

Alëna Aksënova

Lomonosov Moscow State University

Nominal Partitive Constructions in Russian¹

Abstract In this paper we will discuss the nature of Russian nominal quantifiers. Also we will provide a syntactic analysis for the nominal partitive constructions (NPC, ‘čáška čája’ *a cup of tea*) that will help to unify both sources of Genitive on the quantified in the NPC and on complements of some verbs (‘vypít čája’ *to drink some tea*).

1. Introduction

1.1 Theoretical background

The two main analyses of Russian Nominal Partitive Constructions are proposed by G. Rappaport (2000) and J. Bailyn (2012).

Rappaport (2000) assumes that NPC is just a case of a construction formed by two nominals, such as ‘kollekcija monet’ *a collection of coins*, where the second noun is the complement of the first, and the source of Genitive is the position of the quantified NP, i.e. Comp-of-N.

In the view of J. Bailyn (2012) in NPCs there is a QP between the two nominal projections. Also there is a class of verbs (so-called [+Qu] verbs, including *na*-verbs, intensional verbs, etc.) that take QPs as their object. Genitive appears because the head Q assigns it to its complement.

In the both views the nominal quantifier is considered the head of the nominal projection. These solutions raise the following question: if the nominal quantifier phrase is either NP or DP, then why is its interpretation as a physical object impossible (1)?

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- (1) *spletënnaja včera master-ic-ami KORZINA grib-ov
 weaved yesterday craftsperson-FEM-PL.INSTR basket mushroom-PL.GEN
Exp.: ‘the BASKET weaved yesterday by craftswomen filled with mushrooms’

1.2 The goal of this paper

In this paper we will investigate Russian NPCs and nominal quantifiers that can be found in the nominal partitive constructions (2). NPC are formed by two nouns: the first one is the quantifier and the second one is a quantified NP marked by Genitive.

- (2) a. stakan vod-y
 glass water-GEN
 ‘a glass of water’
 b. korobka konfet
 box sweet.PL.GEN
 ‘a box of sweets’

Further we will argue for the following points: first, it would be improper to consider a nominal quantifiers a noun of the category N such as given in (3). Second, the nominal quantifier is located in the specifier of the projection with quantificational properties (QP). Third, the source of Genitive on the quantified element of the NPC and on complements of some verbs (4) is the same head Q.

- (3) ja razbil STAKAN
 I broke glass.ACC
 ‘I broke the glass.’
 (4) on vypil VOD-Y
 he drank water-GEN
 ‘He drank (some) water.’

2. Data

In this section we will briefly discuss properties of Russian NPCs.

I. The nominal quantifier cannot refer to a physical object; it denotes a unit of measure

Nominal quantifier can never refer to a physical object², therefore it cannot be modified with a low adjective specifying its shape or color (5), with the restrictive relative clause (6) or the referential possessor (7).³

- (5) a. *vysokij STAKAN vod-y
tall glass water-GEN
- b. *krasnaja ČAŠKA čaj-a
red cup tea-GEN
- (6) *spletěnnaja včera master-ic-ami KORZINA grib-ov
weaved yesterday craftsperson-FEM-PL.INSTR basket mushroom-PL.GEN
Exp.: ‘the BASKET weaved yesterday by craftswomen filled with mushrooms’
- (7) *an-in-a KORZINA moj-ix grib-ov
Ann-GEN-FEM basket my-GEN.PL mushroom-PL.GEN

II. It is possible to modify the nominal quantifier independently of the quantified NP

However, as a unit of measure the nominal quantifier can be modified with adjectives specifying its size (8), so independent modification is allowed.

- (8) bol’š-oj STAKAN vody
big glass water-GEN
‘a big glass of water’

III. For NPC the only possible object position is one of the [+Qu] verb. Even when located in this position nominal quantifier receives no Genitive

Quantifier of NPC located in the object position can be either overt (9a) or covert (9b). Note that the nominal quantifier receives no Genitive marking (9c). If NPC

² If the nominal quantifier is of the semantic type “container”, then comitative construction can be used to refer the container as to a physical object, cf. ‘moja čaška s tvoim čajem’ *my cup with your tea*. For detailed discussion of comitative constructions in Russian see (Rakhilina 2010).

³ Sometimes partitive constructions become collocations, so the phrase ‘butylka vina’ *a bottle of wine* can not only be the quantifier-and-quantified construction, but may also refer to a physical object. Here we do not consider such cases.

stays in the object position of [-Qu] verb, it is either interpreted as collocation (10a) or is considered totally ungrammatical (10b).

