

**Partitive vs. Genitive in Russian and Polish: an empirical study
on case alternation in the object domain***

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In all current theories a distinction is made between STRUCTURAL and INHERENT (or lexical) case (Chomsky 1981). Structural case is assumed to be assigned at S-structure in a purely configurational way, whereas inherent case is taken to be assigned at D-structure depending on the lexical properties of the predicate. It is a well known fact that not all cases fall into this typology. In particular, the partitive case is one of these cases that pattern syntactically with the structural cases but are semantically conditioned. During the last years a lot of researchers have tried to solve this puzzle and quite a lot of agreement has been achieved. With respect to the Slavic languages partitive case is taken to have at least two functions: on one side a NP-related function where it is assigned to quantitatively indeterminate NPs (indefinite bare plurals and mass nouns), and on the other side an aspectual function where it is assigned to the objects of perfective verbs and alternates with the accusative.

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In the analyses of Franks & Dziwirek (1993), Brown & Franks (1995), Neidle (1988) based on Pesetzky (1982) partitive case is assigned by a null quantifier which must be licensed like other null elements in syntax, i.e. a verb which allows a partitive complement must have a feature [+Qu] to identify the phonologically null quantifier. Verbs that do not allow partitive complements do not have such a feature. Nevertheless, even though some verbs bear a Q feature, that feature must itself be activated by being in the scope of perfective aspect, negation or quantifier like e.g. *mnogo* (kilo). However, the use of partitive is absolutely optional, i.e. also in negated perfective sentences one can use an accusative, instead of partitive. The alternation between partitive/genitive vs. accusative in negated sentences always depends on whether we have a sentence negation or not.

- a) I know no reason
- b) *I don't know the reason_{Gen}

Partitive case is also triggered by “exclamative intonation”, e.g. *shegu vypalo!* (Snow.part fallen) “It’s been snowing a lot”. Additionally, it is claimed in the literature that whenever genitive morphology is allowed with a noun, partitive morphology can be used instead (Brown & Franks 1995).

One of the many problems one is confronted with when testing the partitive use among native speakers is the fact that partitive morphology is distinguished in Russian male mass-nouns only. All other nouns use genitive morphology in order to indicate partitive case. That is why partitive is often called genitive partitive (GP) with respect to the Slavic languages, and why partitive is often claimed to be identical to genitive.

The aim of this empirical study was thus twofold, on one side it is the attempt to summarize the claims that have been made with respect to partitive case in the Slavic languages and to see whether these claims hold when tested among native speakers. On the other side, I wanted to test

whether partitive and genitive is - as claimed in the literature - interchangeable within Russian. Looking at the other languages of the Slavic language family it looks as if diachronically the partitive morphology were lost in favour of the genitive morphology. Russian is the last language of the Slavic language family that still shows the distinctive morphology, but also in Russian “The distinctive partitive case morphology seems to be decreasing in frequency so that most partitives are marked with the ‘standard’ genitive” (King 1995:34). Knowing what we know about language change one could imagine a situation where the starting point with respect to the case system in the Slavic languages was marked by the different semantics of partitive and genitive case. After some time - maybe due to semantic bleaching - the function of the partitive morphology is lost, taken over by genitive morphology or taken over by something else in the sentence.

In order to clarify what might have happened in Polish and will happen to the partitive and genitive morphology in Russian all features that are claimed in the literature to trigger the use of partitive and genitive case were identified and according to these features a questionnaire was created that tested the features systematically (see Appendix 1 for the questionnaire in Russian). The coordination possibilities were imperfective/perfective aspect in negated/not negated sentences with mass nouns/countable nouns and frozen plurals. Secondly the structural positions in which partitives and genitives are able to appear were checked. Usually partitives and genitives are claimed to appear in the position of the direct object in transitive verbs were they alternate with accusative case and in the subject position of unaccusative verbs were they alternates with nominative case. In order to check these claims the same features as before were checked with respect to unaccusative and passive verbs.

