such as (4b) *Пети нет дома*, is semantically motivated as well.

Sections 2 and 3 below deal with formal differences between (non-negative) locative and existential sentences. Section 4 is devoted to general semantics of existentiality. In section 5 contextual semantic differences between locative and existential sentences are explored. After that (in section 6) I return to semantic sources of the genitive (vs. Nominative) of negation, existentiality being one of them, but not the only one. Section 7 deals with borderline cases.

2. Formal markers of an existential sentence

Following V.Borschev and B.Partee, I call the two semantic arguments of *byt'* – both in its existential and locative meaning – Thing and Location, see Борщев, Парти 1998.

1) Morphology. Existential sentences have *est'* as the present tense form, which is opposed to the null form in locative sentences:

- (1) a. Телефон *есть* на кухне [existential sentence];
b. Твой мобильник (**есть*) на кухне [locative sentence].

2) Referential status of the NP Thing. In locative sentences the argument Thing can be, and usually is, definite; in particular, it can be a proper name. Meanwhile in existential sentences Thing is indefinite or even non-referential (Арутюнова 1976; Babby 1980: 67, 144, Chvany 1975: 48):

- (2) a. Коля был в Лондоне [locative];
b. В магазине, несмотря на ранний час, были покупатели [existential].

In the context of the present tense form *есть* the NP Thing is interpreted as indefinite – even if according to its structure it could have referred to a unique object (referential prerequisites of the verb are stronger than the word order):

* This work has got a financial support of NSF, Grant No. BCS-0418311 to V.Borschev and B.Partee for the project, "The Russian Genitive of Negation: Integration of Lexical and Compositional Semantics", 2004-07.

- (3) a. В Переделкино есть музей Пастернака ‘in Peredelkino there is Pasternak’s museum’;
b. Музей Пастернака есть в Переделкино ‘there is Pasternak’s museum in Peredelkino’.

Examples that allegedly violate this restriction on the NP Thing will be discussed in section 4.

Existential sentences are to be distinguished from INTRODUCTORY EXISTENTIALS (Арутюнова 1976: 221-223); for the latter referential and definite NP Thing is not prohibited:

- (4) Есть за границей контора Кука. (Маяковский)

3) Taxonomy of the NP Location.

For prototypical existential sentences, namely, those that function as presuppositions of existence, the World as a whole is the Location:

- (5) Есть реки, которые летом пересыхают [= ‘there are such rivers in the world’].

On the other hand, for a locative sentence the world cannot be a Location. In fact, the modifier *в мире* doesn’t co-occur with the verb *находиться*, which unambiguously denotes location; National corpus of Russian (www.ruscorpora.ru) gives only impossible co-occurrences:

- (6) Известно, что по неиспытанным для нас судьбам Божиим, разныя *в мире* *находятся* веры, и всякой народ к вере естественную имеет привязанность. [Платон (Левшин), архиепископ Московский и Калужский. Слово при действии святого миропомазания (1773)]; Сверх запасов, зафиксированных ЛБМ и МИА (Лондон), *в мире* *находится* более 4 млн тонн алюминия, которые в основном нигде не зафиксированы. [“Металлы Евразии”, 2004]

Still a NP denoting a definite part of space can be a Location in an existential sentence:

- (7) a. В моем номере есть телевизор ‘in my room there is a TV set’;
b. В зале есть иностранцы ‘in the hall there are foreigners’.

Topic-Comment structure does not belong to diagnostic features of the existential sentence – in fact, it can vary; the communicative paradigm of the existential sentence is presented in Падучева 1985: 130-131. For instance, Location can be both Topic and Comment, see (3) above and (8) below:

- (8) a. На веранде ↗ есть кресло ↘ ;
b. Кресло ↗ на веранде есть ↘ .

Transition from a sentence to its negative counterpart almost automatically changes the word order (what happens to Topic-Comment structure remains to be explored):

- (9) a. В музее были посетители ‘in the museum there were visitors’;
b. Посетителей в музее не было ‘no visitors were there in the museum’.

Thus, we have three formal criteria differentiating locative and existential sentences. All of them have a limited differentiating power: morphology is limited to the present tense; the limitation on the referential status of Thing in an existential sentence is cancelled in the context of introduction; taxonomy of the Location NP is restricted only in case of prototypical existential sentences. Thus, an area of ambiguous attribution remains.