- (9) a. on vypil stakan vod-y
 he drank glass.ACC water-GEN
 ‘He drank a glass of water.’
- b. on vypil vod-y
 he drank water-GEN
 ‘He drank some water.’
- c. *on vypil stakan-a vod-y
 he drank glass-GEN water-GEN
- (10) a. ?andrej uvidel korobk-u konfet
 Andrew saw box-ACC sweet.GEN.PL
 ‘Andrew saw a box of sweets (= a box with sweets).’
- b. #on razbil bokal vin-a
 he broke glass.ACC wine-GEN
Expected: ‘He broke a glass of wine.’

There is no restriction on the size (11) or referentiality (12) of the quantified NP⁴. The only requirement is that only non-referent NPs could be marked by Partitive Genitive⁵ (12).

- (11) bokal tvo-ego prekrasn-ogo bel-ogo vin-a
 glass your-NEUT.SG.GEN excellent-NEUT.SG.GEN white-NEUT.SG.GEN wine-GEN
 ‘a glass of your excellent white wine’
- (12) a. čaška kuplennogo včera čaj-a / *čaj-u
 cup bought yesterday tea-GEN / tea-PART
 ‘the cup of TEA that was bought yesterday’
- b. každyj den’ on vypivajet čašku čaj-a / čaj-u
 every day he drinks cup tea-GEN / tea-PART
 ‘Every day he drinks a cup of tea.’

⁴ Here under ‘NP’ we assume a nominal projection with no specification whether it is NP or DP.

⁵ Partitive (or Genitive-II) is a rare Russian case that can be used sometimes instead of the Standard Genitive with the same meaning. Special forms of Partitive case exist for some mass nouns of the second declension (‘mědu’ of *honey*, ‘pesku’ of *sand*, etc.). For detailed description of partitive case in Russian see (Seržant 2014).

The correspondence between the nominal quantifier and the quantified NP is semantically restricted (13), see discussion of the s-selection in partitive contexts in (Borschev 2014).

- (13) a. baton xleb-a
 loaf bread-GEN
 ‘long loaf’
- b. #stakan xleb-a
 glass bread-GEN
 ‘a glass of bread’

3. Summary of relevant properties

An appropriate analysis for the Russian nominal partitive constructions must take into account the following problems:

- (i) Impossibility of referring to a nominal quantifier as to a physical object;
- (ii) Possibility of separate modification of the nominal quantifier;
- (iii) The source of Genitive case on the quantified NP both in the presence of a nominal quantifier and in its absence.

4. Analysis

I agree with Bailyn (2012) in the existence of the QP projection, where the head Q assigns Genitive to its complement. Since the nominal quantifier cannot be interpreted as a physical object, is not marked Genitive and can be independently modified, we suggest that it is located in the specifier of the QP projection. Figure 1 reductively shows the structure of the nominal partitive construction in Russian.

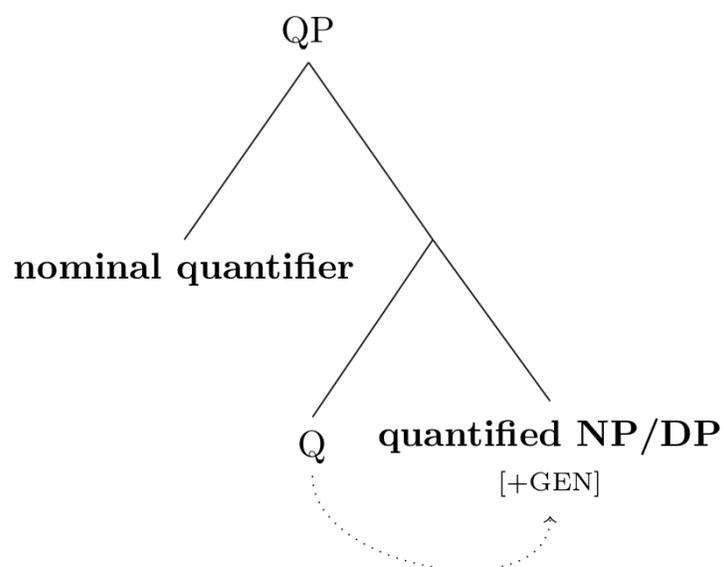
All the properties listed above in the “Data” section are accounted by this analysis.

The location of the nominal quantifier within the functional projection predicts the impossibility of interpreting the quantifier as a physical object, explaining the asterisk on (6).

A nominal quantifier can be modified independently of the quantified NP (8), because it is located in the specifier position that according to Jackendoff (1977) can only be occupied by constituents. Also this analysis applies no structural restrictions on the size of the quantified NP.

