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**THE PREDICATIVE INSTRUMENTAL IN RUSSIAN
AND OTHER SLAVIC LANGUAGES – HISTORY AND ORIGIN**

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Abstract. The fact that the predicative instrumental is not only in used in East- and West Slavic languages but also in Modern Lithuanian makes it possible that this use is a result of a Baltic-Slavic community beside other common features, e.g. the use of Russian and Lithuanian genitive of objects in negated sentences. But there is also the possibility of a Finnish substratum in Russian because of the morpho-syntactic peculiarities in the Modern Finnish language, as there are the “translative” as a case to denote a change of state or purpose and the “essive”, a case marking a temporary state as the grammatical category to denote a temporary quality. Both cases can be compared from a typological viewpoint, with the Baltic and Slavic predicative instrumental.

Key words: predicative instrumental, Slavic languages, Russian

In Russian, predicative nouns can stand in either the nominative or the instrumental, while predicative adjectives stand in either the short form, the nominative long form, or the instrumental long form. Over the whole history of Russian, there has been a tendency for the instrumental to encroach upon the nominative, and for the long form to encroach upon the short form; this process is by no means complete, and normative and pedagogical handbooks still have to list the criteria that require or favor one or other of these forms, but in the recent history of the Russian language we can see some reflections of this general change away from nominative and short forms, in particular in constructions where nineteenth – century usage allowed the nominative or the short form as an alternative, but where current usage does not. In dialect and colloquial speech the use of the short and long adjectives, in particular, is markedly different from their use in written language with much more use of long forms¹.

Inflection is a variation in the form of a lexical word reflecting different morpho-syntactic categories. It contrasts with derivation, which has to do with the

¹ Bernard Comrie & Gerald Stone: The Russian language since the revolution. Oxford 1978, p.117-118.

building up of lexical words. The variation is typologically but not only, by means of a suffix e.g. in Russian: *molotom* “by a hammer” realizes instrumental case, singular number and masculine gender. In *molotov* the suffix *-ov* realizes genitive, case, masculine gender and plural number. In Latin *regat* “may he rule” – *at* realizes third person, singular number, active voice, subjunctive mood and present tense. *Regit* realizes the same morpho-syntactic properties, except for a change of subjunctive to indicative.

Inflection is also a variation in the forms of a lexical word reflecting different morpho-syntactic categories in languages in which words are constructed from stems and typical inflectional affixes. Constructions with the predicative instrumental in Russian were originally used in Old Russian in the pastperfect tense of verbs in northern dialects, but then the use extended also to the other tenses. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the predicative instrumental displaced not only the nominative, but also the accusative when used in apposition constructions. Presumably the extension of the use of the predicative instrumental was aided by an influence of other Slavonic languages, especially Ukrainian and Polish, where we find a widespread use of this syntactic category. During the time of Michail Lomonosov the use of the predicative instrumental seemed to be obligatory. It is certain that the predicative instrumental is not a result of Church Slavonic influence on Russian. Sometimes the use of the instrumental seems to be necessary to avoid formal coincidences of subject and nominal predicate, but there are also other possibilities using a predicative noun in the nominative, e.g., *Den’gi est’ den’gi* = Money is money, but the use of the instrumental case with predicative nouns in the present tense is very rare, e.g. *Naš syn kassirov v banke* = Our son is cashier in a bank.

Concerning the development of the predicative use of the instrumental case it was in the oldest Russian documents very rare, but its use was increasing, while adjectives were used in the short predicative form. In the 17th century the use of the long form of adjectives is more and more widespread and at the end of 17th century the long form of adjectives is used also in the instrumental. Today there are also the possibilities to use either the nominative or the instrumental of predicative adjectives in the long form:

Strana stanovitsja bedna//*Strana stanovitsja bednoj* = The country becomes poor;

On ostalsja nedovolen//*On ostalsja nedovol’nym* = He remained discontented;

Povest’ vyšla skvernej//*Povest’ vyšla skvernoj* = The story turned out to be bad.

In general, the choice between the predicative instrumental and the nominative is determined by whether the predicate denotes a temporary restriction of state or property, or also a characteristic related to a particular moment in time with the use of the instrumental or a more or less state of permanent characteristic unrelated to any

particular moment in time with the use of the nominative². The trend in the current written Russian language to replace the predicative nominative by the instrumental is more advanced than in the colloquial language, whereas the trend to replace short adjectives by long adjectives is more advanced in the colloquial language.