There is an additional formal feature differentiating locative sentences from existential ones: in a locative sentence the participant Location is obligatory (Babby 1980: 100), in existential sentences it is not.

The following axioms of localization are necessary for what follows.

Axiom 1. Every material object must be localized in some physical space.

Axiom 2. There are material objects (houses, cities etc.) that cannot change their place.

Axiom 3. There are entities that have no localization in space (doubts, ideas, qualities).

3. Possessive sentences with *byt’* are a subclass of existential sentences

Possession has no localization in space, so possessive sentences have no Location – only a Possessor:

- (1) a. У царя Мидаса ослиные уши;
b. У Маши есть брат;
c. В нем есть какое-то обаяние.

A sentence with an adverbial of place is locative and not possessive:

(2) *Где у тебя документы?* (example from Арутюнова 1976: 285)

(3) *Ваш пропуск у вахтера.*

Possessive sentences constitute a subclass of existential sentences. In possessive sentences the *est'* – null opposition is possible, but the null form doesn't express localization: it has some other meaning, e.g., (in)alienable possession (Арутюнова 1976: 274-283).

4. Existential meaning, what is it like?

Locative and existential sentences differ in that in a locative sentence existence of the Thing constitutes a **presupposition**, while an existential sentence **asserts** the existence of the Thing (in a given Place). So the NP Thing should be non-referential or indefinite, see examples (7) – (9) in section 2.

This is so if we speak about existence in the world. If Location is a definite NP (as in examples (7a, b) of section 2) then the difference between existence in this place and localization in this very place can be blurred; see also examples (1), (2) of section 7.

There are sentences with an existential verb and a referential subject NP, normally functioning in ordinary communication and not losing their existential presupposition:

(1) *В XIV веке Перемышль уже существовал* 'in XIV century Peremyshl already existed';

(2) *Его больше нет на свете*, lit. 'he is not in this world any more';

(3) *Дома, в котором я родился, больше нет* 'the house where I was born doesn't exist any more'.

In these sentences two worlds are confronted – more precisely, two temporal stages of the world; the presupposition of existence of the Thing in one world doesn't contradict its (possible) absence in the other (Падучева 1997: 111).

In (4) *Everest* means 'such a <beautiful> mountain as Everest', a proper name is understood as an NP not only indefinite but even non-referential:

(4) *Жизнь имеет смысл, пока существует Эверест.* (Ju.D.Аpresjan, personal communication)

5. Contextually determined oppositions between existentiality and localization

As we see, the general meaning of existentiality evades explication. But in particular contexts semantic difference between existential construction, with the form *est'* in the present tense, and locative construction, with the null form, becomes more evident. Here are some relevant points (many examples are taken from Арутюнова, Ширяев 1983, but the interpretation is my own).

• In example (1), in a locative sentence (1a) with its specific Topic-Comment structure, we feel the EXHAUSTIVE LIST interpretation (Sgall, Hajičova 1977; see Russian examples in Падучева 1985:118) – which is absent from the existential sentence (1b):

(1) a. *В номере письменный стол и кровать* 'there is a table and a bed in the room' [nothing else; no chair, for example; locative meaning];

b. *В номере есть письменный стол и кровать* 'there is a table and a bed in the room' [existential meaning; a hope remains that the chair, for example, is just not mentioned].

In the context of sentence (2), where the NP is bounded by a universal quantifier, locative and existential constructions are opposed in the same way as in (1). Sentence (2a) is understood as an exaggeration, natural for universal quantifiers in ordinary language: 'only swindlers are everywhere'; while (2b) has existential and less pessimistic meaning – namely, 'there are swindlers among other kinds of people':

(2) a. *Всюду жулики* 'there are <only> swindlers all around';

b. *Всюду есть жулики* 'swindlers may be at any place' [much more optimistic].

• Sentence (3a) is locative, but almost indistinguishable from existential (3b) semantically:

(3) a. *В этом дворе сторожевая собака* [locative];

b. *В этом дворе есть сторожевая собака* [existential].

