

The Russian Genitive of Negation in Existential Sentences: The Role of Theme-Rheme Structure Reconsidered¹

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0. Introduction

We introduce our topic by citing Yu. D. Apresjan (1985):

In some negated sentences of Russian, as is well known, two main case forms are possible – nominative case and genitive case: *Pis'mo ne prišlo* -- *Pis'ma ne prišlo*². The syntactic, semantic, and communicative particulars of the second of these constructions is one of the classic themes of general and Russian grammar, and has given rise to a huge literature. (Apresjan 1985, p.292)

Another characteristic of intransitive sentences whose subject is marked with the Genitive of Negation (henceforth GenNeg) is the non-agreement of the “impersonal predicate” with the subject. Russian grammarians often classify such sentences as impersonal, although, as Peškovskij notes, “These sentences are impersonal only when negated. If one removes the negation, they become personal³ ...”. (Peškovskij 1938, p334.)

Babby (1980) introduced the terminology “negated declarative sentences” (NDS), for the sentences with nominative subjects, and “negated existential sentences” (NES), for those with genitive “subjects” (there are controversies about subjecthood⁴), as in (1a) and (2a) (his (81a-b), from Ickoviè 1974). We give the corresponding affirmative sentences (ADS and AES) in (1b) and (2b).

- (1) NDS (a) *Otvét iz polka ne priš el.*
Answer-NOM.M.SG from regiment NEG arrived-M.SG
'The answer from the regiment has not arrived.'
- ADS (b) *Otvét iz polka priš el.*
Answer-NOM.M.SG from regiment arrived-M.SG
'The answer from the regiment has arrived.'
- (2) NES (a) *Otveta iz polka ne priš lo.*
Answer-GEN.M.SG from regiment NEG arrived-N.SG
'There was no answer from the regiment.'

² *Pis'mo ne prišlo* -- *Pis'ma ne prišlo.*
Letter-NOM.N.SG NEG came-N.SG – Letter-GEN.N.SG NEG came-N.SG
'The letter didn't come.' 'No letter came.'

In glossing our examples, we use the following abbreviations:

NOM	nominative	SG	singular
GEN	genitive	PL	plural
ACC	accusative	1	first person
M	masculine	2	second person
F	feminine	3	third person
N	neuter		

We use boldface to highlight the relevant occurrences of **NOM** and **GEN** on nouns and **N.SG** on non-agreeing verbs. We do not gloss irrelevant morphology.

³ Perlmutter and Moore (1999) consider even the affirmative counterparts of these sentences, where the “subject” is necessarily nominative, to be impersonal constructions; most linguists do not. See Section 6.2.

⁴ In Section 6 we discuss two debated issues concerning these “subjects”, the Unaccusative Hypothesis according to which they are all underlying objects (Section 6.1), and the question of whether NES's are impersonal (Section 6.2). In the meantime, we will simply use the term “subject” as the simplest label for the NPs we are discussing.

AES (b) *Prž el otvet iz polka.*
 Arrived- M.SG answer-NOM.M.SG from regiment
 ‘There was an answer from the regiment.’

The affirmative ADS and AES sentences differ (obligatorily) in the order of subject and verb, while in the negative sentences, where the difference between NDS and NES is marked by case, the word order can vary; we return to this important point later.

Here are some more standard examples.⁵

- (3) a. NDS: *Stok talyx vod ne nabljudalsja.*
 Runoff-NOM.M.SG melted water NEG was.observed-M.SG
 ‘No runoff of thawed snow was observed.’⁶
- b. NES: *Stoka talyx vod ne nabljudalos’.*
 Runoff-GEN.M.SG melted water NEG was.observed-N.SG
 ‘No runoff of thawed snow was observed.’ (= There was no runoff.)
- (4) a. NDS: *Moroz ne èuvstvovalsja.*
 Frost-NOM.M.SG NEG be.felt-M.SG
 ‘The frost was not felt.’ (E.g. we were dressed warmly).
- b. NES: *Moroza ne èuvstvovalos’.*
 Frost- GEN.M.SG NEG be.felt-N.SG
 ‘No frost was felt (there was no frost).’
- (5) a. NDS: **(#) Somnenija ne byli.*⁷
 Doubts-NOM.N.PL NEG were-N.PL
- b. NES: *Sommenij ne bylo.*
 Doubts- GEN.N.PL NEG were- N.SG
 ‘There were no doubts.’
- (6) a. NDS: *Lena ne pela.*
 Lena-NOM.F.SG NEG sang-F.SG
 ‘Lena didn’t sing.’
- b. NES: **(#) Leny ne pelo.*
 Lena-GEN.F.SG NEG sang-N.SG

⁵ Examples (3) and (4) are from Ickoviè (1974) (cited in Babby 1980), and example (5) from Babby (1980). We note that after many years of work on GenNeg, a large collection of examples has been accumulated and has in a sense become common property. These examples, which highlight various aspects of the construction, are analyzed in many works. We largely take our examples from this collection (sometimes with variations), drawing principally on examples cited by Ickoviè (1974), Babby (1980), Apresjan (1980, 1985), and Paduèeva (1992, 1997.)

⁶ This is Babby’s translation (Babby 1980: 59); in most cases he translates nominative subjects in NDS’s with the definite article, and we believe a definite article would be appropriate in this case as well.

⁷ The status of examples like (5a) as “ungrammatical (*)” or “infelicitous or semantically anomalous without a special context (#)” is a theory-dependent matter that does not have a straightforward answer. Examples (5a) and (6b) are very hard to improve by manipulating the context; other “bad” examples are much easier to improve by that means.

Among the many puzzles about GenNeg, we will be most concerned with the characterization of the semantics of the construction. One question in this area is why, under sentential negation, some sentences allow only genitive subject, some only nominative subject, and some both. When both are possible, we want to know what the difference is. It is to be hoped that if we understand the semantics of the construction and the lexical semantics of the various verbs, the answers to those questions will follow. Here is another quotation from Apresjan (1985):

The key to understanding the construction we are considering can be found in the position taken long ago in the works of S.O. Karcevskij and R. Jakobson, namely that in negative sentences with the genitive case, “the subject itself is negated” (Jakobson), and in negative sentences with nominative case, “what is negated is not the subject, but its activity” (Karcevskij), or, speaking in the words of R. Jakobson, “just the action”. (Apresjan 1985, pp. 295.)

In a certain sense, it is that same claim which is sharpened and developed in the work of Babby (1980). Babby holds that the scope of sentential negation is different in “existential sentences” (ES’s) and “declarative sentences” (DS’s), and that that difference is in turn determined by the differing communicative structure of these sentences, the structure of Theme and Rheme. According to Babby, in an ES, the entire sentence falls within the Rheme, and hence when the sentence is negated, the subject as well as the verb falls within the scope of negation. In a DS, on the other hand, the subject is the Theme and the verb (and its complements, if any) is within the Rheme; therefore, under sentential negation, the subject is outside the scope of negation.

Many other accounts have been offered from many points of view and in many different theoretical frameworks. In recent years the stream of literature on this theme has not diminished, and evidently not all “keys to understanding the construction we are considering” have been found yet. Thus for example E.V. Paduèeva stresses the interaction of verbs of perception with this construction and discusses the role of “Observer” (Paduèeva 1992, 1997). Many works are dedicated to the syntactic aspects of the given construction, and there has been much discussion of the hypothesized centrality of “Unaccusativity” as a pivotal and explanatory property of the verbs whose “subjects” (being underlying Objects) appear in the genitive under negation.⁸ Other works focus in addition or instead on hypotheses concerning the position(s) of negation with respect to the verbal complex and its relation to the position of arguments in existential and declarative sentences (Bailyn 1997, Brown 1999, Abels 2000).

While we agree with Babby (2000) that the assignment of case to the subject is almost certainly mediated by the syntax (since case assignment is unlikely to depend directly on semantics/pragmatics), in this article we remain uncommitted and agnostic about the syntax. We return to some of the syntactic issues in Section 6 below.

Our main goal is to discuss some proposals that have been made for the description of the semantics of this construction and the issue of “different ways of looking at the same situation”. We will concentrate particularly the approaches of Babby and Paduèeva, plus our own

⁸ Pesetsky (1982) argued in favor the hypothesis that Unaccusativity is a crucial part of the explanation of GenNeg, as do Perlmutter and Moore (1999) in the framework of Relational Grammar. Babby (2000) argues against the hypothesis. Most Western Slavists accept the hypothesis, so that behavior with respect to GenNeg is frequently invoked as a principal criteria for classifying Slavic verbs as unaccusative or not.

approaches in Borschev and Partee (1998a, 1998b), considering some of the problems and apparent contradictions among the various structural schemes that have been proposed, and possible directions of resolution. Special attention will be focussed on Babby's central use of Theme-Rheme structure, its attractions and its problems.

In Borschev and Partee (1998a), we followed Babby in his use of Theme-Rheme structure, making certain modifications in his proposals for the sake of the semantics. But it has long been observed in the literature (for example, in Arutjunova 1976, 1997) that ES's may be used with a wide variety of communicative structures, and many believe that the subject can well be the Theme even when it shows up with GenNeg. The acknowledgement of this possibility⁹ seems to create a major problem for the account of Babby (1980), and at least requires that the arguments be rethought. Our present position is that Babby did indeed carve out an aspect of structure, some kind of "marking" or distinguishing of some constituent(s) of the internal part-whole structure, which determines the choice of the genitive vs. nominative construction. But we no longer agree that the relevant structure is to be identified with Theme-Rheme (or Topic-Focus) structure in the classical Praguian sense; we suggest that it is a notion of "taking a perspective", a notion we suggested (in slightly different terminology) in Borschev and Partee (1998b) and will explore further here. In sentences (3a - 6a), the "marked" element is the first constituent, the "existing object" in the terminology of Arutjunova, or the THING, as we have called it for brevity. In sentences (3b - 6b), on the other hand, it is the LOC(ation) ("domain of existence", in Arutjunova's terms) that is marked, and the situation is looked at in terms of this LOCation. We call this structure of "marking" *perspective structure*, and the "marked" constituent the *Perspectival Center*; we introduce these notions more fully in Section 3. It seems that our notion of perspective structure relates in certain important ways to the various types of "Observer" that Paduèeva has written about; we discuss this relationship in Section 4.2.4.

This paper is organized as follows: In Section 1 we describe Babby's (1980) analysis, the core of which consists of two theses: (i) that the most crucial conditioning factor for GenNeg is that the (indefinite) subject and (weak) verb both fall under the scope of sentential negation, and (ii) that the scope of sentential negation is determined by Theme-Rheme structure. As a result, the existential sentences in which GenNeg occurs are a species of "Rheme-only" sentences. We introduce some problems that have led us to doubt the correctness of the proposed link between Theme-Rheme structure and GenNeg (which has been questioned by others as well). We also introduce some possible problems for the nearly universally accepted principle that GenNeg always occurs within the scope of sentential negation. Also in Section 1, we discuss some problems raised by Babby (1980) concerning sentences with the verb *byt'* 'be' with definite subjects marked with GenNeg.

In Section 2, we discuss Paduèeva's approach to GenNeg and the classifications she and others have made of "genitive verbs", particularly her idea that the semantics of the verb, augmented by contextual factors, is crucial in the conditioning of GenNeg. In Section 3, we review several characterizations of "existential sentences" and "genitive sentences", and outline the kernel of the evolving analysis developed in Borschev and Partee (1998a,b) and in the present work. In our earliest work, we followed Babby (1980) in the use of the Theme-Rheme

⁹ This fact was brought to our attention by our colleagues Tanya Yanko, Elena Paducheva, and Sandro Kodzasov, and was confirmed by Jan Firbas and our Prague colleagues Eva Hajičová and Petr Sgall. Babby considered and rejected this "fact" in his 1980 book; we discuss his response below.

distinction in the analysis of GenNeg, but with greater attention to a potentially implicit but semantically obligatory LOCation role, which was posited as the Theme in existential sentences. Now we are partially convinced that the needed distinction is not identical to the Theme-Rheme distinction, and we introduce a “perspective structure”. The new notion of “Perspectival Center” is argued to be needed in place of Babby’s use of Theme.

Section 4 expands on a number of issues related to our proposal that a LOCation is always the Perspectival Center in existential sentences. We discuss the roles we call THING and LOCation in both existential and locative sentences, and the additional perspectival structure which we posit to distinguish between those sentence types. We present arguments for favoring our use of perspectival structure over Babby’s use of Theme-Rheme structure in the analysis of GenNeg. We also present and discuss a structured set of examples, varying the parameters of word order, definiteness of subject, affirmative and negative, and genitive and nominative, adding some comments on intonation and the occasional difficulty of distinguishing sentential negation from constituent negation on the verb and from *verum*-focus negation. We close Section 4 with some brief discussion of the relation of our perspective structure to Paduèeva’s use of Apresjan’s Observer, and of some issues concerning the sources of various presuppositions associated with existential and declarative sentences.

Section 5 returns to the problem of the scope of negation, and presents, without a satisfying solution, two separate kinds of problems that face the favored hypothesis concerning the direct correlation of scope of negation with the licensing of GenNeg. Section 6 gives a brief sketch of a number of interesting syntactic proposals that have been made for treating GenNeg. We remain agnostic about the syntax but appreciative of its undoubted importance in mediating between the semantics and pragmatics of the construction and the morphological choice of cases. The paper ends with some remarks emphasizing the challenge of finding an integrated view of both the elusive core and the interactions of pragmatics, semantics, lexicon, syntax, intonation and morphology in reaching an eventual understanding of the fascinating subtleties of this important construction.

1. Babby on “Declarative” and “Existential” sentences

1.1. The scope of negation. Theme and Rheme. Problems.

We noted above that Babby (1980) distinguished “declarative” from “existential” sentences.¹⁰ For Babby’s distinction between NDS and NES, the negative sentences, occurrence of nominative vs. genitive is criterial. For the corresponding affirmative sentences, ADS and AES, there is no absolute surface criterion; the usual basis for distinguishing between ADS and AES is to ask which case would be used on the subject if the sentence were negated. It is on this criterion that one can determine that there is normally an obligatory difference in word order in the affirmative sentences, as noted in the introduction. But since word order can be varied with accompanying changes in intonation in certain contexts, word order is not itself criterial in the affirmative case.

¹⁰ The most common term in Russian corresponding to Babby’s “existential sentences” is *bytijnye predloženiya*; see Arutjunova (1976, 1997), Arutjunova and Širjaev (1983). The contrasting term “declarative” is not widespread in the English-language literature, and is perhaps not the best choice. The Russian alternative preferred by Arutjunova and Paduèeva is “*sobytijnye*” *predloženiya*, ‘eventive sentences’.

We note that for almost every NES, one can construct a corresponding “declarative” sentence, although, as shown by example (5a) above, the result will not necessarily be acceptable. The converse is by far less valid; it is very easy to find NDS’s with no NES counterpart.

Babby’s first main proposal about the distinction is shown in his chart (7) (Babby 1980: 72) below: DS’s and ES’s differ in their “scope of assertion/negation”.

(7)

	AFFIRMATIVE		NEGATED
EXISTENTIAL	[Scope of A VP NP]	⇒ _{NEG}	[_{ne} VP NP _{gen}]
DECLARATIVE	NP [Scope of A VP]	⇒ _{NEG}	NP _{nom} [_{ne} VP]

Thus the declarative sentence (3a) presupposes that there was some runoff of thawed snow and asserts that it was not observed, i.e. negates only that it was observed. The corresponding ES (3b) is used to negate the very existence of any runoff of thawed snow¹¹. The ES also negates “was observed”, i.e. it negates the whole sentence; but in this case *nabljudalsja* ‘was. observed’ functions as a “weak verb” (often described as “semantically empty”). The notion of “weak” or “empty” verbs was at the center of the work reported in Borschev and Partee (1998a); it is briefly reviewed in Sections 2 and 3.

According to chart (7), a declarative sentence consists of two parts. The subject NP, which remains outside the scope of assertion/negation, and the predicate VP, which is in the scope of assertion/negation. An ES, in contrast, has just one “part” in this sense; the entire sentence is inside the scope of assertion/negation, and such a sentence typically asserts/denies the existence of what the subject NP refers to. Babby cites Kuroda’s (1972) discussion of Brentano and Marty’s distinction between *categorical* and *thetic* judgments, and notes that Kuroda lists existential sentences and impersonal sentences as examples of thetic judgments. Categorical judgments, corresponding to Babby’s “declarative sentences”, have two parts, one part involved with recognizing the subject, the other part predicating something about that subject; thetic judgments are “simple”, have just one part. Babby suggests that the Russian nominative/genitive alternation provides even stronger linguistic evidence for the linguistic reality of the categorical/thetic distinction than the Japanese *wa/ga* alternation discussed by Kuroda.