The questionnaire was translated into Russian and Polish by native speakers (all linguists). Then, it was given to 9 native speakers of Russian (5 linguists, 4 others) and to 12 native speakers of Polish (6 linguists, 6 others). It is too early to make ultimate claims about the use of genitive vs. partitive vs. accusative in the languages studied, however, as will become clear in the following: what we see are tendencies that tell us on which aspect we should concentrate in future investigations.

The grammaticality scale according to which the speakers were asked to judge the sentences is the following:

- * definitely not grammatical
- ??? more ungrammatical than grammatical
- ?? absolutely unsure whether it is grammatical or ungrammatical
- ? more grammatical than ungrammatical
- ok absolutely grammatical

1 Results with respect to Russian

1.1 Genitive morphology

1.1.1 Triggers

Genitive is clearly triggered by negation and/or perfective aspect¹. However as is obvious from the examples in (1) it can be used with an imperfective as soon as the sentence is negated.

- (1) a. Ja dobavil saxar / saxara v aj
 I added.perf sugar-acc / gen in tea
- b. Ja dobavljal saxar / *,??? saxara v aj²
 I added.imp sugar-acc / sugar-gen in tea

¹ Partitive and genitive in contrast to accusative NPs receive an indefinite reading. I added some sugar to the tea vs. I added the sugar to the tea.

² Where not marked differently all 9 speakers found the sentences grammatical (ok).

- c. Ja ne dobavil saxar / saxara v aj
 I didn't add.perf sugar-acc/sugar-gen in tea
- d. Ja ne dobavljal saxar / saxara v caj
 I didn't add.imp sugar-acc / sugar-gen in tea

Additionally, genitive can be used in sentences with an imperfective / iterative reading without the negation (2), and also with those verbs which 'Aktionsart' is atelic/iterative in the imperfective (3).

- (2) Ja dobavljal saxar / ? saxara v aj kazdyj den
 I added.imp sugar-acc / sugar-gen in tea every day
- (3) podlivat' masla/maslo v ogon
 pour.on.imp oil-gen/oil-acc in fire

However, perfective aspect in contrast to imperfective aspect means "singular achievement" whereas iterative should be interpreted as "several following achievements". In so far these iterative readings could be interpreted as being perfective too.

1.1.2 Position in the sentence

Genitive NPs without an overt quantifier (e.g. some/kilo etc.) are bad in initial position in a sentence. The reason for this is to be seen in the fact that in Russian initial NPs need to be interpreted - per default - as definite specific, and this is not possible with a Genitive NP (for Russian information structure see Brun 2000, 2001, Junghanns & Zybatow 1997, Szucsich 2002)

- (4) a. *Jablok bylo nabrano v korzinu
 Apples-gen was picked-perf in basket

- (5) a. *Drov bylo³ podbrošeno v koster
 Logs.gen was-sg.neutr thrown out in bonfire
- b. Drova byli podbrošeny v koster
 logs.nom were.pl thrown out in bonfire
- c. v koster bylo podbrošeno drov
 in bonfire was.sg.neut thrown out logs.gen
- d. v koster byli podbrošeno drova
 in bonfire were.pl thrown out logs.nom

None of the 9 speakers accepted the genitive marked NP in initial position. The only possibility to license a genitive marked NP in initial position is by adding the particle *vse-taki* (however, still). With this particle they somehow become “specific” (in the sense of von Heusinger 2002) and are thus more acceptable. 7 of the 9 speakers marked the following sentence (6a) with (?) and 2 with (o.k.)

- (6) a. ?Saxara vse-taki bylo dobavleno v sok.
 Sugur-gen however was.sg.neut. added.sg.neut in juice
- b. Saxar vse-taki byl dobavlen v sok
 Sugar.nom however was.sg.mask added.sg.mask. in juice

There is a somewhat surprising effect with unaccusative verbs. Respecting agreement genitive NPs are not totally out in initial position with perfective (7c) and negation (7d), whereas with perfective aspect they are totally out (*) in final position (7a) and (o.k.) with negation (7b).

- (7) a. Razlilos' *kleja
 Spilled-pf.sg.neutr glue-gen

³ The genitive subject (like quirky subjects) does not agree with the verb. They get only a sg.neut. marking, i.e. so called impersonal sentences.