The source of Genitive on the quantified complement of the NPC and on the quantified object of [+Qu] verbs is the same, i.e. head Q assigns it to its

Figure 1: Nominal Partitive Construction



complement, so there is no need in distinguishing between these two cases. Moreover, the observation that the only possible object position that can be occupied by NPC is the one of the [+Qu] verb becomes not only unsurprising, but rather inferred logically. Likewise, the nominal quantifier located in the object position of the [+Qu] verb is not marked Genitive, because it stays within the QP projection, but not below it.

The two partial diagrams on the next page illustrate the NPC with an overt nominal quantifier in the object position of an intensional verb (Figure 2, example 14) and the quantified NP without overt quantifier in the object position of *na*-verb (Figure 3, example 15). Here we accept the version of the analysis of verbs in which the head *V* assigns Accusative to its complement (Wurmbrand 2006, Pesetsky and Torrego 2011 i.a.) and Pereltsvaig's (2006) analysis of the *na*-construction, for details see below.

- (14) andrej xochet čašk-u čaj-a
 Andrew wants cup-ACC tea-GEN
 'Andrew wants a cup of tea.'
- (15) maša na-sobirala grib-ov
 Mary na-picked mushroom-PL.GEN
 'Mary picked (a lot of) mushrooms.'

Figure 2: NPC with overt nominal quantifier in the object position of intensional verb

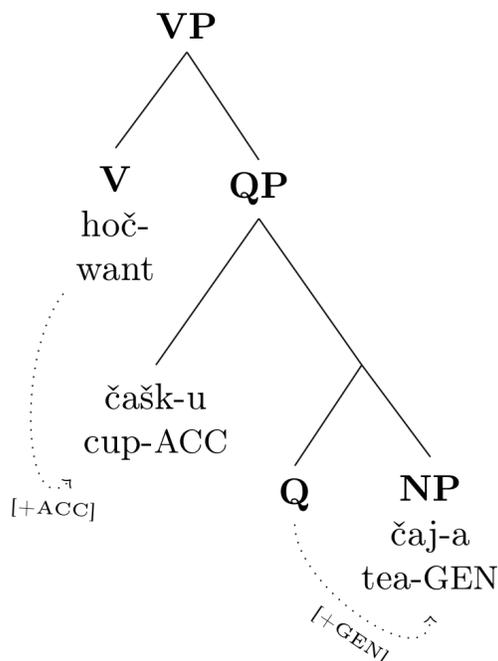
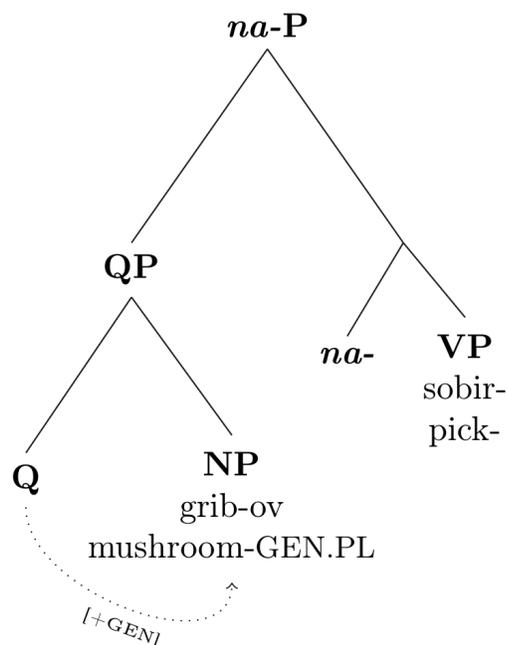


Figure 3: quantified NP without overt quantifier in the object position of na-verb



5. Related constructions with Genitive of Quantification

The same quantificational projection QP is involved to explain the source of Genitive on the quantified NPs in other constructions with the Genitive of Quantification (GQ constructions) as well. Some of them are given below.

5.1 Numerals assigning Genitive case

Some numerals in Russian can assign Genitive (16). Bošković (2006) proposes an analysis in which they “project a QP taking NP as their complement, which they case-mark, on a par with case-assigning verbs and prepositions” (Bošković 2006: 102).

- (16) *ivan kupil pjat' mašin* Bošković (2006: 1)
 Ivan bought five.ACC car.GEN.PL
 ‘Ivan bought five cars.’

interpreting the nominal quantifier as a physical object. Sententially the NPCs can appear in the object position of [+Qu] verbs, in the latter case the nominal quantifier is assigned Accusative and the quantified complement remains marked Genitive.

List of abbreviations

ACC – Accusative, FEM – feminine, GEN – Genitive, INSTR – Instrumental, MASC – masculine, NA – the productive cumulative verbal prefix *na-*, NEUT – neuter, PART – Partitive, PL – plural, SG – singular.

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