Babby’s second main proposal is that the scope of assertion/negation can be equated with the Rheme of the sentence according to the division of the sentence into Theme and Rheme (or Topic and Focus). He notes that various authors define the concepts of Theme and Rheme differently, but the majority agree that Rheme is that which is asserted in an affirmative assertive

¹¹ Cf. the discussion of these examples in Apresjan (1985): “In contemporary terminology in cases of the type of *Stoka talyx vod ne nabljudalos*’ [= (3b)], *Moroza ne èvstvovalos*’ [= (4b)], there is no presupposition and one asserts the nonexistence or complete absence of the object spoken about: there was no runoff of melted snow at all, there was no frost. In contrast, the sentences *Stok talyx vod ne nabljudalsja* [= (3a)], *Moroz ne èvstvovalsja* [= (4a)] most often carry the presupposition of existence of the object spoken about and assert only that it did not carry out the given action or was not in the given state: some runoff of melted snow in principle took place, but no observations were made of it; there was frost, but it could not be felt (because, for instance, everyone was warmly dressed).” (Apresjan 1985:295-296.)

The idea that all “Rheme-only” sentences have an implicit topic, understood as something like a situation or a spatiotemporal LOCation, occurs in various forms in the literature. Erteschik-Shir (1997), who introduces the notion of “stage topic”, corresponding to an explicit or implicit spatiotemporal argument (à la Kratzer 1995) for such sentences, notes that her distinction between sentences with stage topics and sentences with individual topics is equivalent to Kuroda’s distinction betweenthetic and categorical judgments, and to the distinction made by Guéron (1980) between *presentation* sentences and predicational sentences. She also notes that the idea that scene-setting expressions that specify temporal or spatial background for the sentence also function as topics may be found in Gundel (1974) and Reinhart (1981). Sgall et al. (1986:202) claim that initial locatives are always topics. Others who claim that an initial locative in an otherwise unpartitioned sentence always functions as a topic are Dahl (1969:38), Arutjunova (1976: 210-11), Gundel (1974:34), all cited by Babby (1980:96), who agrees; he notes that others have claimed that it is part of a complex Rheme (Krylova and Xavronina (1976:26, [note 2]); Crockett (1976:241)). So there is very wide agreement that an initial Locative in an existential sentence is generally a topic, and considerable support for the idea that when such a locative topic is not overt in an existential sentence, something like it is implicitly understood.

Now, in the light of the observations of our colleagues mentioned in the Introduction and after reviewing Arutjunova (1976, 1997) and other works, we have doubts about the full correlation of the distribution of NES’s and NDS’s with the postulated difference in Theme-Rheme structure. Thus in examples (9-12) below, it appears to us that our colleagues are correct in claiming that the words *sobaki* ‘dog-GEN.F.SG’, *myš ej* ‘mouse-GEN.F.PL’, *kefira* ‘kefir-GEN.M.SG’, and *otveta* ‘answer- GEN.M.SG’ are the Themes (or part of the Theme) of these sentences. Both their most natural intonation pattern and their (most likely) interpretation in the given contexts support this point of view, which argues against the generalization in (8).

- (9) *Sobaki u menja net.* (Arutjunova 1976)
 dog-GEN.F.SG at I-GEN not.is
 I don’t have a dog. [Context: talking about dogs, perhaps about whether I have one.]
- (10) [*Myš i v dome est’?*] – *Net, myš ej v dome net.* (Arutjunova 1997)
 [mouse-NOM.F.PL in house is?] No, mouse-GEN.F.PL in house not.is
 [Are there mice in the house?] – No, there are no mice in the house.
- (11) [*Ja iskal kefir.*] *Kefira v magazine ne bylo.*
 [I looked-for kefir-ACC.M.SG Kefir-GEN.M.SG in store NEG was-N.SG
 ‘[I was looking for kefir.] There wasn’t any kefir in the store.’]
- (12) [*Ja napisal emu i ž dal otveta.*] *Otveta ne př lo.*
 [I wrote him and waited.for answer-GEN.M.SG.] Answer-GEN.M.SG NEG came-N.SG
 [I wrote to him and waited for an answer.] No answer came.

Our conception of the communicative structure of sentences is based to a considerable extent on works in the tradition of the Prague School such as Hajičová (1973, 1974, 1984), Sgall, Hajičová and Panevová (1986) and works of Russian linguists. For us the Theme is, roughly speaking, what is being talked about in a sentence, which is presupposed to be familiar to the hearer, referring back to something which was either spoken about earlier or else simply well

known. The Rheme is new information which the speaker wishes to communicate.

We note that Babby, alongside the Theme-Rheme opposition, considers an additional opposition, between *old (given)* and *new information*. Judging by his discussion of similar examples, he would consider *sobaki* ‘dog-GEN.F.SG’, *myš ej* ‘mouse-GEN.F.PL’, *kefira* ‘kefir-GEN.M.SG’, and *otveta* ‘answer- GEN.M.SG’ in (9-12) above to be *old* information but part of the Rheme. Although we consider this issue far from settled¹⁵, we are now inclined to treat them as (part of) the Theme of the corresponding sentences.

Even the relation of GenNeg to the scope of negation is not as clear as it has generally been believed to be. Consider examples (13-14).

- (13) [*My nadejalis*, *èto na seminare budut studenty.*] *No ni odin*
[We hoped, that at seminar will.be students] But NI one-NOM.M.SG
student tam ne byl
student-NOM.M.SG there NEG was-M.SG
[‘We hoped that (some of the) students would be at the seminar. But not a single one of the students was there.’]

- (14) [*My nadejalis*, *èto na seminare budut studenty.*] *No ni odnogo*
[We hoped, that at seminar will.be students] But NI one-GEN.M.SG
studenta tam ne bylo.
student-GEN.M.SG there NEG was-N.SG
[‘We hoped that there would be students at the seminar.] But there was not a single student [or: not a single one of the students] there.’]

The sentences (13) and (14) have the same truth conditions if looked at in simple extensional models; in both cases, the expression translated as “not one student” is necessarily under the scope of the sentential negation in its clause.¹⁶ Yet only in (14) does that expression occur in the genitive; (13), with the nominative, is equally well-formed, which seems unexpected not only under Babby’s account but under virtually all accounts of GenNeg¹⁷.

There is one important difference in the interpretation of (13) and (14). In the sentence with the nominative subject, we must be speaking of a contextually definite group of students. The background sentence, which has the same surface form in both (13) and (14), contains the bare noun *studenty* ‘students’, which is indeterminate with respect to definiteness or specificity. Given its sentence-final position, *studenty* cannot easily be definite ‘the students’, but it can have a partitive interpretation ‘some of the students’, and must have the partitive interpretation for (13) to be felicitous. The nominative *ni odin student* is also understood partitively: ‘not a single one

¹⁵ In Section 4.2.2. we mention a proposal by Erteschik-Shir according to which the sentences (9-12) are indeed Rheme-only as claimed by Babby, and *kefira* and the like have the status of a subordinate Topic (Theme) inside the main Focus (Rheme). This “subordinate Theme” could correspond to Babby’s “old information”.

¹⁶ The *ni* ‘not’ of *ni odin*, *ni odnogo* ‘not one’ always (except in certain constructions that are irrelevant here) requires the co-presence of sentential negation *ne* in its clause. Russian is a “Negative Concord” language, and expressions like *ni odin* ‘not one’ and *nikto* ‘no one’ are generally analyzed as a negative polarity items (see Brown 1999). We therefore gloss *ni* simply as ‘NI’ rather than translating it as ‘not’.

¹⁷ We return to examples of this kind, including some noted by Babby (1980), in Section 5.

of the students'. In (14), on the other hand, there is no such restriction. A partitive interpretation is possible but a completely non-specific interpretation is normal.

We return to this problem and other issues concerning the scope of negation in Section 5.

1.2. Sentences with the verb *byt'* 'be' and referential subject.

Babby (1980: 124) (like Arutjunova 1976: 225) does not include sentences like (15) among the class of NES's, even though in all syntactic and morphological respects, including the manifestation of GenNeg, (15) looks like an ordinary NES.

- (15) *Ivana ne bylo na lekcii*
 Ivan-GEN.M.SG NEG was-N.SG at lecture
 'Ivan wasn't at the lecture.'

The problem is the semantics: sentences like (15) whose subject is a proper name or other clearly referential definite NP do not deny the existence of the referent of the subject. And Babby has argued that the primary function of an existential sentence is the assertion (in an AES) or denial (in an NES) of existence of the/a referent of the subject NP. So NES's should normally not permit proper names or other definite NPs as subjects, as Babby indicated in his indefiniteness condition (a) in his rule (8) above. But sentences with *byt'* (and a few other typically existential verbs) do commonly allow GenNeg with proper names and other definite NPs, although other verbs rarely do.

So Babby claims that sentence (15) cannot be an existential sentence because of its definite subject and therefore must be a "locative sentence", a type of NDS, with "be at the lecture" as the negated Rheme. This, however, goes contrary to the generalization about the distribution of GenNeg in Babby's basic scheme in (7), as well as to the diagnostics developed by Chvany (1975) for distinguishing existential and locative sentences.

In Borschev and Partee (1998a), we argued that this was a weakness in Babby's treatment. The distribution of GenNeg is otherwise accounted for in Babby (1980) by a single rule, and it would seem strange for *byt'* to be an exception when *byt'* is in a sense a "basic" verb of existence ("being") and roughly speaking all NES's can be approximately paraphrased by NES's with *byt'*, as Babby himself notes¹⁸.

- (16) a. *Otveta ne prř lo = Otveta ne bylo*
 Answer-GEN.M.SG NEG arrived-N.SG = Answer-GEN.M.SG NEG was-N.SG
 'No answer came.' = 'There was no answer.'

¹⁸ "The lexical verb in NES's can always be replaced by *byt'* or one of its functional equivalents without affecting the sentence's primary assertion." (Babby 1980: 17)

In Babby's defense, it should be mentioned that *byt'*, as an exceedingly common verb, could be expected to tolerate irregularities. Wayles Browne has pointed out to us that in Serbo-Croatian, there is no object GenNeg, and subject GenNeg happens only with the (irregular) "there is" verb; and that in Polish and Slovenian, object GenNeg is completely obligatory (no semantic conditions), whereas subject GenNeg happens only with the "there is" verb. Thus not only do subject and object GenNeg not pattern together in all Slavic languages, but some 'be' verbs have special properties with respect to GenNeg in several Slavic languages.

- b. *Moroza ne èuvstvovalos'* = *Moroza ne bylo*
 Frost-GEN.M.SG NEG be.felt-N.SG = Frost-GEN.M.SG NEG was-N.SG
 'No frost was felt.' = 'There was no frost.'
- c. *Posudy na stole ne stojalo* =
 Dishes-GEN.F.SG on table NEG stood-N.SG =
Posudy na stole ne bylo
 Dishes-GEN.F.SG on table NEG were-N.SG
 'No dishes stood on the table.' = 'There were no dishes on the table.'
- d. *Snega na poljax ŭ e ne lě alo* =
 Snow-GEN.M.SG on fields already NEG lay-N.SG =
Snega na poljax ŭ e ne bylo
 Snow-GEN.M.SG on fields already NEG was-N.SG
 'Snow no longer lay on the fields' = 'There was no longer snow on the fields.'

In sentence (15), the subject is definite and denotes a concrete entity presupposed to exist, and indeed such sentences differ in some way from the “classic” existential (*bytijnye*) sentences. But in its form, according to the principles that govern the choice between genitive and nominative under negation, it does not differ at all from the various paraphrases with *byt'* ‘be’ in (16). Babby suggests the following explanation: when a locative sentence contains the verb *byt'*, it is so close syntactically to the form of an existential sentence that Russian grammar “simply treats them the same with respect to genitive marking” (Babby 1980: 124).

We argued in Borschev and Partee (1998a), however, that with more careful attention to the interpretation of “existence” in “existential sentences”, in particular by claiming that “existence is always relative to a LOCATION” (see principle (21) in Section 3), sentence (15) can indeed be interpreted as an ES (an NES). We showed that Babby’s analysis could then work uniformly for GenNeg in sentences with *byt'* just as in ES’s with lexical verbs. While we now have a different view of the distinction which Babby identified as the Theme-Rheme distinction, we continue to believe that sentence (15) should be included among the class of ES’s to be accounted for by a uniform treatment of GenNeg. We return to our analysis in Section 3.

2. Paduèeva on genitive verbs.

Babby’s rule for GenNeg in (8) above specifies that the verb in an NES should be “semantically empty.” Paduèeva (1997) takes a different approach, and tries to describe in more positive terms the class of verbs that can occur with the genitive construction¹⁹.

The class of verbs with which one finds nominative/genitive alternation in negative sentences is not a closed class; but on the other hand, it would be wrong to simply say that any verb can occur with either a nominative or a genitive subject in a negative sentence. The possibility of using a normally nominative-only verb with a genitive subject might be compared with the

¹⁹ We sometimes use the shortened expression ‘genitive construction’ for ‘GenNeg in alternation with nominative’, since none of the other genitive constructions of Russian are discussed in this paper. Similarly, in this paper, whenever we say GenNeg, we mean GenNeg in alternation with nominative unless we explicitly state otherwise; we do not discuss the relation of this construction to GenNeg in alternation with accusative except in Section 6.1 in our brief discussion of the Unaccusative hypothesis.

possibility of using a normally count-noun-only in an environment that demands a mass noun (presumably shifting the noun from a count-noun sense to a related mass-noun sense). Babby (1980) reports that the number of verbs that *regularly* allow genitive marking on the subject is on the order of 50-100; but he emphasizes the openness of the class and the impossibility of predicting the possibility of the use of genitive solely from the semantics of the verb. Paduèeva (1997) includes a list of over 300 “genitive verbs”; she reports about 60% as attested in texts, the others checked with native speakers’ intuitions (including some about which there is reported disagreement). Paduèeva also notes that because of the possibility of coercion, no list can be complete.

Paduèeva (1997) refers to the full range of verbs that can occur in such ‘genitive sentences’ as ‘genitive verbs’, and we will sometimes do the same, with the understanding that these are not all lexically specified as such, and not a closed class; sometimes what one encounters is a rather unusual use of a certain verb, aided by a particular context.

Various subclasses of typically ‘genitive’ verbs²⁰ are often distinguished in addition to the “core” existential verbs discussed by Arutjunova. One group are verbs which add some aspectual modification to the core “existential” notion, especially inchoatives: *voznikat’* ‘arise, come into existence’, *pojavljat’sja* ‘appear’, *ostat’sja* ‘remain’. Another group are modal: *trebovat’sja* ‘be required (be required to exist)’, *nužno* ‘necessary’. A commonly cited group are (passive forms²¹ of) perception verbs: *nabljudat’sja* ‘be observed’, *slyšat’sja* ‘be heard’. With event-denoting subjects, a common class is verbs of ‘happening’: *proizojti* ‘occur, take place’, *sluèit’sja* ‘happen’.

Paduèeva (1997) aims to give a unified semantics for the genitive construction, and she sees the semantics of the main verb as central. She considers that:

“in a negative sentence with the genitive construction, one of two [semantic] components is present:

- I. ‘X does not exist in the World/Location’;
- II. ‘X is not (there is no X) in the perceptual space of the Subject of consciousness’”
(Paduèeva 1997: 103)

She sets the task of seeking a semantic invariant or close semantic relatedness among the verbs which can occur in the genitive construction, which she calls *genitive verbs*. She argues that:

²⁰ Not all of the main predicates in existential sentences are tensed verbs; some are participles, and some are impersonal predicates like *nužno* ‘necessary’. In the past or future they would be accompanied by a tensed form of the copula *byt’* ‘be’, which is phonologically null in the present tense in both affirmative and negative sentences. This copula *byt’* is distinguished by Chvany (1975) from the existential verb *byt’*, which she treats as a real lexical verb occurring in both locative and existential sentences, which differ for her in whether the NP argument ends up as surface subject or not. This lexical verb *byt’* has the special present tense negative form *net* ‘(there) is not’ in existential sentences. In present tense affirmative sentences, it is either null or has the form *est’* (an irregular and invariant form which occurs with all persons and numbers); the distribution of *est’* is a big topic which we will not touch. In the past and future, the forms of copula *byt’* and lexical *byt’* are identical.

²¹ Most of the verbs which end with the suffix *-sja* are “reflexive passives”, sometimes “middles”, but we will simply refer to them here as passives.