- b. Da ne razlilos' kleja
 But not spilled-pf.sg.neutr glue-gen
- c. ???/*kleja razlilos'
 glue-gen spilled-pf.sg.neutr
- d. ???/*kleja ne razlilos'
 glue-gen not spilled-pf.sg.neutr

1.2 Partitive morphology

1.2.1 Triggers

Partitive case is also triggered by perfective aspect. However, with negation it is not as acceptable as is genitive case and additionally it is never allowed with imperfective aspect, neither with iterative, nor with a durative reading.

- (8) a. Ja dobavil saxaru / saxar v aj
 I added.perf sugar-part / sugar-acc in tea
- b. Ja dobavljal *saxaru / saxar v aj medlenno
 I added.imp sugar-part/sugar-acc in tea slowly
- c. Ja dobavljal *saxaru / saxar v aj každyj den'
 I added.imp sugar-part/sugar-acc in tea every day
- d. Ja ne dobavil ?saxaru / saxar v aj
 I didn't add.perf sugar-part/sugar-acc in tea
- e. Ja ne dobavljal ??saxaru / saxar v caj
 I didn't add.imp sugar-part / sugar-acc in tea

None of the 9 speakers allowed partitive case for sentence (8b) and (8c), 6 speakers marked sentence (8d) with a question mark, and none of the 9 speakers allowed the negated imperfective partitive in (8e).

1.2.2 *Position in the sentence*

Partitive seem to be allowed only following the verb. Not even the particles that saved the genitive marked NPs in initial position saved the partitive marked NPs. In initial position partitive for all speakers is always worse than the genitive.

- (9) a. *Saxaru bylo dobavleno v aj
 Sugar.part was added in tea
- b. ??? saxaru ne bylo dobavleno v caj
 sugar.part not was added in tea
- c. *Saxaru vse-takie bylo dobavleno v aj.
 sugar.part however was added in tea
- d. v caj bylo dobavleno saxaru
 in tea was added sugar.part

In unaccusative sentences partitives are excluded altogether. Not even the negation that saved the genitive can save the partitive.

- (10) a. Razlilos' *kleju.
 Spilled-pf.sg.neutr glue-part
- b. Da ne razlilos' ???kleju.
 But not spilled-pf.sg. neutr glue-part
- c. *kleju razlilos'
 glue-part spilled-pf.sg.neutr
- d. *kleju ne razlilos'
 glue-part not spilled-pf.sg.neutr

There is an obvious difference between Partitive and Genitive which is not mentioned in the literature (on the contrary see Steven & Brown 1995). Partitives are never allowed in initial position they are much better following the verb which can be explained by existential closure. Genitives

are clearly preferred with negation, and genitive marked NPs are always better in initial position, and even get evaluated with (o.k.) together with the particle *vse-takie* than the partitive marked NPs. To explain this difference in appearance I propose that - respecting all other peculiarities – genitives allow to be interpreted as being specific (von Heusinger 2001, to appear, submitted), whereas partitives never under no circumstances may be interpreted as specific. Under this assumption one would get the following scale: accusative is used to mark definite specific NPs, genitive marks indefinite specific NPs, and partitive marks indefinite unspecific NPs.

2 Results for Polish

2.1 Triggers

In Polish there is only one case marking for genitive and partitive. For a lot of verbs - as in Russian - the use of the partitive/genitive (PG) case marking instead of the accusative is totally optional and indicates a difference in meaning.

- (11) a. Nalej sobie mleka
pour yourself some milk-gen
b. Nalej sobie mleko
pour yourself the milk.acc

For other verbs however it is obligatory (12).

- (12) Wody przybywa
Water-Gen rises

With respect to negation, we get a clear picture of Genitive of Negation.

Whenever there is a negation in the sentence, all 12 speakers used PG

marking for mass nouns (13a-d) and countable nouns (13e-h). 11 speaker excluded accusative in those sentences and 2 allowed accusative but only for contrastive negation.