Sentence (3b) has the meaning of AVAILABILITY (more explicitly expressed by the verb *иметься*, Падучева 2004: 433–436; see Benveniste 1960 on semantic proximity between 'be' and 'have'; Clancy (forthcoming) on 'be' and 'have' in Slavic). The meaning of

availability in (3b) is engendered by the fact that the NP Thing has the semantics of FUNCTION: it presupposes some definite utilization; cf. Partee, Borschev 2007.

• Sentence (4) employs a locative construction. It doesn't acquire the exhaustive list interpretation, because it has the introductory meaning:

(4) В огороде *свинья* 'a pig is in the garden' [possible implication: Some measures should be taken].

Existential construction, as in (4'), doesn't yield deviance strictly speaking, but it is at place only in the context when the pig in the garden is useful for something; in fact, unambiguously existential construction gives availability meaning:

(4') В огороде *есть* свинья 'there is a pig in the garden'.

• Sentence (5a) is existential as to its meaning. Still the verb *быт*' can only have the null form. In fact, (5b) is ungrammatical or at least non-preferred. The fact is that the NP Thing contains a quantity marker:

(5) a. В этой реке *масса /много /множество* рыбы 'in this river there is a lot of fish';

b. *В этой реке *есть масса /много /множество* рыбы;

c. В этой реке *есть рыба* 'there is fish in this river'.

Ungrammaticality of (5b) can be explained by the fact that in the context of a quantitative subject NP the substitution of the null form for existential *есть*' is **syntactically obligatory**. With this reservation, *есть*' becomes a reliable marker of the existential meaning.

Sentences where Thing is a predicative noun are left out of consideration:

(6) a. В квартире (**есть*) беспорядок;

b. В зале (**есть*) собрание;

c. В клубе (**есть*) танцы.

6. Existentiality and genitive of negation

So, how existentiality influences the choice between genitive and nominative in a negative sentence? The use of the genitive in the context of the locative *быт*' cannot be reduced to a syntactic rule (as was suggested in Babby 1980: 124): genitive construction has a direct semantic basis. The fact is that existentiality is not a **unique** semantic source of the genitive subject. Genitive construction can express not only negation of existence, as in (1a), but also negation of perception, as in (1b):

(1) a. Нарушений *не было* 'there were no violations <of the rule>';

b. Нарушений *не зафиксировано* 'no violations <of the rule> were testified'.

There is no less than a dozen of classes of GENITIVE VERBS (i.e. verbs that **can** have a genitive subject) – including verbs of EXISTENCE, COMING INTO EXISTENCE, AVAILABILITY, APPEARANCE, MANIFESTATION, DISAPPEARANCE, DISCOVERY and some others – lists presented in different papers, e.g., in Babby 1980: 128-129, usually end with enumeration of semantically heterogeneous verbs not belonging to any definite class.

Now, only verbs of EXISTENCE and AVAILABILITY (as well as passives of creation verbs; for example, *публиковаться* <for a text> entails 'coming into existence') are really existential; all the rest contain the semantic component "perception". Purely perceptual verbs, such as *доноситься, слышаться, наблюдаться, отмечаться, регистрироваться, фиксироваться, оказаться, обнаружиться, сниться, найтись* license genitive construction freely, see Ицкович 1982: 54.

Thus, not only negated existence licenses genitive but also negated perception. In other words, absence in the field of perception, along with non-existence, belongs to the set of semantic components providing the semantic basis for the genitive of negation (Падучева 1997). These two components may enter different configurations in the semantic representations of genitive verbs. Examples: *X-а не возникло* = 'X didn't start to be'; *X-а не требуется* = 'it is not necessary for X to be'; *X-а не попало, не встретилось* = 'X didn't enter the field of perception of the observer'.

Thus, the alleged biunique connection of the genitive of negation with existentiality is the result of pure misconception. Existence and perception have equal rights for the genitive of negation construction.

Insisting upon the difference of these two components I do not want to ignore the fact that language treats them as cognate: there is a semantic derivation rule which accounts for a shift from one to another. These two components merge, for instance, in the semantics of such verbs as *появиться*, *исчезнуть*, *оказаться*, *остаться*. Appearance and coming into existence alternate in the semantics of *затянуть*, *заполнить* and many other verbs of the “spray/load class”, see Падучева, Розина 1993.