[their] definitions²² (or lexical semantic analyses) include an existential or a perceptual component, and moreover with a communicative status such that that component of the verb's meaning is negated when the sentence is negated: that component may be an assertion or an implication, but it cannot be a presupposition.

The affirmative analogs of components I and II have the form:

I'. 'X exists in the World/Location';

II'. 'X is located in the perceptual space of the Subject of consciousness.'

In order to schematize this approach, some elaboration is necessary: what is a definition or lexical representation (what type of object is it, from a more or less formal point of view?), what does it mean that components I and II "are present in the sentence"? Evidently, for Paduèeva, as for us (cf. Borshev and Partee 1998a, 1998b), the semantic content of a sentence is equivalent (to a first approximation) to a collection of propositions which are true in every situation in which the given sentence is true. A definition, or lexical semantic analysis, is also a collection of propositions²³, which Paduèeva further subdivides into presuppositions, assertions, and implications²⁴. These propositions are what constitute the "components" of a definition.

In some sense Paduèeva and Babby describe the genitive construction from different sides: Babby is primarily concerned with the semantics of the construction itself, and Paduèeva primarily with the semantics of "genitive verbs". Her thesis may be formulated as follows: If the speaker wishes to express "components" I or II, then he or she uses in the negative sentence a genitive verb and is (therefore?) obliged to use the genitive construction. However, the relevant "semantic component" of the verb does not actually have to be lexical; it may arise from the context or be an optional addition by the speaker him/herself.

There are several further respects in which Paduèeva's approach contrasts with Babby's and with our variant of Babby's approach, including her proposals about a separate subclass of perceptual verbs and her distinctions among various senses of the verb *byt'* 'be'.

The division of genitive verbs into existential and perceptual is one of the main theses of Paduèeva (1992, 1997). The semantics of perceptual verbs, and the splitting off of a "perceptual" meaning, merit particular attention. Thus Paduèeva (1992) states that alongside the existential meaning of the verb *byt'*, there exist in addition two distinct locative meanings: *byt'*₁, with her perceptual component of meaning II', as in example (17a), and *byt'*₂, which lacks such a component, as in example (17b)²⁵.

²² The Russian *tolkovanie* is hard to translate; it is somewhere between 'explication' and 'definition', and in practice is an extensive decompositional semantic analysis of a given lexical item.

²³ This is of course a simplification, ignoring the question of types (among other things). We have in mind the Russian tradition of representing the meaning of a verb as a conjunction of propositions, each containing free variables standing for the arguments of the verb. Something resembling a formal semantic (but highly 'decompositional') lexical entry could then be obtained by lambda abstraction over the given variables.

²⁴ The term "implications" in this sense is not familiar in formal semantics. To illustrate the distinctions, Paduèeva (1997:104) gives a sample lexical entry for the verb *postroit'* 'build.PERFECTIVE', as follows (we translate into English):

"Y built X from Z" = (i) before t, X did not exist (presupposition); (ii) at t Y acted with a goal: in a definite manner: affected Z (assertion); (iii) this had as a result: now X exists (implication).

The notion of implication here may be related to the notion of "resultant state" of an accomplishment verb, but we will not follow up on these points here.

²⁵ Example (17a) is example (3'b) in Paduèeva (1992: 55); example (17b) is our addition based on her statements

- (17) a. *Geologičeskoj partii ne bylo₁ na baze.*
 Geological-GEN.F.SG party-GEN.F.SG NEG was₁-N.SG at base
 ‘The geological party²⁶ was not at the base.’ (Paduèeva 1992: 55 (3’b))
- b. *Geologičeskaja partija ne byla₂ na baze.*
 Geological-NOM.F.SG party-NOM.F.SG NEG was₂-F.SG at base
 ‘The geological party was not at the base.’

Paduèeva’s perceptual component II’ is connected with the notion of an *observer*²⁷ (*nabljudatel’*) (a perceiving subject, a subject of consciousness). In particular, for example, consider the lexical semantic analysis of the verb *byt’₁* (an optionally genitive verb although it is a “locative verb” rather than an “existential verb”). Its basic argument structure is as in (18), but in addition there may optionally occur the semantic component “Subject of consciousness imagines himself located at place *Y* at moment *t₀*” (that is, together with the individual *X*), which then licenses GenNeg as in (17a).

- (18) *X byl₁ v meste Y [v momente t₀]*
X was₁ in place Y at moment t₀

The meaning of *byt’₂*, with which only a nominative subject is possible, is also connected to an “observer”, but in this case the observer’s frame of reference is the utterance situation (in the simplest case), yielding what Paduèeva calls a “retrospective observer”, in contrast to the “synchronous observer” with *byt’₁*.

We find the notions of these (often implicit) observers interesting and substantive²⁸, and the description of the semantics of perception verbs is clearly an important part of the study of genitive sentences. In our own work we have nevertheless concentrated on what is common to perception verbs and other genitive verbs, treating “being perceived” as a species of “existing” in the (metaphorical) “location” of the perceptual space of the observer.

One particularly interesting possibility that is raised by some parts of Paduèeva’s discussion is the possibility that some (perhaps many) verbs have noticeably different senses when used with genitive and when used with nominative in negative sentences. For verbs such as *nabljudat’sja* ‘be observed’ and *èuvstvovat’sja* ‘be felt’, for instance (cf. examples (3) and (4)), as well as for the verb *byt’* ‘be’, the verb is felt to be “more stative” when used with genitive and “more agentive” when used with nominative.²⁹ We would hope that such differences in the

there.

²⁶ The subject NP in (17a), although genitive, is obligatorily interpreted as definite. It is presumably for this reason that Paduèeva classifies this sentence as locative rather than existential and *byt’₁* as a locative rather than existential verb. We discuss the definiteness issue in connection with examples (39c-d) in Section 4.2.3.

²⁷ The linguistic notion of an *observer* is looked at in detail in the works of Ju. D. Apresjan, in particular in Apresjan (1986).

²⁸ The point of view of an implicit observer also plays a role in Fillmore’s analysis of English *come* and *go* (Fillmore 1971), and in a number of insightful works by Carlota Smith and by Paduèeva about the manipulation by authors of fiction of the points of observation from which the reader is ‘shown’ the unfolding scene (see, for example, Smith and Whitaker 1985, Paduèeva 1994, 1996.)

²⁹ In Section 6.1 we briefly discuss the Unaccusative hypothesis, according to which GenNeg with intransitive verbs

interpretations of the verbs could be described in terms of regular semantic shifts influenced by the semantics of the constructions in which they occur, rather than as simple stipulated polysemy.

We will return to the issue of the possible interactions between lexical sense-shifting and perspective-shifting in Section 4.2.4, where we examine the relation between Paduèeva's and others' investigations of the role of the Observer and our notion of perspective structure.

3. Existential sentences and the “genitive rule”.

We have mentioned that various authors use the terms “existential sentences” (*bytijnye predlǎž enija*) and “genitive sentences”. The expression “genitive sentences” in this context means, by definition, negative sentences with an NP subject in the genitive which would be in the nominative in a corresponding affirmative sentence, or sometimes the affirmative sentences of which those are the negation. The expression “existential sentence” is used by some authors, including Babby³⁰ (1980) and Borshev and Partee (1998a,b) as fully equivalent to “genitive sentence”, representing a hypothesis about the core semantics lying behind the prototypical cases of the construction and extended in some systematic way to the more marginal or novel cases.

Arutjunova (1997: 57) characterizes *bytijnye predlǎž enija* ‘existential sentences’ as “a syntactic type of sentence asserting the existence in the world or some fragment of it of objects of some class or other.” As *bytijnye glagoly* ‘existential verbs’ she cites the prototypical existential verb *byt’* ‘be’ plus “its equivalents and analogs” *suš’ èestvovat’* ‘exist’, *imet’sja* ‘be available’, *byvat’* ‘be (frequentative)’, *vodit’sja* ‘be (found)’, *vstreèat’sja* ‘be encountered’, *popadat’sja* ‘[‘passive’ of ‘impersonal’ of] come across’.

- (19) *V lesu popadajutsja belye griby.*
 In woods come.across.PRES.PL.REFL white-NOM.M.PL mushroom-NOM.M.PL
 In the woods one comes across white mushrooms. (Arutjunova 1997: 57)

Arutjunova cites the GenNeg phenomenon as a property that existential sentences all have, but she does not suggest the converse and thus does not seem to equate the class of existential sentences with the class of sentences in which GenNeg occurs. She speaks of prototypical existential verbs and of verbs which are semantically close to them or “analogs” of them. She may have in mind a distinction between a narrower and more literal notion of existential sentences and a broader notion that covers the entire range of genitive sentences.

For Paduèeva (1997), it is clear that “existential verbs” are just a proper subclass of “genitive verbs”, which she divides into those which contain her “existential” semantic component I, and those which contain her “perceptual” semantic component II. But since we do not believe that the presence of a “genitive verb” is sufficient to license a genitive sentence, we prefer to follow

affects only Unaccusative verbs, whose subject is an underlying direct object, and which are necessarily non-agentive. The use of nominative in a negative intransitive sentence, on that approach, signals that the subject is an underlying subject, i.e. that the verb is “Unergative”; and such verbs are typically interpreted as Agentive. On that view, there are indeed different verbs used with nominative and genitive, and the fact that for many verbs there appears to be a choice would have to be recast in terms of lexical ambiguity, perhaps with some regular sense-shifting rules.

³⁰ As noted earlier, Babby (like Arutjunova) makes an exception in the case of genitive sentences with the verb *byt’* and a definite subject, which he classifies as “locative” rather than existential.

the lead of Babby and Arutjunova in seeing the literally “existential” sentences as a model case which provides the basis for a construction whose use is extended to sentences which may be only in some metaphorical sense asserting or denying the “existence” of the referent of the subject. All of the mentioned authors, including the present writers, allow extension of the notion of “existential sentence” to those in which there are certain modal or aspectual operators added to the core verbal notion.

So our principal question is what the conditions on the “genitive rule” are³¹. In principle, of course, we should not have to stipulate a “genitive rule” covering the entire GenNeg construction; the assignment of genitive case should be a consequence of the interplay of a number of principles, and whatever is “special” about the Russian GenNeg construction should be identified and “localized” to an appropriate part of Russian grammar. One example of “localization” of this sort can be found in the hypothesis (Pesetsky 1982, Pereltsvaig 1997) that there is a phonologically empty quantificational head in Russian which is a negative polarity item with various other constraints on its occurrence, which itself occurs in the nominative or accusative, and which, like many other Russian quantifiers, governs the genitive case in its complement. Under such a hypothesis, the problem becomes one of explaining the distribution of that null quantifier, so as not to predict that genitive NPs can occur in every kind of sentence in which a nominative or accusative NP might occur under the scope of negation. We mention this and other syntactic hypotheses in Section 6. But in the meantime, we concentrate on the semantic factors, including communicative structure, that seem to be crucial in GenNeg, remaining agnostic about how these are reflected in the syntax.

We will consider the full range of “genitive verbs”, including those that can behave as genitive verbs only with the help of strong contextual factors. But we will take as the central paradigm case the “relation of existing” in a situation of ‘existing’, with the verb *byt’*.

Among the central notions needed for understanding existential sentences, Arutjunova distinguishes three components in a “classical” existential sentence: a “Localizer” (“Region of existence”), a name of an “Existing object”, and an “Existential Verb”:

- (20) *V ètom kraju* (Localizer) *est’* (Existential Verb) *lesa* (name of “Existing Object”).
 In that region is/are forests-NOM.M.PL
 ‘There are forests in that region.’

We have used different terms for the same notions. Our terms are probably not optimal, but they are shorter (and closer to Paduèeva’s): the “Localizer” is the name of our LOCATION, and the “Existing Object” is our THING³². As for the verb, we usually schematize and simply call it BE.

³¹ We use this term in a broad sense; we do not rule out base generation. The conditions may be of various sorts, including conditions on possible interpretations.

³² While for us, both THING and LOC are in the first instance elements of models, we often use the same terms to identify the corresponding expressions. On the one hand, this may be slightly careless terminology, but on the other hand, it corresponds to the use of a linguistic term such as Agent, which is regularly used to identify both a role of a participant in an event and the expression in a sentence that denotes the participant that plays that role. Our Russian terms for these two participants are *VEŠÈ* ‘thing’ and *MESTO* ‘place’.

The core principles behind our analysis are as follows³³.

(21) **“EXISTENCE IS RELATIVE” PRINCIPLE:**

Existence (in the sense relevant to AES’s and NES’s) is always relative to a LOC(ation).

We discuss the principles that determine *which* LOCation is relevant in a given case in Borschev and Partee (1998a). The distinctions among locations associated with Perspectival Center, Perspectival non-Center, and background existence make it possible to make sense of GenNeg examples which deny the existence of the THING in a certain LOCation, possibly a perceiver’s perceptual field, while presupposing existence of that THING in “the actual world” or some other LOCation invoked in the interpretation of the sentence in the given context. The distinctions discussed in Borschev and Partee (1998a) were based on Theme-Rheme structure; we would now systematically modify them, replacing ‘Theme’ by ‘Perspectival Center’.

(22) **The Common Structure of “Existence/location situations” and their descriptions:**
BE (THING, LOC)

We share the view of many writers that in many cases, including the core cases with the verb *byr*, existential sentences and “declarative” sentences (including “locative” sentences), have the same verb and the same participants but a different organization. Abstracting away from the difference, both describe situations involving some THING ‘being’ in some LOCation.

An “existence/location situation” may be structured either from the perspective of the THING or from the perspective of the LOCation. Let us use the term *Perspectival Center* for the participant chosen as the point of departure for structuring the situation. (Our *Perspectival Center* will play the role that “Theme” played for Babby (1980).) We have no special term for the complementary term, the part of the situation that is not the Perspectival Center; we will sometimes just call it a predicate. We expand on the notion of Perspective Structure in Section 4.

(23) **PERSPECTIVE STRUCTURE:**

In the following, we underline the Perspectival Center.

BE (THING, LOC): structure of the interpretation of a Locative (“Declarative”) sentence.

BE (THING, LOC): structure of the interpretation of an Existential sentence.

There are many ways to imagine different syntactic structures corresponding to these different structures of interpretation: unergative vs. unaccusative, personal vs. impersonal, NP as external argument vs. implicit event argument as external argument. The differences might be located only in the semantics, but that would be a problem for compositionality if we posited neither a lexical difference in the verbs nor a structural difference in the sentences. So while we remain agnostic about the syntax, we believe that it is likely that what we are discussing is the semantics that corresponds to some syntactic distinction.

Perspective structure has much in common with Theme-Rheme structure. Just as we said that the Theme is what the speaker is talking about and the Rheme contains the new information the

³³ Principles (21, 22, 25, 26) are from Borschev and Partee (1998a) with little change. In that work, Principle (23) was stated in terms of Theme-Rheme structure, so in that work Principle (24) was not needed.

speaker wishes to convey about the Theme (what the speaker predicates of the Theme), we can also say that Perspective Structure involves picking out one participant, here the THING or the LOC, and describing it. We say more about the differences between the two notions in Section 4.2.2.

(24) **PERSPECTIVAL CENTER PRESUPPOSITION:**

Any Perspectival Center must be normally be presupposed to exist.

Principle (24) allows us to derive the same presuppositions that were derived in Borschev and Partee (1998a) from the correlation of greater presuppositionality with the Theme of the sentence (Hajičová 1973, 1974, 1984, Peregrin 1995, Sgall et al 1986). In particular, from this principle it will follow that the nominative subjects in NDS's are normally presupposed to exist, whereas in NES's, only the LOCation is normally presupposed to exist, and the perspectival structure does not provide any existence presupposition for the THING. Of course there may be presuppositions derived from other sources. But we will argue that ES's have a "marked" structure in comparison to the "unmarked" structure of Locative (Declarative) sentences, and that choosing a marked structure that avoids a presupposition of existence invites an implicature of likely non-existence.

Another way of stating the core of our analysis is to say that when the LOC is chosen as the Perspectival Center, then we look at the situation in terms of the LOC and "what's in it". In the case of an NES, the main assertion is that in that LOCation x , "NEG (BE (THING, in x)). In an NDS, on the other hand, our Perspectival Center is the THING, and of that THING, we state something about its location, namely that it is not in the given LOC.

(25) **NES PRINCIPLE:**

An NES denies the existence of the thing(s) described by the subject NP *in the Perspectival center LOCation*.

This statement may be too strong in the cases where the verb of the sentence is not *byt* 'be'. In any case, until we are able to derive this or some related principle compositionally, we are not in a position to be sure exactly how strong it should be. In the meantime, this is our analog of Paduèeva's statement that a genitive sentence must contain Semantic Component I. In Borschev and Partee (1998a), we related principle (25) to the following principle, where "V" represents any lexical verb³⁴.