- (13) a. Nie dodałam *cukier do herbaty.
not (I) added-perf sugar-acc to tea
- b. Nie dodałam cukru do herbaty.
not (I) added-perf suger-gen to tea
- c. Nie dodawałam *cukier do herbaty.
not (I) added-imperf sugar-acc to tea
- d. Nie dodawałam cukru do herbaty.
not (I) added-imperf suger-gen to tea
- e. Nie dokupiłam *nowe ksi ki do mojej biblioteki.
not (I) bought-perf new books-acc to my library
- f. Nie dokupiłam nowych ksi ek do mojej biblioteki.
not (I) bought-perf new books-gen to my library
- g. Nie dokupowałam *nowe ksi ki do mojej biblioteki.
not (I) bought-imperf new books-acc to my library
- h. Nie dokupowałam nowych ksi ek do mojej biblioteki.
not (I) bought-imperf new books-gen to my library

With respect to the perfective and imperfective aspect holds that all speaker allowed accusative next to GP in perfective sentences, with respect to imperfective sentences, all allowed accusative morphology, 9 speakers allowed PG with mass nouns and 3 marked PG case with a question mark. And for countable nouns there were 4 speakers that excluded PG marking, and 3 who marked it with two question marks.

- (14) a. Dorzuciłam traw do ogniska.
(I) added-perf grass-acc to bonfire

- b. Dorzuciłam trawy do ogniska.
(I) added-perf grass-gen to bonfire
- c. Dorzuciłam traw do ogniska.
(I) added-imperf grass-acc to bonfire
- d. Dorzuciłam ? trawy do ogniska.
(I) added-imperf grass-gen to bonfire
- e. Dokupiłam nowe ksi ki do mojej biblioteki.
(I) bought-perf new books-acc to my library
- f. Dokupiłam nowych ksi ek do mojej biblioteki.
(I) bought-perf new books-gen to my library
- g. Dokupowałam nowe.ksi ki do mojej biblioteki.
(I) bought-imperf new books-acc to my library
- h. Dokupowałam ??/*nowych ksi ek do mojej biblioteki.
(I) bought-imperf new books-gen to my library

2.2 Position in the sentence

The pattern with respect to the position in the sentence is not as clear cut as in Russian. In Polish 6 speaker don't allow the PG marked NP in initial position, not even with a negation, 1 speaker marked it with two question marks and 2 marked it with one question mark. Following the verb almost all speaker allowed it.

- (15) a. */??/?Cukru był dodane do herbaty
sugar.gen was added to tea
- b. Cukier było dodane do herbaty
sugar-nom was added to tea
- c. Do herbaty było dodane cukier
in tea was added sugar.nom
- d. Do herbaty był dodane cukru

in teas was added sugar.gen

With respect to unaccusative verbs the results are even worse. Nominative is allowed in all positions in the clause with or without negation. Genitive marked NPs don't seem to be allowed in first position 9 didn't allow it at all, 2 marked it with a question mark. Together with a negation three more allowed it. Following the verb PG is almost perfect 10 allowed it, two marked it with a question mark.

- (16) a. Rozlało si kleju
 spilled-perf-sg.neutr refl glue-gen
- b. Rozlał si klej
 spilled-perf-sg.masc refl glue-nom
- c. Nie rozlało si kleju
 not spilled-perf-sg.neutr refl glue-gen
- d. Nie rozlał si klej
 not spilled-perf-sg.masc refl glue-nom
- e. *kleju rozlało si
 glue-gen spilled-perf-sg.neutr refl
- f. Klej rozlał si
 glue-nom spilled-perf-sg.masc refl
- g. ?kleju nie rozlało si
 glue-gen not spilled-perf-sg.neutr refl
- h. Klej nie rozlał si
 glue-nom not spilled-perf-sg.masc refl

With respect to PG in Polish it was attested that in contrast to Russian PG is obligatory with sentence negation and therefore can be said to be licensed almost exclusively in syntax. All 12 speakers accepted sentences with negation and PG whereas negated sentences with accusative were only accepted with an additional semantic trigger (contrastive negation). In

Polish there is according to Buttler et.al. (1971), Brown & Franks (1995) and others a strong tendency that complements of perfective verbs are marked with PG whereas imperfective aspect should block PG. This was not confirmed. Perfective verbs with *do-* and *na-* allow with mass-nouns and with countable nouns accusative (12/12) next to PG (9/12) always depending on what needs to be expressed, a definite vs. indefinite NP. If we see Polish in contrast to Russian it seems plausible to say that PG in Polish is more grammaticalised than in Russian, with respect to negation, but also with respect to aspect. The aspectual function seems to be reduced and only the NP-related function where it is assigned to quantitatively indeterminate NPs is still fully in use.