The use of one of the two predicative cases in Slavic languages seems to depend on semantic conditions. In some Slavic languages we find an increase of use of the instrumental, in other Slavic languages an increase of the use of the nominative. The former is a rule in Polish where the instrumental case is used for a predicative noun and the nominative is used only in special situations³. In Russian it seems to be a question of style, which form is used for the predicative adjectives, e.g. *Ja stal meločnoju* // *Ja stal razdražitel'nyj* (Gor'kij). Here seems to be a difference in Russian between a substantial attribute and an occasional attribute e.g. *On nastojaščij soldat* // *Ona krasavica* // *Ona krasiva* // *On byl togda nastojaščim geroem* // *Onabudet v etom plat'e očeny' krasivoj*. The instrumental case in Russian is also used with verbs denoting a relative or temporary situation, e.g. *kažetsja, okazyvaetsja, delaetsja, stanovitsja*, e.g. *On okazalsja oratorom* // *On byl naznačen oficerom* // *On byl izbran deputatom*.

In Czech we find also two possibilities of predicative cases, e.g. nominative and instrumental, e.g. *Je hrdina* // *Udělal Jiříka králem* // *Je hezká* // *Ukázal se statečným*. But sometimes the dative or accusative is also used in Czech with a predicative noun, e.g. *Něni dobře člověku být samotnému* // *Ukázali nám jej mrtvého*.

In Slovene the instrumental case occurs only with prepositions, the meaning of which can be grouped into three categories: accompaniment, instrument and stationary proximity, denoting an orientation between objects in a three-dimensional scale, or by extension in time, e.g. *gren z njo* = I am going with her, *pišem z flomasterjem* = I am writing with a marker, *nad oblaki* = above the clouds, *med kosilom* = during lunch⁴.

Between Baltic and Slavic languages we find another similarity in the syntax of Lithuanian and Russian, also in other Slavic languages⁵, but there doesn't seem to be a parallel with the Finnish language.

² D.S.Worth: Transform analysis of Russian instrumental constructions. In: Word 5, 1958, p.247-290;

R.Roed. Zwei Studien über den prädikativen Instrumental im Russischen. Oslo 1966.

B.O.Unbegaun: Russische Grammatik..Göttingen 1969. S.167.

³ Compare H.W.Schaller. Das Prädikatsnomen im Russischen. Eine beschreibend-historische Untersuchung. Köln-Wien 1975. P.115f.

⁴ Marc L. Greenberg. A Short Reference Grammar of Slovene. Muenchen 2008. P.102.

⁵ Ernst Fraenkel: Die baltischen Sprachen. Heidelberg 1950. S.100-101:

„Der prädikative Instrumental hat sich im Baltischen und Slavischen erst allmählich entwickelt, was man vor allem im Slavischen im Lichte der Geschichte deutlich verfolgen kann. Am stärksten ist er unter den slavischen Sprachen im Polnischen ausgeprägt, wo er sogar von Partizipien in der Passivparaphrase gebraucht werden kann. Wenn sich ostlitauische Dialekte seiner besonders gerne bedienen, so liegt später slavischer Einfluss vor.

Russian examples:

Ja ne čitaju ètu knigu // Ja ne čital nikakich knig.

Lithuanian examples:

Aš tevui duodu pinigų = I give the father the money. *Aš tevui neduodu pinigų*
= I give the father no money⁶.

Another peculiarity, which is common for Slavic and Baltic languages, is the use of compound adjectives by affixation of a pronoun at the older class of adjectives, short forms *dobrŭ, dobra, dobro*, long forms, e.g. *dobryj, dobraja, dobroe*, which was the supposition of the later emerging use of attributive and predicative forms. In Lithuanian we find also short and long forms of adjectives, e.g. *geras//gerasis* = good.

The instrumental is not only used in Slavic languages, but also in modern Lithuanian as a predicative case and thus makes it possible to argue that this predicative use of the instrumental is a result of the Balto-Slavic community beside other common features, e.g. the use of Russian and Lithuanian genitive of direct objects in negated sentences, which is to be found also in other Slavic languages. But there is also the possibility of a Finnish substratum in Russian because of the morpho-syntactic particularities in the contemporary Finnish language as there are the “translative” as a case to denote a change of state or purpose and the “essive”, a case marking a temporary state as the grammatical category to denote a temporary quality. Both cases can be compared, from a typological viewpoint, with the Russian predicative instrumental.

Translative: A case denoting state and purpose. Finnish *vede (water) lumi mattui veeks* snow turned water- translation: The snow turned to water (Latin trans – across, latum – carried.)

Essive: In some languages with inflections, marking, signaling as a temporary state, e.g. Finnish *poika* – boy - *poykana* “Boy-Ess. (as a boy (I did not know him))”⁷

Instrumental: A case expressing manner of means e.g. Russian: *molot* hammer, *molotom* – with a hammer, *les* – forest, *lesom* – through the forest.