(26) **PRESUPPOSED EQUIVALENCE:**

An NES presupposes that the following equivalence holds locally in the given context of utterance:

$$V(\text{THING}, \underline{\text{LOC}}) \Leftrightarrow \text{BE}(\text{THING}, \underline{\text{LOC}})$$

In the general case, we assume that verbs have their normal literal meaning, which in most cases is not simply "exist" or "be". Then in order for the presupposition to be satisfied in a given

³⁴ The statement as given is evidently too strong. It is meant as a first approximation, to be amended to take account of the modal and aspectual modifications of basic existential meanings discussed in Section 2.

context of use, some further assumptions must be available in the context which together with the compositional semantics of the sentence will entail the equivalence. If the GenNeg construction is used, the presupposition must be satisfied for the use of the sentence to be felicitous, and the hearer uses whatever contextual information is available to support an accommodation of the presupposition. (Examples involving the interaction of additional “axioms” deriving from lexical semantics, encyclopedic knowledge, and local contextual information are given in Borschev and Partee 1998a.)

But for it to be possible to satisfy the Presupposed Equivalence, the semantics of the verb must not be directly incompatible with it. If the meaning of the main verb of a sentence is inconsistent with the presupposed equivalence, then the use of GenNeg is impossible; this is standardly the case with Agentive verbs, for instance. But it may be possible in some cases for the verb to be coerced to a weaker meaning compatible with the presupposed equivalence in the given context, in which case GenNeg may be possible³⁵.

And what about cases in which the use of GenNeg is obligatory and nominative is impossible, as in examples (5a-b)? It is clearly not right to say that if the Presupposed Equivalence follows directly from the lexical semantics of the verb, as it evidently does for the verb *byt* ‘be’ itself (at least in its existential sense, if it has several), then GenNeg is obligatory and the Nominative alternative is impossible. We have already seen many pairs of NES/NDS examples with the verb *byt* ‘be’ alternating between GenNeg and the Nominative construction (and see the systematic variations in examples (34-39) in Section 4.2.3.) What makes GenNeg obligatory and an NDS impossible in example (5) is not only that the verb is *byt* ‘be’, but a combination of factors. To interpret (5a), the (impossible) NDS, it is necessary to take *sommenija* ‘doubts’ as the Perspectival Center of the sentence, and to try to interpret the predicate *ne byli* ‘were not’ as predicating some property of those doubts. A good example of an NDS with *sommenija* ‘doubts’ as its subject is given by Paduèeva (1992: 53):

- (27) *Sommenija ne isèezli.*
 Doubts-NOM.N.PL NEG disappeared- PL
 ‘The doubts did not disappear.’

(And in fact GenNeg is impossible with the verb *isèezat* ‘disappear’, since the lexical semantics of that verb is unsalvageably incompatible with the Presupposed Equivalence.)

But what about the predicate in (5a)? While it is normal to leave a LOCative complement of *byt* implicit when it is the Theme, it is virtually impossible for the verb *byt* by itself to be used as an assertive main predicate.³⁶ (In this it differs from *suš èestvovat* ‘exist’, which is regularly used intransitively to assert existence, with “in the world” as its default “LOCation”.) And even with *suš èestvovat* ‘exist’, an asserted denial of existence using an NDS is only possible when the subject has some independent status in some possible world other than the one in which its

³⁵ We see the openness of the class of “genitive verbs” as resulting from the possibility of such coercion. Even an agentive verb like *pet* ‘sing’, used in examples (6a-b) as a case where GenNeg is impossible, can sometimes be coerced into a ‘genitive verb’ with the help of a very strong context. We plan to discuss this issue in future work.

³⁶ Descartes’ statement, which is rendered in English as *I think; therefore I am* is rendered in Russian as *Ja myslju; sledovatel’no ja sušèstvujju* ‘I think; therefore I exist’. There may be occasional stylistically marked intransitive uses of *byt* ‘be’ with no complement to assert existence, but if it is possible at all (and it may not be) then only with proper names or other definite subjects.

existence is being denied. For example, the subject may be presupposed to exist in some mythical, fictional, theological, subjective or other world and its existence is denied in the actual (or other contextually relevant) world, or vice versa. See examples (28a-b) from Paduèeva (1997: 111). (With *byt* ‘be’, it seems to be impossible to consider two alternative worlds or LOCations if the Perspectival Center is the THING and there is no overt locative complement expressed.)

- (28) a. *Dlja nego ne siš èestvoval obš èezavodskoj rasporjadok*
 For him NEG existed-M.SG factory-wide schedule-NOM.M.SG
dnja. (Paduèeva (1997: 111). From Panova, “Kružilixa”)
 day-GEN.M.SG
 ‘For him, the factory schedule did not exist.’
- b. *Ètot real’nyj mir sejèas ne siš èestvoval*
 This real-NOM.M.SG world-NOM.M.SG now NEG existed-M.SG
dlja nee. (From Gladkov, “Povest’ o detstve”)
 for her
 ‘Now this real world did not exist for her.’

Thus there are many factors conspiring against (5a); it is almost impossible to use bare intransitive *byt* ‘be’ to mean ‘exist’, and even if that were possible, the subject *somnenija* ‘doubts’ is almost impossible to interpret as an individual having something like an independent existence in some world other than the one in which the nonexistence is asserted. One factor or the other might be overcome in a strong enough context, but not both.

We illustrate the workings of these various principles below, with examples. Some of the foundational questions about where such principles come from remain open for further research.

4. Existential sentences: LOC as Perspectival Center.

There seems clearly to be a distinction, discussed by many authors in many frameworks, involving a contrast in two kinds of sentences each having the parts we have called “BE (THING, LOC)”.

One kind of sentence is “ordinary”, and has the “THING” as ordinary subject. This kind of sentence doesn’t really have a name except when put in contrast with the other kind; this is Babby’s “Declarative Sentence”, more often called “Locational”, and often subsumed within the larger class of “Predicational” sentences. This also seems to be an instance of the Brentano/Marty “categorical judgment”.

The ES’s do not have that ordinary structure, but exactly what structure they do have is controversial. In some sense they seem to be turning the predication around: saying of the LOCation that there is THING in it, or that it has THING in it. If the LOC is implicit, this is a “thetic judgment”. And insofar as various authors (see Erteschik-Shir (1997) for discussion) have argued that thetic judgments should always be understood as predicating something of a situation or of a spatiotemporal location, then perhaps statements with an explicit LOC also express thetic judgments.

But in what way and at what “level” or “levels” of structure is the predication “turned around”?

Babby (1980) proposed that the difference is a difference at the level of Theme-Rheme (or

Topic-Focus) structure. A number of linguists including Babby (2000) have proposed differences in syntactic structure. We propose a difference in Perspectival Structure. But that is no more than a change in terminology until we can say more about what Perspectival Structure is and by what principles it relates to other better-recognized aspects of pragmatic, semantic, and syntactic structure. We make some suggestive remarks below, but many questions remain open. The main thing we claim, and this too needs deeper exploration, is that the structural divisions Babby drew were more or less correct, but the distinction he identified cannot be identical to the widely recognized distinction between Theme and Rheme. So the weakest form of our present view is simply that Babby's structures need new labels, and we are suggesting that the new labels should relate to our intuitions about looking at a situation from alternative perspectives. A more substantive claim is embedded within this view, however: namely, that there is an important level of structure which does not so far have any standard representation in any theory that is familiar to us.

4.1. THING and LOC.

Above we schematized the structure common to existential and locative situations as involving a THING and a LOCation related by a two-place predicate (BE in the prototypical case, other V's in the more extended cases.) In place of our LOCation, one might propose the term SCENE or STAGE³⁷ (Russian *scena* 'stage'), in the sense of the stage on which the action takes place, for ES's, and similarly for what are often called "presentational" sentences. But we will continue to use LOC. This scheme is analogous to the proposal of Jackendoff (1972, 1990) to metaphorically broaden the notion of "being in a location", mentioned in Section 1.1.

One could say that THING and LOC are *roles* of the verb *byt'*, but it is undoubtedly better to consider them roles of the *participants of the situation* (or *state*) of existing or of being located. Thus, in examples (11), (15), and the examples on the right-hand side in (16), THING is (what is denoted by) *kefir* 'kefir', *Ivan* 'Ivan', *otvet* 'answer', etc., and LOC is (what is denoted by) *v magazine* 'in the store', *na lekcii* 'at the lecture', and an understood "here" in the case of (16a).

The LOC may be given explicitly, as in (11), (15), and (16c,d), or it may be implicitly understood, as in (16a,b). It is important that existence is always understood with respect to some LOCation. An implicit LOCation must be given by the context. This is usually "here" or "there", "now" or "then": at the place and time where someone is awaiting an answer which "didn't arrive", for (16a), or "feeling (or not feeling) the frost", for (16b).

The THING and the NP denoting it may belong to various sorts: concrete objects (including humans), massy stuff (kefir, money, etc.), events, pluralities, abstract entities (justice, problems); one area in need of further investigation is the difference in interpretation when the NP is an individual-level indefinite and when it is a kind-denoting term (Carlson 1977/80). Assertions of non-existence are presumably semantically somewhat different in the two kinds of cases. The problem of definite NPs is discussed further in Partee (2000).

³⁷ Erteschik-Shir (1997) speaks of "stage-topics", and we like the concept of a stage on which the events described in a sentence take place. There is a problem with the already existing usage of the English word *stage* in a different sense, in *stage-level* vs. *individual-level* predicates (Carlson 1977, Kratzer 1995). Russian *scena* unambiguously conveys the sense of a stage on which a performance takes place, but its English cognate *scene* unfortunately has a much more static meaning, 'what one sees before one, or what is depicted in a picture.' So in Russian we could use *SCENA* alternatively with *MESTO*, but in English we will continue to use LOC.

Note that the denial of existence of a THING in a LOCation does not contradict the existence of the THING *outside* the given LOCation, for instance “in the world”. Thus, for instance, the use of GenNeg in sentence (15) to deny the existence of Ivan at the lecture is compatible with the presupposition of existence “in the world” carried by the proper name *Ivan* ‘Ivan’. When our Perspectival Center is the lecture, the relevant LOC is the location of the lecture, and in that LOC there is no Ivan. But the use of the proper name is itself associated with a conventional, larger LOCation³⁸, the world in which the people we know exist (and continue to exist when we don’t see them). Thus our rejection of the requirement that the THING be expressed by an indefinite NP is intimately connected to our adoption of the thesis that existence is always relative to a LOCation.

The much greater frequency of indefinite over definite NPs in ES’s may be linked to the consideration that when the THING is a definite particular, the speaker is more likely to make a description from the perspective of that THING. But that is not an absolute preference; sentence (15) is natural because we may sometimes be more interested in knowing who was at the lecture than in knowing where Ivan was.

4.2. Perspective.

4.2.1. The notion of Perspective and its role in Existential Sentences

The structure of a situation of existing cannot be reduced to its decomposition into the participants THING and LOC, since a situation of “being located” (corresponding to a “declarative” or “locative” sentence) has the same participants. We have proposed that the distinction between a situation of existing and a situation of being located involves a *choice of perspective*, of a point of view, from which the speaker, or sometimes the subject of a higher clause in the sentence, looks at that situation. The speaker, of course, is the one who chooses the form of expression; but if the relevant clause is an embedded one, the speaker may be representing the point of view of a higher subject of a propositional attitude. And even in the case of a simple sentence, if it occurs as part of a narrative, then the point of view of someone other than the “author” may be represented.

The situation may be described with the THING as Perspectival Center, or with the LOCation as Perspectival Center. When the THING is chosen as Perspectival Center, its existence is presupposed, and the sentence speaks of its LOCation and potentially about other properties or states or actions in the situation. When we choose the LOCation as Perspectival Center, the sentence speaks about what THINGs there are or are not in that situation and potentially about what is happening in the situation.

The choice of Perspectival Center, as so described, has much in common with the choice of Theme (Topic) on the one hand (see Section 4.2.2), and with the choice of grammatical Subject on the other (see Section 6): all three notions involve structuring something (a situation, a proposition, or a sentence) so that one part is picked out and the rest is in effect predicated of it.

We believe that the perspectival structuring is first and foremost a (cognitive) structuring of the situation that will be talked about. How that structuring will be reflected in the linguistic

³⁸ Cf. Barwise and Perry’s (1981) notion of a “Resource Location”. And cf. examples (28a-b) above, which illustrated the similar possibility of NDS’s with denials of existence in one world (a LOCation) of entities presupposed to exist in another world.

structure of the corresponding expression may vary from language to language.

Our main hypothesis with respect to the case at hand is that the role of perspective in ES's is to indicate a choice among different kinds of situations within the class of situations that share the basic participant-structure V(THING, LOC): when the LOC is marked as Perspectival Center, the result is an existential sentence³⁹, as stated in the Perspective Structure principle (23) in Section 3. As noted, we consider it likely that this result is mediated by a difference in choice of syntactic structure, but are agnostic as to what the syntactic difference is. But we do not believe that perspective structure directly affects or is affected by Theme-Rheme structure; we turn to this topic in the next section.

4.2.2. Perspective vs. Theme-Rheme Structure.

While the choice of perspective structure and the choice of Theme-Rheme structure may often coincide (in the sense that the Perspectival Center is a natural choice for Theme), we believe that they are different notions and in principle independent of one another.

Perspectival structure is basically a structuring at the model-theoretic level, a structuring of the situation the sentence describes. If the job of semantics is to associate linguistic expressions with the non-linguistic 'realia' they refer to or describe, then we take perspectival structure as a property of those 'realia', in the same sort of domain as the properties that distinguish telic from atelic eventualities, or agents from experiencers, or the denotata of mass nouns from the denotata of count nouns. All of these properties reflect cognitive structuring of the domains that we use language to talk about, and are not simply "given" by the nature of the external world. Correspondingly, all of them are properties with respect to which we find differences from language to language. Two verbs in different languages, which seem to be otherwise perfect translations of one another, may nevertheless differ as to whether one of their arguments counts as a "Theme" (in the "theta-role" sense) or an "Experiencer". Hence the verbs may govern accusative in one language and dative in the other, even when the general principles for the choice of Accusative and Dative are the same in the two languages. (E.g. the verb meaning 'call', as to call someone on the phone, takes dative in some of the Indo-European languages, such as Russian *zvonit'* and Spanish *llamar*, and accusative in others, such as English *call* and German *rufen*, *anzurufen*.) This presumably represents a different schematization of the situation-type, a different decision as to whether a given participant in the situation-type counts as an "Experiencer" or not.

Theme-Rheme structure is first and foremost a matter of information structure in discourse, although as Sgall et al (1986) have argued, it belongs in semantics and not only in pragmatics. The information structure chosen depends not only on the situation to be described but also on what aspects of that situation have been mentioned most recently, which aspects are presumed familiar to the hearer, etc.

³⁹ Some conditions probably need to be placed on the choice of verb as well; there may be dynamic sentences that may also have the structure V(THING, LOC) with LOC as Perspectival Center that should not be classed as existential. However, we cannot simply require that the Presupposed Equivalence (26) hold, since that is a requirement only on NES's and not on AES's; and it is a requirement on the interpretation of the sentence in context, not on the verb. At this point the most we can say is that an affirmative sentence with semantic structure V(THING, LOC) and the LOC as Perspectival Center is existential if its "corresponding negative sentence" meets (26) in the given context.

The kind of example which has most strongly convinced us that distinction we need for explaining the distribution of GenNeg is not standard Theme-Rheme structure is our “*kefir* example” (11), repeated below as (29).

- (29) [*Ja iskal kefir.*] *Kefira v magazine ne bylo.*
 [I looked-for kefir-ACC.M.SG Kefir-GEN.M.SG in store NEG was-N.SG
 ‘[I was looking for kefir.] There wasn’t any kefir in the store.’

In (29), *kefira* ‘kefir’, in the genitive, is nevertheless part of the Theme. The evidence is twofold. In the first place, the rules governing the interplay of word order and intonation in Russian have been very well studied and repeatedly argued to be intimately bound up with Theme-Rheme structure (Kovtunova 1976, Yokoyama 1986, *Russkaja Grammatika* 1980; similarly for Czech and in general in Sgall et al 1986.). According to those principles, *kefira* should be the Theme or part of the Theme in (29). Secondly, according to virtually all theories of communicative structure, the Rheme of one sentence is a favored candidate to become the Theme of the following sentence: one sentence introduces something as important, and the following sentence picks up that topic and says something about it. And in example (29), the background sentence clearly introduces *kefir* in the Rheme, so it is natural that *kefira* should be the Theme (or part of the Theme) of the following sentence.