In Russian a clear difference between the uses of partitive vs. genitive could be attested. All results show that the use of partitive vs. genitive vs. accusative is highly dependent on the semantic trigger, i.e. what needs to be expressed. This holds for negated sentences and as well for perfective sentences. The different semantic interpretation can also be seen in the difference with respect to imperfective sentences and in what is allowed in initial position. In Russian there is a lot of variety in interpreting the partitive, genitive or accusative marked NPs, whereas in Polish first of all genitive took over all of the functions of partitive case and furthermore it seems to have less semantic interpretation possibilities, it is clearly semantically bleached and more syntactically licensed. The question to ask at this point and – most of all – for further research is what took over the semantic variety of the partitive vs. genitive alternation in Polish, and will something similar happen to Russian?

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Appendix

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| (1) | a. Ja dobavil | saxaru / saxar / saxara | v aj | mass masculin |
| | b. Ja dobavljal | saxaru / saxar / saxara | v aj | |
| | c. Ja ne dobavil | saxaru / saxar / saxara | v aj | |
| | d. Ja ne dobavljal | saxaru / saxar / saxara | v aj | |
| | e. Ja dobavljal | saxaru / saxar / saxara | v aj | kazdyj den |
| (2) | a. Ja dobavil | kleju / klej / kleja | v rastvor | mass masculin |
| | b. Ja dobavljal | kleju / klej / kleja | v rastvor | |
| | c. Ja ne dobavil | kleju / klej / kleja | v rastvor | |
| | d. Ja ne dobavljal | kleju / klej / kleja | v rastvor | |
| | e. Ja dobavljal | kleju / klej / kleja | v rastvor | kazdyj den |
| (3) | a. Ja dobavil | travy / travu / v koster | | mass feminin |
| | b. Ja dobavljal | travy / travu / v koster | | |
| | c. Ja ne dobavil | travy / travu | v koster | |
| | d. Ja ne dobovljal | travy / travu | v koster | |
| (4) | a. Ja dobavil | novye knigi /novyx knig | v moju biblioteku | countable nouns |
| | b. Ja dobavljal | novye knigi /novyx knig | v moju biblioteku | |
| | c. Ja ne dobavil | novye knigi /novyx knig | v moju biblioteku | |
| | d. Ja ne dobavljal | novye knigi / novyx knig | v moju biblioteku | |
| (5) | a. On otnes | kamni / kamnej | vo dvor. | |

- b. On otnes vo dvor kamni / kamnej.
 c. On odnosil kamni/kamnej vo dvor.
 d. On ne otnes kamni/ kamnej vo dvor
 e. On ne odnosil kamni/kamnej vo dvor.
- (6) a. Ja dobavil *jadovituju jagodu / jadovitoj jagody* v varen'e sing
 inanimate
 b. Ja dobavil arbuza v varen'je.
 c. Ja dobavljal *jadovituju jagodu / jadovitoj jagody* v varen'e
 d. Ja dobavil arbuza v vare
 e. Ja ne dobavil *jadovituju jagodu / jadovitoj jagody* v varen'e
 f. Ja ne dobavljal *jadovituju jagodu / jadovitoj jagody* v varen'e
- (7) a. Ja položila ogurec / ogurca v salat.
 b. ' Ja položila v salat ogurca.
 c. Ja klala ogurec /ogurca v salat.
 d. Ja ne položila ogurec / ogurca v salat.
 e. Ja ne klala ogurec / ogurca v salat.
- (8) a. Ja vytaš il saxar / saxaru / saxara iz aški mass
 masculin
 b. Ja vytaskival saxar / saxaru / saxara iz aški
 c. Ja ne vytaš il saxar / saxaru/ saxara iz aški
 d. Ja ne vytaskival saxar / saxaru / saxara iz aški
- (9) a. On vyter klej / kleju /kleja
 b. On vytiral klej / kleju / kleja
 c. On ne vyter klej / kleju / kleja
 d. On ne vytiral klej / kleju / kleja.
- (10) a. On vylil aj/ aju / aja
 b. On vylival aj / aju / aja
 c. On ne vylil aj / aju / aja
 d. On ne vylival aj / aju / aja
- (11) a. Ja vybrosil travu / travy iz kostra mass feminin
 b. Ja vybrasyval travu / travy iz kostra
 c. Ja ne vybrosil travu / travy iz kostra
 d. Ja ne vybrasyval travu / travy iz kostra
- (12) a. Ja podbrosil drov /drova v koster frozen plural
 b. Ja podbrasyval drov / drova v koster
 c. Ja ne podbrosil drov / drova v koster
 d. Ja ne podbrasyval drov /drova v koster
- (13) a. Ja dal sena / seno korovam mass neuter
 b. Ja daval sena / seno korovam
 c. Ja ne dal sena / seno korovam
 d. Ja ne daval sena / seno korovam
- (14) a. Ja nabral jablok v korzinu countable plural