Concerning Slavic languages we find the following examples for using nominative and instrumental as predicative cases:

Ansätze zu prädikativem Instrumental bekunden im übrigen auch andere idg. Sprachen als Baltisch und Slavisch (vgl. lat. *aqua nive concrecit* „das Wasser erstarrt zu Schnee“)

Ernst Fraenkel: Der prädicative Instrumental im Slavischen und Baltischen und seine syntaktischen Grundlagen. In. Archiv für Slavische Philologie 60, 1924, P.115.

⁶ According to Alfred Senn. Kleine Litauische Sprachlehre. Heidelberg 1929. P.36-37.

⁷ According to Richard Semrau: Wir lernen finnisch sprechen. Leipzig 1964. P.66-67.

Russian language:

Ja rab, I byl rabom pokornym. Verjoatno on okažetsja mošennikom. *Polkovnik kazalsja mal'čiškoj* /Der Oberst sah aus, wirkte wie ein Milchgesicht. Samoј spokojnoj byla ego lošad'... meždu drugimi lošad'jami. On byl ne tol'ko sotrudnikom, no i drugom. On prišel pervyj //On prišel pervym.

Polish language:

For democracy against government. Polish people demonstrate against Jarosław Kaczyński, the powerful chief of the government party PIS: Program partii programem narodu. STOP demokracji PIS!. Plan pięcioletni jest planem dobrobytu. Mój ojciec – to jest robotnik. Mój pies jest jak wilk.

Czech language:

Můj spoluzák stal inženýrem. Naš dědeček byl učitelem.

Baltic languages /Lithuanian:

Jis buvo mokytoju //On byl kogda-nibud'učitelem. *Jis buvo geras mokytojas* //On byl chorošij učitel'.

Finnish language:

Hän oli oppettaja //On byl učitel'. Hän tuli oppettajaksi //On stal učitelem. *Hän tuli presidentiksi* //On stal presidentom. *Isäni on pappi* //Moj otec pastor. *Isäni on pappina naa puripitäjässä.* //Moj otec pastor v sosednem prichode⁸.

It was Ernst Lewy who first discussed in 1925 the theory of a fenno-ougric substrate in the Russian language⁹. It was also Dmitrij Tschizhevskij who called in question some peculiarities of the Russian language, e.g. the case system with its special use of genitive and instrumental cases¹⁰. For both Russian and Finnish have in common that the predicative instrumental and essive which is only used

⁸According to Richard Semrau: Wir lernen finnisch sprechen. Leipzig 1964. P.66.

⁹ Ernst Levy. Betrachtung des Russischen. 1925. In. Kleine Schriften. Berlin 1961, p.312: „Es heißt doch eben mit „voller Undeutlichkeit“ im Lateinischen „Darium egem salutant“, und warum gerade im Slavischen und Baltischen und gerade der Instrumental n die Stelle des prädikativen Nominativs getreten ist, das heißt auch die Annahme jener Voraussetzung völlig im Dunkeln. Mit dürren Worten sage ich, dass die Erklärungen syntaktischer Erscheinungen meist keine sind.“

¹⁰ D.Tschizhevskij: Über die Eigenart der russischen Sprache. Halle (Saale) 1958. p.22-23: „Es kann die Frage aufgeworfen werden, ob nicht das finnische Substrat, auf welchem sich das Russ. seit ältester Zeit (vgl. die finn. Reste in Rußland) entwickelt, die „horizontale Spaltung des Kasussystems zumindest begünstigt, wenn nicht hervorgerufen hat. Die große Zahl der Kasus in den finn. Sprachen hat jedenfalls den Vertretern des finn. Substrats erlaubt die große Zahl der neurussischen Kasus leichter zu behalten und zu handhaben.“

in situations with no permanent qualities. Against the fenno-ougrian influence have articulated the Russian slavist Samuil Bernštejn, during a conference in Leningrad, and the German slavist Ulrich Busch, voting for an independent origin in Slavic and Baltic, which was also pronounced by Ernst Fraenkel without following the position of Antoine Meillet, who argued that the predicative instrumental in Slavic languages is the result of Finnish influence:

“Der prädikative Instrumental hat sich im Baltischen und Slavischen erst allmählich entwickelt, was man vor allem im Slavischen im Lichte der Geschichte deutlich verfolgen kann. Am stärksten ist er unter den slavischen Sprachen im Polnischen ausgeprägt, wo er sogar vom Partizipium in der Passivparaphrase gebraucht werden kann. Wenn sich ostlitauische Dialekte seiner gern bedienen, so liegt später slavischer Einfluss vor. Ansätze zum prädikativen Instrumental bekunden im übrigen auch andere idg. Sprachen als Baltisch und Slavisch (vgl. lat. *aqua nive concrecit*“ das Wasser erstarrt zu Schnee“¹¹.