In this example the Rheme is probably only the final *ne bylo* ‘wasn’t’, and *v magazine* ‘in the store’ is also part of the Theme. According to the most general rule of the place of negation in Russian (Paduèeva 1974: 154-155; Sgall et al 1986), negation is associated with the Rheme.

A minimally contrasting example, in which *kefira* is indeed Rheme and the sentence fits Babby’s pattern as he predicts, is (30) below.

- (30) [*Ja zš el v magazin.*] *V magazine ne bylo kefira.*
 [I went into store.] In store NEG was-N.SG kefir-GEN.M.SG
 ‘[I went into the store.] In the store there wasn’t any kefir.’

A different kind of minimal pair is given below in (31) and (32). In this pair of sentences, the sentence-initial Theme is the same (*on/ego* ‘he-NOM/he-GEN’), anaphorically referring to the Rheme *Petja* ‘Petja’ of the preceding sentence. In (31), the THING *Petja* is chosen as the Perspectival Center: we consider *Petja*, and where he was, and we give the partial information that he was not at the lecture. In (32) the LOCATION is the Perspectival Center; this suggests that in our search for *Petja*, we went to the lecture expecting to find him, but *Petja* was not among those at the lecture⁴⁰.

- (31) [*Ja iskal Petju.*] *On ne byl na lekcii.*
 [I looked.for Petja.] He-NOM.M.SG NEG was-M.SG at lecture.
 [I looked for Petja.] He wasn’t at the lecture.

⁴⁰ Examples of this kind are also given by Paduèeva to illustrate her distinction between “retrospective Observer” (in (31)) and “synchronous Observer” (in (32)); as we note below in Section 4.2.4, her synchronous Observer corresponds to the cases in which for us the LOCATION is the Perspectival Center.

- (32) [*Ja iskal Petju.*] *Ego ne bylo na lekcii.*
 [I looked.for Petja.] He-GEN.M.SG NEG was-N.SG at lecture.
 [I looked for Petja.] He wasn't at the lecture⁴¹.

We note again that our proposed perspective structure corresponds quite exactly with the division Babby (1980) proposed between Theme and Rheme: our Perspectival Center corresponds to Babby's Theme. The difference could be called purely terminological and in a sense it is; the substantive issue is that Babby believed that the structure he had identified could be equated with the independently motivated Theme-Rheme structure, and we believe that it cannot be. The issues concerning the scope of negation mentioned in the Introduction and discussed in the Section 5 also raise substantive problems for what seemed to be additional independent motivation for using Theme-Rheme structure as the determinative structure.

But we do not consider this issue closed, and we do not consider our arguments against the use of Theme-Rheme structure totally conclusive. There are several possible kinds of arguments that may be given in defense of Babby's original proposal, or which suggest modifications that could preserve the main structure of Babby's analysis.

Babby's own suggestion (Babby 1980: 114-120) is that in NES's, the word order no longer expresses topic-focus structure, since that is now disambiguated by the genitive marking, but rather a difference in *old (given)* vs. *new* information. Babby cites Kovtunova (1976) and Gundel (1974) in support. He cites Gundel as characterizing "given" as "what you were talking about or what I was talking about before", while "topic" is "what I am talking about now". And he claims that in NES's like our *kefir* example (11/29), the genitive NP is pre-verbal if it is "old" or "given" in that sense (contextually bound), even though it is Rheme in the given sentence. It is well-known that while Theme is often "old", and Rheme often "new", these correlations are by no means absolute, and Babby thinks that is what is going on in the NES's with initial genitive NP. To support this suggestion, one would need an account of word order and intonation in these terms⁴².

A similar idea can be found in Paduèeva (1995: 119-20), also citing Kovtunova (1976). Paduèeva discusses the "dislocation of part of a complex rheme", in which the "rheme proper" is left at the end of the sentence with the main accent, and the remainder of the Rheme is dislocated leftward, usually but not always to sentence-initial position; the dislocated part receives a secondary stress with falling intonation. Paduèeva (personal communication) holds that the *kefir* example (11) can have either of two communicative structures: in a context such as we present in (11), *kefira* would indeed be Theme and unaccented, but the same sentence could occur with no prior mention of *kefir*, only of the store, and in that case *kefira* would be a dislocated part of the Rheme, with a secondary falling stress. But note that if Paduèeva is correct about that, it would

⁴¹ We have given these two sentences the same translations, because the difference felt between them by a native speaker of Russian, described in the paragraph preceding the examples, does not easily translate into English (see Chvany 1975: 157-158). Existential sentences with indefinite subjects usually translate into *there*-sentences in English, but that option is not normally possible with definite subjects.

⁴² The Serbo-Croatian data in the Appendix offers some potential support but also some problems for Babby's claim. The data indicate that the LOC in a sentence with a genitive subject is still Theme, even if the subject is sentence-initial, indirectly supporting Babby's claim that the subject is Rheme. But the word order restrictions in Serbo-Croatian undermine one of Babby's arguments about Russian NES's with initial subject: see Note 62.

not support Babby's approach, because on Paduèeva's approach, if *kefira* is a dislocated part of the Rheme it remains *indefinite*, and it is only when *kefira* is part of the Theme that it would be interpreted as definite. Babby was trying to account for a potentially definite interpretation still being part of the Rheme.

A second argument begins with the assertion that the LOCation (explicit or implicit) in examples like (11 / 29) is still Theme. The basis for this assertion is that it cannot be contrasted. The Appendix contains similar data from Serbo-Croatian, but in which genitive is used in both affirmative and negative ES's, and where differences in contrastability suggest that nominative subjects are Themes and genitive subjects are Rhemes, no matter what the word order.) If the LOC is still Theme, then either the THING must be part of the Rheme, or else the Rheme is only the (negation plus the) copula. The latter case is a possibility, but its semantics is mysterious: what exactly is being negated in that case? Does the negation still have sentence scope? Or is this *verum-focus*, focus only on the Affirmative/Negative polarity?⁴³ But this issue should be deferred until we have solved the other puzzles of scope of negation discussed in the next section. The not fully conclusive outcome of this argument is that if just one or the other of LOC and THING is Rheme in the *kefir* sentences, it would seem that it is still the THING *kefir* that is Rheme; but matters may well be more complex.

A different suggestion comes from Erteschik-Shir, and this is really an argument for greater subtlety of Theme-Rheme (Topic-Focus) structure, with internal hierarchical structure and other enrichments not dealt with in our simple adaptations of Babby's simple one-level Theme-Rheme structures. Erteschik-Shir (1997) has a very relevant notion of stage-topic, and has an articulated system that allows for nested topic-focus structures. She suggests (p.c.) analyzing our *kefir* example as follows in her terms, with an initial implicit stage-topic, and *kefira* as a subordinate topic⁴⁴:

(33) $_{STOPi}$ [*Kefira* $_{TOP-sub}$ [*v magazine ne bylo*] $_{FOC-sub}$] $_{FOC}$

On this proposal, both Babby and the critics could be correct, although the crucial aspects of the structures would not be isomorphic to Babby's. On Erteschik-Shir's approach, existential (thetic) sentences are characterized by having a Stage-topic, and normal 'declarative' or 'predicational' sentences have an NP, usually the subject, as topic. On the other hand, when there is an implicit Stage-topic, which is not pronounced, the subordinate topic-focus structure of the explicit part of the sentence presumably takes over in determining the word order and intonation of the pronounced sentence.

Other relevant work includes the proposals of Junghanns and Zybatow (1997) concerning the information structure of Russian; they follow Jacobs (1992) in working with two binary distinctions, Topic-Comment and Focus-Background, and under their proposal there are instances of thetic (Comment-only) sentences with the unaccusative subject moved into preverbal position although it is not topic. They also have examples of all-focus sentences which

⁴³ This suggestion was made to us for this example by Petr Sgall (personal communication). For a discussion of *verum-focus* in general, see Höhle (1992).

⁴⁴ It is irrelevant to the main argument whether *v magazine* 'in the store' is part of the subordinate focus, part of the subordinate topic, or a modifier of the stage-topic (another suggestion made to us by Nomi Erteschik-Shir). What's crucial is that the main topic is the Stage-topic, and *kefir* is part of the main focus (Rheme).

contain an added sentence-initial topic.

A further complication that arises in trying to evaluate the Theme-Rheme and other structures of the affirmative and negative sentences we have been considering is touched on in Babby's (1980: 119-20) discussion of Givón's observations about the different pragmatic situations in which affirmative and negative sentences are likely to be used. Givón (1975) notes that negative speech acts are typically uttered in contexts that are presuppositionally richer than the contexts typical for the corresponding affirmatives. Paduèeva (p.c.) has raised our awareness of the related fact that not every affirmative sentence has a corresponding negative sentence that can be safely assumed to have the same Theme-Rheme structure. It is all too easy when testing the word order and intonation pattern of a negative sentence to pronounce it as a denial of an implicit preceding affirmative sentence (hence inviting a *verum*-focus pattern), and not always very easy to conjure up a natural context which does not involve such a denial. In fact, we can see that not every affirmative sentence has a corresponding negative sentence at all, and some of the clearest examples of this are presentational sentences like *Here comes the bus*, which are close cousins of affirmative ES's.

We conclude this subsection by reiterating that we are inclined to believe that there are sentences like the *kefir* example in which the THING manifests GenNeg and is the Theme of the sentence. We are therefore inclined to prefer the introduction of our Perspective Structure over Babby's original use of classic Theme-Rheme structure for distinguishing Declarative from Existential sentences, but we consider the issues far from settled.

4.2.3. Examples.

In this section we list a set of examples with systematic manipulations of three factors, not in all possible variations, but in several of the more significant patterns. We group the examples according to their values on the three parameters: Declarative/Existential⁴⁵, Affirmative/Negative, and "THVLOC" Word Order (THING – V – LOC)/ "LOCVTH" Word Order⁴⁶ (LOC – V – THING). The subjects vary: one is a proper name, one a quasi-proper-name (*otec* 'father'), one a bare singular count noun (*doktor* 'a doctor/ the doctor'), one a bare plural count noun (*studenty* 'students/ some students/ the students'), and one a mass noun (*vodka* 'vodka'). There is also some variation in the semantic nature of the LOCative expressions, particularly with respect to whether they denote simple spatial locations or more event-like entities with a strong intrinsic temporal dimension. At one extreme is one *na konferencii* 'at the conference', which can only be understood as including a temporal as well as spatial dimension. There are two which can but need not be understood as implying something like an event (*na*

⁴⁵ This parameter is not entirely independent of the other two. In the affirmative sentences, it is determined by THVLOC vs. LOCVTH word order (assuming neutral intonation); hence there are only six sets, not eight. In the negative sentences, Declarative sentences are those with Nominative case and Existential sentences those with Genitive. In addition to the parameter DECL/EX, we indicate the sentence types using Babby's labels 'ADS', 'NDS', 'AES', 'NES'.

⁴⁶ Since our simple sentences have three relevant constituents, there are in principle six different word orders to consider, without counting the position of negation in the negative sentences. We principally consider the two "main" word orders, LOCVTH and THVLOC. Other word orders do occur, and we will mention two of them in the discussion. But a fuller study of word order, which would only be fruitful if accompanied by a serious study of intonation, is far beyond the scope of this work. See Yokoyama (1986) for a serious study of communicative structure, word order, and intonation in Russian.

more ‘at the sea’ (easily eventive) and *v gorode* ‘in town’ (less easily eventive)). And one, *v magazine naprotiv* ‘in the store across the way’, is almost never interpreted as having any intrinsic temporal dimension. We first list the sentences and then discuss them.⁴⁷

(34) ADS (DECL, AFF, THVLOC)

- (a) *Petrov byl na konferencii.*
 Petrov-NOM.M.SG was-M.SG at conference
 ‘Petrov was at the conference.’
- (b) *Otec byl na more.*
 Father-NOM.M.SG was-M.SG at sea
 ‘Father was at the sea (at a definite time / at some time in his life).’
- (c) *Doktor byl v gorode.*
 doctor-NOM.M.SG was-M.SG in town
 ‘The doctor was in town.’
- (d) *Studenty byli na konferencii.*
 Students-NOM.M.PL were-M.PL at conference
 ‘The students were at the conference.’
- (e) *Vodka byla (prodavalas') v magazine naprotiv.*⁴⁸
 Vodka-NOM.F.SG was-F.SG (was.sold-F.SG) in store opposite.
 ‘Vodka was (was sold) in the store across the way.’

(35) NDS (DECL, NEG, THVLOC)

- (a) *Petrov ne byl na konferencii.*
 Petrov-NOM.M.SG NEG was-M.SG at conference
 ‘Petrov was not at the conference.’
- (b) *Otec ne byl na more.*
 Father-NOM.M.SG NEG was-M.SG at sea
 ‘Father was not at the sea (at a definite time / at any time in his life).’
- (c) *Doktor ne byl v gorode.*
 doctor-NOM.M.SG NEG was-M.SG in town
 ‘The doctor was not in town.’ (= ‘The doctor did not go to town.’)
- (d) *Studenty ne byli na konferencii.*
 Students-NOM.M.PL NEG were-M.PL at conference
 ‘The students were not at the conference.’

⁴⁷ The “doctor” examples here are an extension of a set of examples discussed in Brown (1999: 85), who in turn draws on discussion of the same examples in Chvany (1975). The examples discussed by Brown and Chvany are in (42) below, with further discussion of our own. The ‘father at the sea’ examples start from the classic pair (35b, 39b) discussed by Ickoviè (1974), Apresjan (1980), Paduèeva (1992), Borschev and Partee (1998a,b), and others.

⁴⁸ As a declarative sentence with neutral word order, this sentence answers a question such as “Where was the vodka?” or “Where was vodka (generic) available?” The sentence can also be read as a topicalized ES; in that case the main stress would be on the verb *byla*. In the present tense, both versions would be possible with *prodaetsja* ‘is sold’; but if the verb were just *byt* ‘be’ in the present tense, they would be disambiguated by *est* ‘is’, with main stress, (existential) vs. null (declarative).

(e) *Vodka ne prodavalas' v magazine naprotiv.*
 Vodka-NOM.F.SG NEG was.sold-F.SG in store opposite.
 'Vodka was not sold in the store across the way.'

(36) NDS (DECL, NEG, LOCVTH)

- (a) *Na konferencii ne byl Petrov.*
 At conference NEG was-M.SG Petrov-NOM.M.SG
 'Petrov was not at the conference.'
- (b) *Na more ne byl otec.*
 At sea NEG was-M.SG father-NOM.M.SG
 'Father was not at the sea (at a definite time/ at any time in his life).'
- (c) *V gorode ne byl doktor.*
 In town NEG was doctor-NOM.M.SG
 'The doctor was not in town.'
- (d) *Na konferencii ne byli studenty.*
 At conference NEG was-M.PL students-NOM.M.PL
 'The students were not at the conference.'
- (e) *V magazine naprotiv ne prodavalas' vodka.*
 In store opposite NEG was.sold-F.SG vodka-NOM.F.SG
 'In the store across the way, vodka was not sold.'

(37) AES (EX, AFF, LOCVTH)

- (a) *Na konferencii byl Petrov.*
 At conference was-M.SG Petrov-NOM.M.SG
 'Petrov was (among those) at the conference.'
- (b) *Na more byl otec.*
 At sea was-M.SG father-NOM.M.SG
 'Father was at the sea (on a certain occasion at the sea/ at some time in his life⁴⁹).'
- (c) *V gorode byl doktor.*
 In town was-M.SG doctor-NOM.M.SG
 'There was a doctor in town.'
- (d) *Na konferencii byli studenty.*
 At conference was-M.PL students-NOM.M.PL
 'There were students at the conference.'
- (e) *V magazine naprotiv byla (prodavalas') vodka.*
 In store opposite was-F.SG (was.sold-F.SG) vodka-NOM.F.SG
 'In the store across the way there was vodka (sold).'

⁴⁹ Although this sentence seems most naturally interpreted with the sea as the Perspectival Center considered at some particular time or occasion, it's possible to understand it as an answer to the question "Who has ever been to the sea?"; this still has the sea as Perspectival Center, we believe, but without a specific associated time. But see Note 55.