- b. Ja sobiral griby / gribov v lesu
 c. Ja ne sobral griby / gribov v lesu
 d. Ja ne sobiral griby / gribov v lesu

PASSIVES

- (15) a. Saxaru/ Saxar/ Saxara bylo dobavleno v aj
 b. Saxaru / Saxar / Saxara ne bylo dobavleno v aj
 c. v caj ne bylo dobavleno saxaru /saxar /saxara
 d. v caj bylo dobavleno saxaru / saxar / saxara
 e. Saxaru, saxar / saxara byl dobavlen v aj.
 f. V stakane byl saxar / saxaru / saxara
- (16) a. Saxaru / Saxar / Saxara v aj dobavleno ne bylo.
 b. Saxaru / Saxar / Saxara vse-taki bylo dobavleno v sok.
 c. Saxaru / Saxar / Saxara tak i ne bylo dobavleno v aj.
- (17) a. V aj dobavljaetsja saxar / saxaru / saxara
 b. V vino ne dobavljaetsja saxar / saxaru / saxara.
 b' V vino saxar/ saxaru/ saxara ne dobavljaetsja.
- (18) a. Drov / drova bylo podbrošeno v koster
 b. Drov / drova ne bylo podbrošeno v koster
 c. Drov / drova byl podbrošeno v koster
 d. Drov / drova ne byl podbrošeno v koster
 e. Drova / drov byli podbrošeny v koster.
 f. Drova / drov ne byli podbrošen v koster.
- (19) a. v koster bylo podbrošeno drov / drova
 b. v koster ne bylo podbrošeno drov / drova
 c. v koster byli podbrošeny drov / drova
 d. v koster ne byli podbrošeny drov / drova
- (20) a) Jablok bylo nabrano v korzinu
 b) V korzinu bylo nabrano jablok.

UNACCUSATIVES / ERGATIVES

- (21) a. Mja ej / Mja i s gory ne skatilis'
 b. Mja ej / Mja i s gory ne skatilos'
 c. mja ej / mja i skatilis' s goray
 d. Mja ej/ Mja i skatilos s gory
- (22) a. S gory skatilos' mja ej / mja i
 b. S gory skatilis' mja ej / mja i

-
- | | | | | | |
|------|-------------------------|--------------|------|----------------------|--------|
| | c. S gory | ne skatilis' | | mja ej / mja i | |
| | d. S gory | ne skatilos' | | mja ej /mja i | |
| (23) | a. Razlilos' | | | klej / kleja/*kleju. | |
| | b. Razlilsja | | | klej / kleja/kleju. | |
| | c. Klej / kleja/ kleju | | | ne razlilos' | |
| | d. Klej / kleja / kleju | | | ne razlilsja | |
| (24) | a. Saxar | vse-taki | byl | dobavlen | v sok |
| | b. Saxara | vse-taki | bylo | dobavleno | v sok |
| | c. Saxaru | vse-taki | bylo | dobavleno | v sok. |