We have to ask, if the origin of the predicative instrumental in Baltic and Slavic is a result of fenno-ougriic substrat, or was it a “superstrat” in the sense of Wartburg in 1932 or an “adstrat” in the sense of Valkhoff also in 1932? It was Kalima with his book “Die ostseefinnischen Lehnwörter im Russischen“, who offered in his scientific publication important hints to other grammatical areas of the Russian language. “Substrat” is an influence by one language on another language by an old population with the consequence of bilingualism in one region. In his very important book on the question of a fenno-ougriic substratum in the Russian language the German linguist Wolfgang Veenker makes the following final conclusion concerning this question:

“Bei allen Berührungen und Mischungen hat sich das Russentum als stärker erwiesen und durchsetzen können; allerdings hat das finnougriische Element an der Symbiose großen Anteil. Einige der finnougriischen Sprachen sind erloschen (die Merier und Muromer) andere haben sich (zum Teil nur noch in geringen Resten) behaupten können, vor allem die Sprachen der Völker, die erst später mit den Russen in Berührung gekommen sind und infolge ihrer geographischen Lage eine isolierte Stellung einnahmen; an einigen finnougriischen Völkern und Sprachen lässt sich der Prozess der Russifizierung bzw. des Aussterbens in der Gegenwart ablesen (Voten, Vepsen).“¹² Veenker pointed out that there are enough extralinguistic presuppositions to vote for a fenno-ougriic substrat in the Russian language.

It is very important that in the first century of the Christian era Plinius used the name “Venedi”, Tacitus “Veneti” and in the second century Ptolemaeus used this name as “Ouenedai”. And this was just the same word the Finnish people used for

¹¹ Ernst Fraenkel: Die baltischen Sprachen. Heidelberg 1950. P.190-101.

¹² Wolfgang Veenker: Die Frage des finnougriischen Substrats in der russischen Sprache. The Hague 1967. p.20

the Russian, e.g. “Venäjä” derived from “Venädä”, the Scandinavian people used the word “vindr, vindland” and the Germans denominated the Slavs at the Baltic Sea and the Sorbs as Old German “winida”. But the etymology of this old name is not clear.¹³

We can assume that there was in early times an intensive contact between Slavonic and Finnish people with the consequence of the mentioned similarities in their languages. The open question is if the Finnish language was in contact with Baltic and Slavic languages merely during the Balto-Slavic language community as a substrat or was that later after the partition of Baltic and Slavic and the predicative forms were the result of a Finnish adstrat.

It is very important what the Finnish slavist Valentin Kiparsky wrote in 1969 about the relation between the Russians and the Finnish people in his short paper “Is there a fenno-ougric substrate in Slavic languages?¹⁴”:

„Gebildete Russen, die in der Schule Auszüge aus der Nestor-Chronik gelesen hatten, vergegenwärtigten sich stets, dass sie ursprünglich finnischen (tschudischen“) Boden bewohnten, ungefähr so wie man in Deutschland ganz allgemein glaubte, die meisten Ostelbier seien entnationalisierte Slaven. Große russische Dichter romantisierten Russlands „finnische“ Vergangenheit. Puschkina sprach von „armseligen finnischen Fischern“, den „tristen Stiefsohnen der Natur“, die vor der Gründung St.Petersburgs im J. 1703 an den Ufern der Newa wohnten, und in seiner prophetischen Vision der künftigen eurasiatischen Industriemacht, des „neuen Amerika“, nennt Aleksandr Blok noch am Vorabend des ersten Weltkrieges seine Heimat „oh, Du armes, finnisches Reussenland.“¹⁵

„Educated Russians who had at school read parts of the Nestor chronicle realized always that they were inhabitants of Finnish land, just the same, as there existed in Germany the general opinion, that most of the inhabitants east of the river Elbe were people who had lost their nationality. Prominent Russian poets spoke in a romantic manner of Russias “Finnish” past. Puškin spoke about poor Finnish fishermen, sad stepsons of nature, who lived at the bank of the river Neva before the time Petersburg was founded in 1703. In a prophetic vision of a Eurasian industrial power of a new America, Aleksandr Blok called before the beginning of World War I his homeland “oh, you poor Finnish land of Russians.”

¹³ J.J. Mikkola. *Urslavische Grammatik. I. Teil. Lautlehre, Vokalismus, Betonung*. Heidelberg 1913, p.7-8.

¹⁴ Valentin Kiparsky: *Gibt es ein finnougrißches Substrat im Slavischen?* Helsinki 1960.

¹⁵ Valentin Kiparsky: *Gibt es ein finnougrißches Substrat im Slavischen?* Helsinki 1960. P.7-8.

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