(38) NES (EX, NEG, LOCVTH)

- (a) *Na konferencii ne bylo Petrova.*
At conference NEG was-N.SG Petrov-GEN.M.SG
'Petrov was not (among those) at the conference.'
- (b) *Na more ne bylo otca.*
At sea NEG was-N.SG father-GEN.M.SG
'Father was not (among those) at the sea (on a certain occasion).'
- (c) *V gorode ne bylo doktora.*
In town NEG was doctor-GEN.M.SG
'There was no doctor in town⁵⁰.'
- (d) *Na konferencii ne bylo studentov.*
At conference NEG was-N.SG students-GEN.M.PL
'There weren't any students at the conference.'
- (e) *V magazine naprotiv ne bylo vodki.*
In store opposite NEG was-N.SG vodka-GEN.F.SG
'In the store across the way there wasn't any vodka.'

(39) NES (EX, NEG, THVLOC)

- (a) *Petrova ne bylo na konferencii.*
Petrov-GEN.M.SG NEG was-N.SG at conference
'Petrov was not (among those) at the conference.'
- (b) *Otca ne bylo na more.*
Father-GEN.M.SG NEG was-N.SG at sea
'Father was not (present) at the sea (on a certain occasion).'
- (c) *Doktora ne bylo v gorode.*
Doctor-GEN.M.SG NEG was in town
'The doctor was not in town.'⁵¹
- (d) *Studentov ne bylo na konferencii.*
Students- GEN.M.PL NEG was-N.SG at conference
'The students were not at the conference.'
- (e) *Vodki ne bylo v magazine naprotiv.*
Vodka- GEN.F.SG NEG was-N.SG in store opposite.
'There wasn't any vodka in the store across the way.'

First a note about intonation patterns, since intonation and word order have to be taken into

⁵⁰ The simple existential translation given represents the most natural reading without any special context. But it is also possible to interpret the sentence analogously to the (a) and (b) sentences, about a definite doctor, who we perhaps hoped or expected to find at some town-event (here "in town" is understood in an event-like way, like "at the sea" in (b), or "at the conference" in (a).) It might even be possible to get a similar reading for (d), but it's harder (i.e. it requires a richer context) to interpret the bare plural *studenty* 'students' as a definite group than to interpret the bare singular *doktor* 'doctor' as a definite individual.

⁵¹ The obligatory definiteness of the subject in this pattern, which we have still labeled NES, is discussed later in this subsection.

account together; the same word order with different intonation patterns may represent different syntactic structures and different information structures (see especially Yokoyama 1986). In general, we have intended that our sentences be read with neutral intonation insofar as possible, with no contrastive stress. Under neutral intonation in Russian (IK-1 in *Russkaja Grammatika* (1980: 96-122), there is a level tone followed by a final fall, with no strong emphasis at the point of the fall.

Nevertheless, we are not sure that we have succeeded in limiting ourselves to examples which lend themselves naturally to neutral intonation. There may be examples in this paper (possibly including some which are part of the standard stock of examples on this subject) which require some special intonation, in which case any arguments in which they play a role may require closer scrutiny. We have noted some cases in earlier sections in which we are unsure that neutral intonation is a natural choice, and we will note below some uncertainty about some of the examples above.

In the declarative sentences (34-36), with the THING as Perspectival Center, the situation is looked at in terms of the properties and location of the THING. For that reason, it is almost impossible for the THING to be indefinite; it is almost impossible to look at a situation from the point of view of an indefinite THING. (More must eventually be said about kinds, individuals, generic expressions, specific vs. non-specific indefinites, etc. But to a first approximation it is safe to say that the thing chosen as Perspectival Center must be presupposed to exist and in general must be identifiable.) In the (a) and (b) examples, we have a proper name and the quasi-proper name “father”. In (c) and (d) we have the bare nouns *doktor* ‘doctor’ and *studenty* ‘students’, which in Russian are unspecified for definiteness. In the declarative sentences (34-36) they can only be understood as definite, even in (36), where the NP is sentence-final and hence Rheme, a position and communicative status that normally favors an indefinite interpretation. (Of course, if the affirmative pattern (34) were to be inverted, the final NP would be understood as indefinite. But that is precisely pattern (37), which is unambiguously an existential sentence.) In the (e) examples, the subject is *vodka* ‘vodka’, which can be understood as the name of a kind, and hence implicitly definite. In some of the (e) examples, the verbs *byt’* ‘be’ and *prodavat’sja* ‘be sold’ seem to be interchangeable, in some not; we are not entirely sure of the reasons.

In the ES’s (37-39), the LOC is the Perspectival Center. In (37) and (38), it is also the Theme. But in (39), although LOC is still the Perspectival Center, on our view, it is not clear that it is Theme. If these sentences can be pronounced with neutral intonation (IK-1), then they appear to be cases in which the THING is marked with GenNeg but is Theme, and the LOC is part of the Rheme. But it is not clear that such a pronunciation is possible; the preferred pronunciation of those sentences seems to have heavy stress on *ne* ‘NEG’, suggesting that this may be an inverted structure of some kind, and the LOC, though final, may still be Theme. What the status of the “preposed” GenNeg THING is is not clear.

According to the intuitions of the first author, the “marked” word orders in both the NDS (36) and the NES (39) are not completely natural without a marked intonation. Because we are interested in the problem of the alternative word orders in the NES’s, (38) vs. (39), we also included both word orders for the NDS’s for comparison, (35) and (36). But it must be noted that the LOCVTH word order in the NDS (36), in which the Perspectival Center is not the THEME, is not entirely natural; it seems to require a particular context such as the asking of a negative question like *Who was not at the conference? Who was not at (or has never been to) the sea?* In

that case this is not a normal negated sentence, since it answers a question which contains a negated predicate. A more natural LOC-initial order for an NDS than the LOCVTH order of (36a) would be the LOCTHV order in (40a). We suspect that with this word order (where the stress most naturally falls on *ne* ‘NEG’), the Rheme may be only the negated verb, or only the negation itself. In that case this would be a case of *verum-focus*, as conjectured above for our *kefir* example (see footnote 43). In neither case would (36) be an ordinary NDS according to Babby’s scheme. (Babby himself did not discuss alternative word orders in NDS’s; (36) and (40) are our additions to the discussion.)

- (40) (a) *Na konferencii Petrov ne byl.*
 At conference Petrov-NOM.M.SG NEG was-M.SG
 ‘Petrov was not at the conference.’

And as for the marked THVLOC order in the NES (39), we already noted above that it may not be possible to pronounce that sentence with neutral intonation; if (39) would normally be pronounced with contrastive stress on *ne* ‘NEG’, then it too may be a case of *verum-focus*. The first author considers the THLOCV word order in (41) below a more natural word order for ES’s in which the THING, marked with GenNeg, is initial.

- (41) (EX, NEG, THLOCV)
- (a) *Petrova na konferencii ne bylo.*
 Petrov-GEN.M.SG at conference NEG was-N.SG
 ‘Petrov was not (among those) at the conference.’
- (b) *Otca na more ne bylo.*
 Father-GEN.M.SG at sea NEG was-N.SG
 ‘Father was not (present) at the sea (on a certain occasion).’
- (c) *Doktora v gorode ne bylo.*
 Doctor-GEN.M.SG in town NEG was
 ‘The doctor was not in town./ There was no doctor in town.’
- (d) *Studentov na konferencii ne bylo.*
 Students-NOM.M.PL at conference NEG was-N.SG
 ‘The students were not at the conference./ There were no students at the conference.’
- (e) *Vodki v magazine naprotiv ne bylo.*
 Vodka-NOM.F.SG in store opposite NEG was-N.SG
 ‘There wasn’t any vodka in the store across the way.’

It is interesting to note that this is the word order that occurs in our *kefir* example (11, 29), in the examples (9, 10) which Arutjunova uses to argue that the THING marked by GenNeg can be Theme, and also in our problematic scope-of-negation example (14). The same THLOCV word order occurs in all of the *byt’*-paraphrases of the lexical-verb examples in (16). So the complications and uncertainties concerning the *kefir* example discussed in Section 4.2.2. carry over to this whole set of examples. In fact, a review of the examples in Babby(1980) reveals that there are no NES’s with the marked THVLOC order of (39), although there are many with initial

THING marked with GenNeg. But virtually all of them are either THLOCV like (41) or else have no overt LOC constituent at all, as in (3b, 4b, 12), and in all of the weak-verb examples of (16).

Examples with the THVLOC word order of (39) have, however, received some attention in the literature, and one of the interesting things noted about them is that the bare NPs in sentence-initial position in these sentences must be understood as definite, leading some authors to doubt that these are ES's. Brown (1999: 85) discusses the contrasts among the following three sentences⁵², of which (42b) is of the THVLOC order.

- (42) a. *V gorode net doktora.*
 In town NEG.is doctor-GEN.M.SG
 'There is no doctor in town.'
- b. *Doktora net v gorode.*
 doctor-GEN.M.SG NEG.is in town
 'The doctor is not in town.'
- c. *Doktor ne byl v gorode.*
 doctor-NOM.M.SG NEG was-M.SG in town
 'The doctor was not in town.' = 'The doctor did not go to town.'

These sentences pose an interesting challenge to the notion of existential sentence; note that only (42a) (like (39c-e)) translates into an existential *there*-sentence in English, and yet both (42a) and (42b) show GenNeg. Since the existence of the doctor is presupposed, both Chvany and Brown consider (42b) to be a locative sentence rather than an existential sentence. Chvany designs her rules so that GenNeg applies to both existential and locative sentences with "existential" (lexical) *byt'*, and accounts for the nominative in (42c) (an NDS, =(35c)) by appealing to an agentive variant of *byt'* that has a deep structure subject NP (as opposed to her basically Unaccusative analysis of existential/locative *byt'*). Brown has a direct account of the opposition of (42a) vs. (42c), with the higher position of the subject in (42c) at the relevant point in the derivation corresponding both to the assignment of nominative case and to the subject's being outside the scope of negation. She believes that *doktora* in (42b) receives its "presuppositional interpretation" because it is outside the scope of negation⁵³, and that that is accomplished by its overt movement to some leftmost position, possibly Topic Phrase (Brown 1999: 90-91 and footnote 33.)

For Babby, (42a) and (42c) would be normal NES and NDS respectively; (42b) might be an example in which the genitive subject, although part of the Rheme, occurs initially because it is "old information." But since *doktor(a)*, as a simple bare nominal, is unspecified for definiteness, it is unclear how to account for its obligatory definiteness in this example. Babby gives several

⁵² Sentence (42a) = (78) from Brown (1999: 85) = (2.2a) from Chvany (1975: 45). Sentence (42b) is Brown's (79a), = (2.5b) from Chvany (1975: 47). Sentence (42c) is Brown's (79b), which is a variant (substituting *doktor* for *Ivan*) of (4.44a) from Chvany (1975: 157).

⁵³ But we should ask: Is *doktora* in (42b) outside the scope of negation? Is it interpreted as definite because it's outside the scope of negation, or is it scope-irrelevant because it's definite? If there is to be any hope of preserving the correlation of scope of negation with the occurrence of GenNeg, one would have to be able to argue for the latter option. We say a bit more about this issue in Section 5.

examples in which a genitive-marked subject is initial because it is “old”, but in which it is nevertheless still indefinite.

Let us first consider the short discourse in (43) [/136/]: in the first sentence, the word *sobaku* (ACC) ‘dog’ is mentioned for the first time. Later on, the word *sobak* (GEN) ‘dogs’ is mentioned again, this time as the “subject” in an NES; the word order is NP_{gen}- verb since *sobak* is old information:

(43) [/136/] ... *devoèka – Katja – zavela – sobaku ... Do – ètoj – pory – ni-u-kogo – iz –ž ilcov – sobak – ne – vodilos’*.
... girl – Katja – got – dog (ACC) ... up – to – then – no-one – from- tenants – dogs (Gen pl.) – NEG – had (n.sg.)
‘... little Katja got a dog ... Up to then none of the tenants had dogs.’ (*Izvestija* 1978)

(Babby 1980: 117)

In fact it seems that in all NES’s with the THVLOC pattern of (39), the subject is obligatorily interpreted as definite, even though it is marked with GenNeg. In contrast, in those with the THLOCV pattern of (41), the initial GenNeg-marked subject may be interpreted as either definite or indefinite, and preferably indefinite.

We do not pretend to understand all of the factors and their interactions. In fact it seems that no one has a fully satisfactory explanation at this point of the sentences that appear to be “declarative” or “existential” but which do not have the canonical word order of examples (34 - 35) and (37 - 38). The apparently greater freedom of word order in the negative sentences remains interestingly problematic. Also remaining only partially understood is the fact that an underspecified indefinite/definite bare noun phrase must be understood as definite in all declarative sentences and in one word order in NES’s, that of (39). We resist the claim that those are not ES’s, as we resisted it in the case of sentences with referential subjects and the verb *byt’* ‘be’ discussed in Section 1.2. We return to some of these problems (without full resolution) in Section 5, in connection with problems concerning the scope of negation.

4.2.4. Perspective and Observer.

Our use of the notion of perspective is in some ways close to the use of the notion of Observer in the work of Paduèeva (1992, 1997).

When the Perspectival Center is the LOCation, there is normally a moment or interval of time associated with it as well⁵⁴; some kinds of LOCation expressions (like *at the lecture*) are inherently as much temporal as spatial. Apart from atypical domains like mathematics, one can say that the marking of a LOC as Perspectival Center, like the notion of a stage on which a play takes place, always includes a temporal dimension as well⁵⁵, the time at which something exists

⁵⁴ See the translations of the ‘father at the sea’ examples, (34b-39b).

⁵⁵ The claim that a LOCation which is the Perspectival Center is always associated with a time is at odds with what we said in Note 49 about the possible translations of (37b), an AES. It is unexpected, on our view, that (37b) allows a reading in which it asserts that Father was at the sea *at some time in his life*, a temporal specification that is associated with Father and not with the sea. It would fit our claims better if the sentence on that reading turned out to

or is taking place at that LOC. Paduèeva's "synchronous Observer" can be conceived as being located at the LOC at that time; or perhaps as "observing that LOC" at that time. (We believe that our Perspectival Center is what Paduèeva's Observer observes, not where the Observer stands; see below.)

On the other hand, when the THING is the Perspectival Center, it is conceived as an independently existing thing, with no intrinsically associated temporal moment or interval. For this reason, in the case of "declarative" sentences where the THING is the Perspectival Center, and the situation is described in terms of the THING, one may follow Paduèeva in speaking of a "retrospective Observer", particularly in the case where "reference time" and "reference location" are associated either with the speaker's utterance time and place or with the thoughts or perceptions of some textually identified "subject of consciousness".

There are some differences between our notion of perspective and the notion of the Observer, however. (And there may well be more than one relevant notion of each sort in connection with various levels of sentence and discourse structure.)

In perception verbs, the LOC is not the place where the Observer stands, but the "scene/stage" the observer sees, the observer's 'perceptual field'. The LOC can be named by egocentric (or "protagonist-centric") expressions like *blizko* 'nearby', *nedaleko* 'not far away', *naprotiv* 'opposite, across the way' (cf. examples (34d – 39d), *vperedi* 'ahead', *nalevo* 'on the left', etc. Such expressions do not denote the position of the observer but rather presuppose an observer from whose point of view the descriptions are to be interpreted. Our "Perspectival Center" is therefore not Bühler's *origo*, the "I, here, now" center. If we take the metaphor of the movie camera, Bühler's *origo* is the eye of the cameraman, and our Perspectival Center is what the camera is tracking. When the Perspectival Center is the THING, the cameraman will follow the THING as it moves and keep it in the picture; when the Perspectival Center is the LOCation, individuals may come into the scene and leave it again, while the cameraman doesn't move the camera, or moves it to "survey the scene". A still photograph, like a written sentence out of context, may be unspecified as to perspective: a picture showing a person crossing a street may be a picture of the person or a picture of the street.

Erteschik-Shir's notion of a "stage-topic", mentioned earlier, is also very compatible with our suggestion of LOC as Perspectival Center in an existential sentence, where the Perspectival Center is what the "implicit Observer" or the "imagined camera" is visually tracking. The idea of a "stage" on which events are unfolding implies observers or an audience who are looking at the stage from a given location. The audience corresponds to Paduèeva's Observer, and the stage to our LOCation.

As a related matter, T.E. Yanko (manuscript 1998), citing discussions with Yu. Bronnikov, emphasizes the fact that sentences with GenNeg subject use the impersonal form of the verb.