Take, e.g., the verb *появиться* ‘appear’. In the context *не появилось нужного препарата* it means ‘the medicine didn’t come into existence’; in the context *не появилось домов на горизонте* it means ‘houses didn’t appear in the field of perception <of the observer>’. In general, what counts, is not the semantic class of a verb but the component “perception” or “existence” in its meaning in the given context. As is said in Levin & Rappaport Hovav 2005: 16, more and more arguments arise supporting the thesis that “it is the elements of meaning that define verb classes that are most important, and the verb classes themselves are epiphenomenal <...> – even if they might be useful in statements of certain generalizations”. A verb of motion, for instance, becomes a genitive verb, if it means appearance in the field of perception of the observer (examples (2), (3) are from Babby 1980, but the analysis is different from mine):

(2) *Ни одной подлодки* [Gen] не всплыло = ‘not a single submarine appeared on the surface’.

(3) У меня отказали голосовые связки. Пробовал кликнуть жену – *ни один звук* [Nom] не вырвался из гортани ‘not a single sound went out of my throat’.

(4) *Ни одного звука* [Gen] не вырывалось из его гортани ‘not a single sound went out of his throat’.

In (3) the observer, in fact, the speaker, perceives the situation from the inside “of his throat”; sentence (4), with the 3d person subject, corresponds to a more natural situation, with the external observer – and this observer legitimately manifests him/herself in the genitive of the subject.

Other genitive engendering semantic components aren’t excluded. For example, in *ожидаться* (*Маши в Москве не ожидается*) genitive may be substantiated by the semantics of expectation – in fact, *ожидать* is an intensional verb that governs the genitive case in Russian independently of negation.

Let us now return to the verb *быть*. In Падучева 1992 the semantic difference between Genitive in (5a) and Nominative in (5b) was explained with the help of the figure of the OBSERVER. Utterance (5a) is naturally made by a speaker who is at school (or has his/her representative there). Meanwhile, (5b) conveys no information about the place of the speaker:

(5) a. *Вани* [Gen] нет в школе ‘Vanja isn’t at school’;

b. *Ваня* [Nom] не в школе ‘Vanja is not at school’.

In Апресян 1986 the observer is thought of as the subject of (secondary) deixis, i.e. as a kind of a substitute of the speaker. The observer in this sense reveals him/herself in limitations imposed upon interchangeability of the 1st and the 3d person and in dependence on the REGISTER OF INTERPRETATION (I here mean the opposition of SPEECH, NARRATIVE and HYPOTACTIC REGISTERS as they are defined in Падучева 1996). One of Апресян’s examples gives the following triad:

(6) a. На дороге показался всадник ‘on the road appeared the rider’;

b. *На дороге показался я, lit. “on the road appeared I”;

c. Он говорит, что именно в этот момент на дороге показался я ‘he says that exactly at that moment I appeared on the road’.

Sentence (6a), with the 3d person subject, is normal; but if we substitute the 1st person pronoun for the NP *всадник*, we get a deviant sentence. In fact, the verb *показался* semantically presupposes the subject of perception. In the speech register the subject and the

object of perception coincide in one person, hence the anomaly; in hypotactical context the 1st person ceases to be the object of perception, and the anomaly disappears.

The same triad can be constructed for a sentence with the genitive of negation:

- (7) a. *Вани нет дома* ‘Vanja is not at home’;
b. *°Меня нет дома* ‘I am not at home’;
c. *Ему сказали, что меня нет дома* ‘He was told that I am надо was not at home’.

Consequently, there is secondary deixis in (7a), as well as in (6a). If the observer is not present in the context of “situation of absence” and the speaker doesn’t think of himself as being present there then the nominative construction will be used, which has no deictic meaning:

- (8) *Я [Nom], к счастью, не был в Махачкале, когда там началась эпидемия холеры*
‘fortunately I was not in Mahachkala when epidemic cholera began there’¹.

Here instead of *я* it is possible to say *ты, он, Иван Иванович* – and whoever else.

The genitive is out of place in the context of sentence (9), which is assessed as ungrammatical by native speakers of Russian. (The utterance was made in the following context. A woman is standing in the queue in the bank. Her mobile telephone rings. She answers the call – apparently she works at some office and this is her client calling. She explains the client why she cannot give him the information he needs.):

- (9) **Меня [Gen] нет в офисе.*

On the other hand, the genitive of negation is at place in the context of example (5), where it expresses the presence of the observer in the situation of absence:

- (5a) *Вани [Gen] нет в школе* ≈ ‘it is not true that Vanja is at school, and I see it – being at school or having my representative there’.
(5b) *Ваня [Nom] не в школе* = ‘it is not true that Vanja is at school’.