The impersonal form of the verb denotes an event which takes place with no visible effort of the subject, as a result of hidden forces or by itself, accidentally, uncontrolled Let us compare [(44)], which means that Maša, being of sound mind and clear memory and

be an instance of an inverted Declarative sentence, with Father as the Perspectival Center. It is possible that the affirmative sentences in (34) and (37) are ambiguous, with the dominant interpretation as given, plus a marked interpretation, probably with a marked intonation, on which the sentences in (34) are inverted versions of those in (37) and vice versa.

possessing a will, decided not to visit us. While [(45)] may be understood as indicating that it was a matter of fate that Maša didn't visit us (Yanko 1998: 1)

- (44) *Maša priežala v Moskvu, no u nas ne byla.*
 Maša-NOM.F.SG came to Moscow, but at us NEG was-F.SG
 'Maša came to Moscow, but she hasn't been to us (didn't come to us.)'
- (45) *Maša i u nas ne bylo.*
 Maša-GEN.F.SG at us NEG was-N.SG
 'Maša wasn't (didn't happen to be) at our place.'

The non-agentivity of the subject of an NES is a matter to which we will return briefly in Section 6.1., in connection with the Unaccusative hypothesis. This non-agentivity has been noted by a number of authors. Chvany (1975: 158) compares the "polite" (46a) (her (4.47a)) with the "less polite" (46b) (her (4.48a)).

- (46) a. *Menja ne budet na vaš em koncerte.*
 I-GEN NEG will.be-3.SG at your concert
 'I will not be at your concert.' (Non-agentive)
- b. *Ja ne budu na vaš em koncerte.*
 I-NOM NEG will.be-1.SG at your concert
 'I will not be at your concert.' (Agentive)

Recall from Section 2 that Paduèeva posited a systematic polysemy in the verbs used in the various constructions with *byt'* and other verbs. Roughly, her proposal was that non-agentive verbs are used in NES's and agentive verbs in NDS's. We can put her proposal together with our perspective in the following way. For us, the difference in perspective structure is the basic difference between ES's and DS's. But one could well imagine that a given verb contains lexical information about its preferred perspective structure. (See in particular Paduèeva (in press), for discussion of the obligatory THING-centered perspective of the verb *naxodit'sja* 'to be located' as compared with the preferred LOCATION-centered perspective of *prisutstvovat'* 'to be present'.) With many verbs, we are able to shift our perspective from one with THING as Perspectival Center to one with LOCATION as Perspectival Center; it would be natural to suppose that such a shift in perspective is very often accompanied by a shift, perhaps subtle and slight, in verb meaning. As has been noted by many authors, when we are paying attention to some human individual and talking about him or her (whether this is reflected in choice of that individual as Topic or as subject or as Perspectival Center), we are inclined to view that individual as an Agent of the events he/she participates in. When we are just watching a scene unfold, with LOCATION as the Perspectival Center, we are more inclined to look at processes as just "happening", by themselves or as if by themselves, or at least without any attention to what their causes might be.

Such shifts could in principle be signaled in a number of ways, including alternations in Theme-Rheme structure, alternations among related verbs, and choices of different syntactic structures. Such a view of this family of phenomena is compatible with different degrees of "grammaticization" of the means of expressing these different perspectives, within and across

languages, and with differences in how the expressive power is shared among lexicon, syntax, and information structure.

4.2.5. Issues about the sources of presuppositions.

In all of the literature and discussion of the Russian GenNeg construction, there is widespread agreement about the differences in presuppositions in various different examples, but much less agreement about the degree of strength of the various presuppositions and about their sources, i.e. how their presence is to be explained.

In Borschev and Partee (1998a), some of the crucial presuppositions were consequences of the Theme-Rheme structure, by principles articulated in Hajičová (1973, 1974, 1984), and having challenged the correctness of Babby's assumptions, we are not sure how to derive them from other principles.

The challenge for a theory like Babby's based on Theme-Rheme structure amounts to the following. It does not appear to be possible to simultaneously maintain all of the following, at least not in a simplistic form:

(47)

- (1) Theme-Rheme articulation is indicated (in Russian) by certain patterns of intonation and word order.
- (2) Theme-Rheme articulation is a determinant of the scope of negation.
- (3) Being in the scope of negation is a necessary condition for GenNeg in ES's.
- (4) The central difference between NES's and NDS's is their Theme-Rheme structure, from which their differences in scope of negation and in presuppositions follows.

We have argued in favor of maintaining (1), since it seems to represent the most solidly established criterion for that distinction, and to replace (4) by an appeal to a somewhat similar but not identical distinction which we call *perspectival structure*. But since *perspectival structure* is a new concept, there is no pre-existing theory to connect it with scope of negation or presuppositions. In Section 5 below we will raise and discuss some challenges to principle (3); if principle (3) above fails, then (2) becomes moot. But we would still like to try to say something about presuppositions, since they play a role in distinguishing existential from declarative sentences.

As a working hypothesis, we will assume that any element chosen as a *Perspectival Center* must be presupposed to exist (in the relevant *LOCation*, which may or may not be the actual world). Elements that are not part of the *Perspectival Center* may or may not be presupposed to exist, but any presupposition of existence for them would have to come from other sources and not from the *perspectival structure*. In an ES, since the main assertion is an assertion of existence in some *LOCation*, they cannot be presupposed to exist *in that LOCation*, or else the sentence would be anomalously redundant. We thus allow for definite subjects in AES's and NES's, as in the (a) and (b) examples in the example set (34 - 39).

Those who classify sentences with definite subjects as automatically disqualified from being counted as ES's (we have cited examples in which Babby, Brown, Chvany, and Paduèeva have done that) may be failing to accept or to exploit sufficiently Principle (21), that existence is

always relative to a LOCATION. The Russian GenNeg construction seems to use this principle to permit a much broader range of ES's (as manifested by GenNeg) than English permits with *there*-sentences.

Other issues related to the sources of presuppositions are discussed in Borschev and Partee (1998a), including the presupposition of existence of the LOCATION in ES's and the potential absence of such a presupposition in DS's. But the issues relating to definiteness in ES's are among the areas that call for further study; see e.g. Ward and Birner (1995) and subsequent discussion.

5. On the scope of negation.

As noted in the Introduction, we have recently discovered that even the generally agreed-on statement that GenNeg is a reliable indicator of occurring in the scope of sentential negation is not quite correct. We have apparent counterexamples in both directions.

In the paradigm cases of NES vs. NDS, such as (3a-b, 4a-b, 35c vs. 38c, 35d vs. 38d), there is unquestionably a difference in the scope of negation. But there are problem cases. Since negation is very often a much more complex matter than it seems at first sight, the apparent counterexamples to the claim that GenNeg occurs only under the scope of sentential negation that we will discuss may not be absolute.

But before turning to our two classes of problem cases in Sections 5.1. and 5.2., let us just note one interesting problem that arises in trying to determine the scope of negation. Suppose we have a negated sentence containing a proper noun, as in (48).

(48) *John is not in the house.*

It might seem intuitively obvious that *John* is outside the scope of negation in that sentence. But in fact, as far as ordinary truth-conditions go, there is no way to decide. One can represent the semantic interpretation of the sentence either as in (49a) or as in (49b); the results will be equivalent. If what were moving in and out of the syntactic scope of the negation operator were a weak quantifier like *a boy*, the truth conditions would indeed be different, but if it's a proper name or a presuppositional or anaphoric definite description⁵⁶, its structural scope will not be reflected in any semantic difference in the result.

(49) a. $\neg [In(John, \iota z(house(z)))]$ [informally: NOT (John in the house)]
 b. $\lambda x [\neg In(x, \iota z(house(z)))](John)$ [informally: John has the property: NOT in the house]

We mention this basic fact as an example of ways in which the scope of negation is not open to immediate intuition; in examples like (48), theoretical arguments are likely to be crucial in

⁵⁶ These qualifiers are meant to exclude a genuinely attributive or quantificational definite noun phrase from this claim. Such possibilities are relevant to the discussion of possible definite descriptions as GenNeg subjects of NES, as in Babby's example (i), discussed in Partee (2000).

(i) Navodèik ... ž dal komandy. No ee ne posledovalo.
 Gunner ... awaited command. But it-GEN-f-sg NEG followed-n-sg
 'The gunner waited for the command (to fire). But it didn't come.'

deciding whether the subject should be included under the scope of the sentential negation.

These observations are directly relevant to some of the disputed examples discussed above, such as the definite-subject readings of the examples (39c-d). If the THING-first word order arises because the subject is definite and Theme, then it would be as scope-insensitive as a proper name. Its presuppositionality would be independent of whether it is in the scope of negation or not, just as the presuppositionality of a proper name normally is. The sentences could then be argued to be NES's by the same arguments we have used for the proper-name examples. (But there is more to explain in the case of bare nouns; a proper name is interpreted as definite unless there is a very strong context to coerce it otherwise; the factors that make a bare noun in Russian preferentially interpreted as indefinite or definite (or non-presuppositional vs. presuppositional) require much more discussion.) The important thing to note is that a definite interpretation of the subject is not by itself proof that the subject is outside the scope of negation, though that is a natural first hypothesis.

We turn now to our problematic examples.

5.1. Nominative under scope of negation in BE(THING, LOC) sentences.

Babby (1980) argued, and we as well as most other researchers had been in agreement on this matter, that GenNeg in intransitive sentences occurs under the scope of negation, and nominatives in such sentences are outside the scope of negation. But it turns out⁵⁷ that both of the following are perfectly good sentences:

- (50) *Nikto tam ne byl.*
 NI.who-NOM.M.SG there NEG was- M.SG
 'No one was there.'
- (51) a. *Nikogo tam ne bylo.*
 NI.who-GEN.M.SG there NEG was- N.SG
 'No one was there.'
- or b. *Tam ne bylo nikogo.*
 There NEG was-N.SG NI.who- GEN.M.SG
 'No one was there'

It seems clear that (50) is a DS and (51a,b) are ES's, in Babby's terms; they have all the same differences in presuppositions, natural contexts, etc. as the well-known pair (35b)- (39b) discussed by Apresjan (1980) in connection with differences in 'reference time', and by Borschev and Partee (1998a,b), repeated below as (52a-b):

- (52) a. *Otec ne byl na more.*
 Father-NOM.M.SG NEG was-M.SG at sea
 'Father was not at the sea (at a definite time / at any time in his life).'

⁵⁷ Thanks to the students in Partee's seminar at RGGU in Moscow in spring 2000, especially Masha Frid, Lena Model, Yura Lander, and Zoya Efimova.

Data from a subsequent "Google" search of Russian with Latin transliteration: For (50) in three variant word orders, 2 citations; for (51) in three variant word orders, 63 citations. In each of the nominative citations, there is a definite group presupposed in the context, over which the *nikto* can be understood as quantifying.

- b. *Otca ne bylo na more.*
 Father-GEN.M.SG NEG was-N.SG at sea
 ‘Father was not (present) at the sea (on a certain occasion).’

But it seems that *nikto* in (50) must be in the scope of the sentential negation *ne* just as much as *nikogo* in (51). Is there some way out of this that preserves the otherwise apparently valid generalization about genitive vs. nominative correlating with scope of negation?

Babyonyshev, Fein, Ganger, Pesetsky, and Wexler (ms. 1998) discuss the acquisition of GenNeg by Russian children ages 3-6, and show that they master GenNeg with the direct object of transitive verbs earlier than they master it with intransitive verbs. That paper includes a number of constructed minimal pair examples with NPs of the form *nikakie* (NOM/ACC.PL) / *nikakix* (GEN.PL), in various positions where GenNeg is licensed. The authors’ judgment is that in such positions (under the scope of sufficiently local sentence negation) both forms are possible though the genitive form is likely to be preferred when the NPI *nikakie/nikakix* is included. But the very possibility of the NOM/ACC form raises the same question as the occurrence of *nikto* raised above⁵⁸.

The examples in which Babyonyshev et al suggest that NOM/ACC and GEN are in free variation under scope of negation are all object cases, so we haven’t reproduced them above and we do not put much weight on them. But we have also found apparently analogous subject cases.

- (53) a. *Odin student tam ne byl.*
 One-NOM.M.SG student-NOM.M.SG there NEG was-M.SG
 ‘One student was not there.’ (One student has never been there/ one student wasn’t there at an understood occasion.)
 b. *Odnogo studenta tam ne bylo.*
 One-GEN.M.SG student-GEN.M.SG there NEG was-N.SG
 ‘One student wasn’t there.’ (on a given occasion)
- (54) a. *Ni odin student tam ne byl.*
 NI one-NOM.M.SG student-NOM.M.SG there NEG was-M.SG
 Not one student was there. (No student was there.)
 b. *Ni odnogo studenta tam ne bylo.*
 NI one-GEN.M.SG student-GEN.M.SG there NEG was-N.SG
 ‘There was not one student there.’ (‘There was no student there.’)

In terms of the logical scopes of the negation operator and the quantifier “one”, it seems that the (truth-conditional part of the) meanings of both (53a,b) could be represented approximately as⁵⁹:

- (55) *One student x [NEG [x was there]]*

And the (truth-conditional part of the) meanings of both (54a,b) could be represented as:

⁵⁸ The first author and some of our Russian colleagues have some doubts about quite a number of the examples that have NOM/ACC *nikakie*, though they do not categorically exclude all of them.

⁵⁹ Since *tam* ‘there’ is a definite LOCATION, the ‘scope’ of *tam*, which could structurally vary in (53a) vs. (53b), doesn’t really have any logical import.

(56) NEG [*one student x [x was there]*]

So the standard notion of scope of negation seems not to distinguish between the interpretations of the nominative and genitive NPs in these examples.

This is different from the behavior of comparable English quantifiers in existential *there there*-sentences compared to their behavior in plain categorical sentences.

- (57) a. *One student wasn't there. (One student was absent)*
b. *There wasn't one student there. (No student was there.)*

One might have expected the nominative sentence (53a) to be like (57a) and the genitive (53b) to be interpreted like (57b). And it is a surprise that (54a), in the nominative, is perfectly fine.

Part of the explanation (thanks to Elena Paduèva (p.c. and 1992) is that Russian *odin* 'one' is more 'specific' than English *one*. This *odin*₁, since it is specific, may be as scope-insensitive as a definite. Compare the "wide-scope-only" behavior, i.e. scope insensitivity, of English *a certain*:

(58) *I couldn't find a certain book I wanted.*

And *ni odin* 'not one, not a single' is not (semantically) just the negation of *odin*, it's something much stronger, like 'not a single'. So this *odin*₂ may be a Negative Polarity Item. There are thus two different things going on in those examples, which the examples illustrate nicely. One is degree of referentiality (*odin*₁ and (*ni-*) *odin*₂), +/- specific respectively. The other is the NOM/GEN choice, which is a central concern of this paper. For Paduèva (1992), the choice involves two different verbs *byt'*, with the more agentive one taking nominative, and the more stative one taking genitive. But in Paduèva (1997), and in our work, the choice would rather be seen as depending on whether the sentence as a whole is interpreted as an existential sentence or not, not (or not only, for Paduèva) as an ambiguity in the verb.

It turns out that Babby (1980) has an example similar to (54a,b)

- (59) a. *Tam ne roslo ni odno derevco*
There NEG grew-N.SG. NI one-NOM.M.SG. tree-NOM.M.SG.
'Not a single tree was growing there.'
b. *Tam ne roslo ni odnogo derevca.*
There NEG grew-N.SG. NI one- GEN.M.SG tree-GEN.M.SG
'There wasn't a single tree growing there.' (Babby 1980: 66)

Babby asserts that even when such a pair of sentences seem to mean essentially the same thing, there is always a subtle functional difference. But is it consistent with Babby's statements to have a nominative in (59) at all? Babby makes slightly conflicting statements on this point. In his central chapter 3 on the subject, "Genitive Marking and the Scope of Negation", the chapter which includes his chart (7), he says:

The key to understanding the "genitive of negation" in general, and genitive subject NP marking in particular, can be stated as follows:

/78/ In Russian, an NP in a negated sentence can be marked with the genitive case if and only if it is in the scope of negation.

.... It is only in NES's that the subject NP falls in the scope of negation; thus it is only in NES's that the subject NP is marked genitive. (Babby 1980: 69)

Footnote 10 to Chapter 3: ... I would like to emphasize once again that /78/ is a necessary but *not sufficient* condition for genitive marking to operate, i.e., all NPs marked genitive in Russian negated sentences must be in the scope of negation, but it is not the case that all NP's in the scope of negation are marked genitive. There are a number of other conditions that must be satisfied if an NP in the scope of negation is to be marked genitive. (Babby 1980: 76)

We believe that the “if and only if” in Condition /78/ was meant to be “only if”; then Babby would be consistently claiming that we will sometimes find nominatives in the scope of negation, but will never find genitives that are not in the scope of negation. So from this much, it is not inconsistent with Babby's principal hypothesis that we may find examples like (50), (54a), and (59a), with nominatives inside the scope of negation.