One more example in favor of the presence of the observer in a locative sentence with the genitive subject, now in a sentence with the quantified Location (*byt’* in quantified sentences was being studied by B.Partee and V.Borschev within the framework of perspectival structure in Partee, Borschev 2002):

- (10) a. *Вани нигде нет* ‘Vanja is nowhere to be found’;
b. *?Ваня нигде* ‘Vanja is nowhere’.

Sentence (10a) is interpreted along the same lines as (5a):

- (10a) *Вани нигде нет* ≈ ‘I couldn’t see Vanja in any of those places where I attempted to see him’.

As for (10b), according to its form, it should have meant (11); but (11) violates Axiom 1, so (10b) is deviant:

- (11) ‘there is no such place that Vanja is in that place’.

Example (12) (from Падучева 1985: 107) appeals to Axiom 2, which explains why (12b) strictly satisfies the norm, while (12a) is deviant:

- (12) a. *?Тегусигальпы нет в Никарагуа*, lit. ‘Tegucigalpa is absent from Nicaragua’;
b. *Тегусигальпа не в Никарагуа* ‘Tegucigalpa is not in Nicaragua’;

Sentence (12a) has no direct sense (in fact, in its direct sense it presupposes that Tegucigalpa cannot – at the moment – be observed in Nicaragua (in the same sense as Vanja, cannot be observed at school). But (12a) may have sense, e.g., in the context of looking for Tegucigalpa on a map. The explication for (12a) will then be the same as for (5a): ‘I couldn’t see Tegucigalpa on the map of Nicaragua’.

¹ I owe examples of this kind to Vladimir Borschev and the seminar on the Genitive of negation governed by Barbara Partee and Vladimir Borschev in the frame of NSF Grant No. BCS-0418311 for the project, “The Russian Genitive of Negation: Integration of Lexical and Compositional Semantics”, 2004-2007. I am grateful to other participants of this seminar – Katja Rakxilina, Jakov Testelec, Igor Yanovich for helpful comments and suggestions.

Thus, I see no chance for a **syntactic** rule that would predict the genitive subject of *byt'* in one syntactic context and the nominative subject in another. In fact, there are contexts where genitive is not obligatory and the choice between genitive and nominative is conditioned semantically, see (8); more than that, there are contexts where genitive is out of place in a locative sentence, see example (9). Thus, we come to an important conclusion: language treats non-observed location in the same way as non-existence – not only on the level of words but also on the level of constructions.

7. Location and existence as semantic components of verb meaning

Existence and location tend not to be distinguished. Alan Timberlake, discussing the problem of genitive subject, speaks about **existence** in the field of perception of the observer – though, at least from the Russian point of view the object is **located** in the field of perception, and does not **exist** there:

“With perceptuals, **existence** is determined relative to the field of perception of the observer”
(Timberlake 2004: 303-304).

In Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1995: 244 it is said in connection with sentences as (1): “... the verbs are used statively to describe the **existence** of a physical object at a particular location”.

(1) The railway tracks run along the stream.

In fact, there are cases where the difference between non-existence and absence almost disappears:

(2) a. <Я пошел в киоск за газетами.> *Газеты* не поступили. (example from Борщев, Парти 2002)
b. <Я пошел в киоск за газетами.> *Газет* не поступило.

The opposition Genitive vs. Nominative in example (2) can be given the following two interpretations. For the nominative in (2a) only **locative** interpretation is possible: *газеты не поступили* = ‘newspapers didn’t move to the shop’. The nominative case preserves movement component in the semantics of *поступить*. Meanwhile the genitive in (2b) can be treated in two ways: either it expresses only partitivity (with the movement component of the verb preserved) or it expresses negation of availability, i.e. of **existential** component: *газет не поступило* = ‘newspapers didn’t become available’.

Thus, there are such combinations of communicative structure, referential type and taxonomy of arguments when a sentence cannot be unambiguously identified as existential or locative. But in the majority of cases existence and location are to be distinguished – in spite of the fact that both predicates license the genitive of negation in a suitable context.

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