But for Babby, a second important hypothesis is that the scope of negation is determined by the Theme-Rheme structure, and that NES's and NDS's differ in their Theme-Rheme structure. And it is central to that distinction that the subject of an NDS is outside the scope of assertion and accordingly outside the scope of sentential negation. So we should not find NDS's like (50), (54a), and (59a): the only time we should find nominative NPs inside the scope of negation is when we have an NES which fails to meet some of the further conditions for genitive marking. But Babby makes it clear that he considers the pair in (59) a good example of an NDS/NES pair.

Perhaps the problem thus posed by an apparent NDS with its subject in the scope of negation was part of the reason for his careful hedge later in Footnote 10:

It should also be pointed out that I have introduced two separate hypotheses in this chapter: 1) a sentence's scope of negation is determined by the scope of assertion; and 2) an NP can be marked with the genitive only if it is in the scope of negation. Since (1) and (2) are separate hypotheses, one can be shown to be wrong without necessarily involving the other. Only hypothesis 2 is crucial for our analysis of NES's. (Babby 1980: 76-77.)

It seems clear that one of the two hypotheses, presumably the first, must be wrong if Babby's own examples (59a-b) are to be taken as a pair of an NDS and an NES respectively.

At first glance it would seem that the second, more central, hypothesis is challenged by example (53b), where we appear to have a GenNeg that is outside the scope of negation, violating the principal hypothesis. But this violation may be only apparent: the NP *odnogo studenta* ‘one student-GEN.M.SG’ is a specific indefinite, and hence following Kratzer (1998) and others, it may be analyzed by a choice function and may display many of the same properties as proper names and definite NPs. In other words, a specific indefinite, like a definite, may “sit inside the scope” of negation, and nevertheless semantically appear to escape that scope by virtue of its referential properties. (No “movement” is required. Movement or some comparable mechanism is needed for obtaining “wide scope” readings only for those NP's for which wide and narrow scope relative to negation are semantically distinct.)

A real challenge to Babby's principal hypothesis comes in the next subsection.

5.2. Genitive of negation apparently not under scope of sentential negation

The examples above concerned nominatives under the scope of negation in positions where one might have expected GenNeg to be obligatory, and an apparent but probably not real case of GenNeg not under the scope of negation. We have also found real examples of the opposite sort, with occurrences of GenNeg which more strongly appear not to be under the scope of sentential negation.

We introduce this section with a real-life example involving a direct object GenNeg not in scope of negation. The two authors were out collecting mushrooms on August 4, 2000. We had started early in the morning, and in the first places we looked, it appeared that we had succeeded in being the first ones there, maybe for some days. Later, towards noon, we were in places where others had evidently been before us. But we still found some. The second author [BHP] was thinking about how to say in Russian, “[Other people have been here, but] there could be some they didn’t find.” She made some incorrect attempts, after which the first author [VB] corrected her with (60a) In later discussion VB said that (60b-d) are also possible, though (60b) seems somehow not quite as natural.

- (60) (a) *Oni mogli èego-nibud’ ne najti.*
 They could something-GEN (non-specific) NEG find-INF
 ‘There could be something (non-specific) they didn’t find.’
- (b) *?Oni mogli èto-nibud’ ne najti.*
 They could something-ACC (non-specific) NEG find- INF
 ‘There could be something (non-specific) they didn’t find.’
- (c) *Oni mogli èto-to ne najti.*
 They could something-ACC (specific) NEG find- INF
 ‘There could be something (specific) they didn’t find.’
- (d) *Oni mogli èego-to ne najti.*
 They could something-GEN (specific) NEG find- INF
 ‘There could be something (specific) they didn’t find.’

What’s interesting about (60a) in particular is that *èto-nibud’* is often characterized as a weak kind of polarity item that is licensed by various modals, interrogatives, and higher-clause negation, but *cannot* occur with clausemate negation (as its licenser). So (61), for instance, is impossible, in contrast to (62, 63), which are both ok.

- (61) * *Oni èego-nibud’ ne naš li.*
 They something-GEN (non-specific) NEG found.
- (62) *Oni nièego ne naš li.*
 They nothing NEG found.
 ‘They didn’t find anything.’
- (63) *Oni èto-to/ èego-to ne naš li.*
 They something-NOM/GEN (specific) not found.
 ‘There was something they didn’t find.’

So (60a) seems to show that in the case of *object* GenNeg, at least, the object does NOT have

to be in the scope of negation, it just has to be the syntactic direct object in a ‘negative VP’ or ‘negative sentence’. We have not studied that construction though, so we cannot comment on the factors that may be involved.⁶⁰

Here is a constructed example involving the subject of an existential construction. We find the same result.

- (64) *Mǎ et byt’, èego-nibud’* *u nego net.*
 May be , something- GEN (non-specific) at him NEG.is
 ‘Maybe there is something he doesn’t have.’

An appropriate context for (64) would be shopping for a present for someone who has just about everything he needs, and hoping you can think of something that he doesn’t have that you could get for him.

Mǎ et byt’ ‘maybe’ in (64) is a verbal construction that forms a higher clause; that is what licenses the *–nibud’* form, which cannot occur within the scope of its clausemate negation. The same kind of construction can also be found with a higher modal verb taking the lower clause in infinitive form, as in (65); and conversely, examples like (60a-d) but with higher *mozhet byt’* and a finite clause complement are also fine, as in (66).

- (65) (a) *Èego-nibud’* *moglo u nego ne byt’.*
 Something- GEN (non-specific) could at him NEG be-INF
 ‘There could be something he doesn’t have.’
 (b) *U nego moglo èego-nibud’* *ne byt’.*
 At him could something- GEN (non-specific) NEG be-INF
 ‘There could be something he doesn’t have.’
 (c) *Moglo u nego èego-nibud’* *ne byt’.*
 could at him something- GEN (non-specific) NEG be-INF
 ‘There could be something he doesn’t have.’
 (66) *Mozhet byt’, oni èego-nibud’* *ne naš li.*
 May be, they something- GEN (non-specific) NEG found.
 ‘Maybe there is something (non-specific) they didn’t find.’

So putting together the examples in Sections 5.1 and 5.2, it seems that occurring in the semantic scope of negation is not necessary for genitive and not impossible for nominative. Babby (1980) acknowledged the latter, although it is not without problems for his theory, as noted above.

The data in Section 5.1. rely on the behavior of *ni*-phrases: if *nikto* and *ni odin student* are NPIs, and must be in the semantic scope of negation, then nominative can be in the semantic scope of negation.

⁶⁰ There is a brief discussion of some possibly related examples in Brown (1999: 94-98), who notes that various examples of “attenuated” negation, i.e. negation accompanied by various other operators, so allow *–nibud’* words. It seems that perhaps when some other “operator” expression is licensing the *–nibud’* word, the presence of negation does not block it. So it may be simply that clausemate negation cannot license *–nibud’*, but can co-occur with it if it is not the closest operator. This calls for further study.

The data in Section 5.2 rely on the behavior of *–nibud’* –phrases. It has been argued that they cannot occur in the semantic scope of clausemate negation, but we can find them in the genitive form where that genitive is apparently indeed (syntactically) licensed by clausemate negation. (And see Brown (1999: 94-98) for some related observations.)

This suggests that there should be some relevant distinction between being syntactically ‘in the scope of negation’ [e.g. c-commanded by it in surface structure with no intervenors of some relevant sort] and semantically in the scope of negation [the usual semantic notion]. Brown (1999) is one proposal of that sort, and we will mention it in Section 6 below. Although we remain syntactically agnostic, at least the second author strongly suspects that there are very likely some syntactic as well as semantic differences that distinguish NES’s from NDS’s. The fact that some Slavic languages have completely syntacticized the rules for GenNeg also lends some plausibility that there is syntactic mediation of the phenomenon in Russian as well.

6. Syntactic issues.

Many authors who have worked on the problem of Russian NES have proposed syntactic distinctions of one kind or another between NES and NDS. And Babby (2000), while preserving the Theme/Rheme ideas of Babby (1980), also proposes that the assignment of GenNeg in NES’s should be mediated by the syntax, and makes a specific syntactic proposal. The NP within Rheme of his analysis of ES’s is syntactically characterized as an NP dominated by V-bar in his recent analysis; his NP Theme is syntactically one that has gotten to a higher position in the tree, either by starting there or by movement. A number of authors point to Diesing’s (1992) tree-splitting hypothesis as a relevant parallel. See also the connections suggested between Theme-Rheme structure and analogs of Diesing’s tree-splitting hypothesis in Hajičová, Partee and Sgall (1998).

Syntactic analyses of Russian ES’s, motivated largely by the problem of the GenNeg, are often put in direct parallel with analyses of Italian existential sentences, with references to work by Belletti and critiques of it by Williams and others; and Perlmutter has worked on both and sees them as very parallel.

We do not consider ourselves experts on the syntax of these sentences, but compositional semantics can’t be done without considering syntax. So let us briefly review some of the main ideas that have been proposed about the syntax of existential sentences.

6.1. Unaccusativity vs. Non-agentivity

The GenNeg construction is found in Russian not only on the “subjects” of intransitive verbs in ES’s, but on the objects of transitive verbs in almost all kinds of sentences. And many have claimed that the verbs that can be used in ES’s are all Unaccusative verbs (Chvany 1975, Pesetsky 1982, Bailyn 1997, Brown 1999), intransitive verbs whose surface subject is an underlying object. The idea that GenNeg applies only to underlying objects has great appeal in unifying the GenNeg construction. Babby (2000) argues against it. His strongest arguments are against equating the post-verbal “subject” position in ES’s with the direct object position in transitive sentences. He also suggests, less conclusively, that some ES’s involve Unergative verbs; but there it might be possible to appeal to type-shifting of verbs from one sort to the other, something Pesetsky explicitly acknowledged as a consequence of the Unaccusative hypothesis for Russian.

Unaccusativity gives at most a necessary condition for GenNeg, not a sufficient one. In particular, no one suggests that all and only sentences containing Unaccusatives are ES's.

Questions not automatically answered by the Unaccusative hypothesis:

- (i) Does the underlying object in an NES become surface subject? In an AES?
- (ii) Are minimal AES/ADS pairs both Unaccusative, with different derived surface structures (if so, what?), or are AES/ADS pairs Unaccusative/Unergative?
- (iii) A related question: What governs "optional" GenNeg assignment in NDS/NES pairs?

Babyonyshev (1996) relates the alternation of genitive with nominative and accusative in Russian to the 'weak-strong' "Diesing effects" effects found when NPs in Germanic languages are left in their base-generated positions or topicalized. Bailyn (1997) is another who supposes that both ES and DS's involve Unaccusative verbs, with DS's involving a raising of the THING NP to a position higher than scope of negation. Brown (1999) builds on Bailyn's view, with her negation position higher in the tree than Bailyn's in order to account for negated subjects in all kinds of sentences. Brown analyzes GenNeg as a phenomenon that affects NPs that start "low enough" in the tree. They may move higher in the course of a derivation, and many of their optional properties are explained as reflecting a choice of interpreting the "head" or the "tail" of the chain created by their movement.

Semantically, it is widely agreed that when the same verb may be used in both ES's and DS's, it receives a more agentive reading in the DS and a more stative reading in the ES. Those who are skeptical about the Unaccusative hypothesis generally believe that much of what it is trying to explain should be explained in terms more directly relating to Agentivity.

6.2. Existential sentences as Impersonal sentences.

There is considerable debate in the literature as to whether NES's (and even more controversially, AES's) are Impersonal sentences. Perlmutter and Moore (1999) propose that both AES's and NES's involve Unaccusative sentences in which the underlying object does **not** become the surface subject.

We sketch Perlmutter's proposal in extremely brief form. Perlmutter was concerned only with syntax; the extension of his ideas to relate to semantics and pragmatics is our suggestion.

- (i) In "DS", there are two possibilities. (a) verb Unergative, initial subject is the surface subject, in both affirmative and negative sentences. (b) verb Unaccusative, underlying object has become surface subject and has remained a surface subject.
- (ii) "ES" are impersonal sentences, whose surface subject is a null dummy expletive pronoun, classified as neuter singular and nominative. The previous subject is demoted to become "brother-in-law" of the dummy expletive. In affirmative sentences, the "brother-in-law" NP is nominative, in negative sentences it is genitive.
- (iii) Like many other authors, Perlmutter classifies the verbs that participate in the ES's as "Unaccusatives", having an underlying object and no underlying subject. Thus the genitive NP in an NES starts out as an object, then becomes a subject, then becomes "brother-in-law" of the dummy expletive subject. (This is similar to the structure proposed for English existential sentences with *There*.)

Perlmutter’s rule for GenNeg in Russian is that an underlying direct object that is not the surface subject may be genitive under the scope of negation. (This unifies the ES’s with the transitive sentences in which the object gets the GenNeg marking.)

The distinction between ES and DS, with those verbs that allow both, would be whether the NP in question becomes the surface subject (DS) or the dummy expletive becomes the surface subject. We would propose that it may be the choice of “LOCation” as the “Perspectival Center” of the sentence that is the functional trigger for choosing the impersonal construction, and that this syntactic difference could therefore be the way the distinction is reflected in the grammar. See the similar semantic correlate of Locative inversion in Chiche a discussed by Bresnan and Kanerva (1989).

A three-way contrast is possible in the case of verbs which can be either Unergative or Unaccusative: a DS (either affirmative or negative) with Unergative verb and THING subject, a DS with Unaccusative verb and THING subject, or an ES with Unaccusative verb and the THING as brother-in-law to a null expletive subject. The verb *plavat* ‘swim, float’ is one which in Russian can be understood either as Unergative (and agentive) or Unaccusative (and non-agentive). We give (67a-c) from Perlmutter and Moore (1999), adding (67d) as an unergative example; if the lexical items of (67d) were used in the NES structure of (67b-c), the (unnatural) interpretation might tend to be one of bodies floating in the pond, or some other loss of agentivity.

- (67) a. *Kuř inki ne plavali v prudu.* NDS (Unaccusative)
 Water-lilies-NOM NEG floated-PL in pond
 ‘Water lilies were not floating in the pond.’
- b. *V prudu ne plavalo kuř inok.* NES (Unaccusative)
 In pond NEG floated-N.SG. water-lilies-GEN
 ‘There weren’t any water lilies floating in the pond.’
- c. *Kuř inok ne plavalo v prudu.* Scrambled NES (Unaccusative)
 water-lilies-GEN NEG floated-N.SG. in pond.
 ‘There weren’t any water lilies floating in the pond.’
- d. *Malèiki ne plavali v prudu.* NDS (Unergative (or unaccusative))
 Boys- NOM NEG swam/(floated) in pond
 ‘Boys/the boys were not swimming (floating) in the pond.’

In both (67b) and (67c), *kuř inok* ‘water-lilies’ is in the predicate predicated of the Perspectival Center; in (67b), the unmarked order, it is also in the Rheme. But in the scrambled (67c), appropriate if we have just been talking about water lilies, it is Theme: here it names a type (which exists in the ‘universe of discourse’, the Reference LOCation) of which no tokens exist in the stated LOCation.

6.3. LOCative as subject? “THING” as subject?

Few authors go so far as to suggest that the LOCative can become the subject in an ES (as it can in Chiche a), but Kondrashova (1996) does make such a suggestion for ES’s with the copula verb.

Babby (2000) is in a sense at the opposite extreme: he argues that the **THING** element is still the subject even in an NES or AES, but that unlike in an NDS or ADS, the subject NP is not in “canonical” subject position. The roles of subject are ‘split’ in ES’s, Babby suggests, with the Locative typically fronting to satisfy the Extended Projection Principle (the requirement that every sentence have something that functions as a “subject” in a suitable structural sense.). The **THING** argument remains post-verbal, but not in a direct object position; it is sister to a V-bar, where it can be in a predication relation. But Babby (2000) and Perlmutter and Moore (1999) are not really so far apart; they propose very similar impersonal constructions for ES’s and may differ primarily on criteria for calling something a subject. And probably only Perlmutter has impersonal AES’s.

What these proposals and other related ones have in common is proposing a more syntactic version of the idea that what is a canonical subject in a DS somehow stays inside the VP in an ES, or at any rate stays “lower”, or at least starts out “lower”. It is as if a **Perspectival Center LOCation** “wants” to be subject of an ES, but since it is structurally unable to become subject, some non-canonical structure must be found. Proposals for the structure of a “NegP” (NEG Phrase, a functional projection) exploit the “lowness” of the subject of an ES to account for the fact that the subject of an ES is under the scope of sentential (or VP) negation, and the subject of a DS is not.

6.4. Genitive of negation as a Negative Polarity Item.

A number of authors, including Pesetsky (1982) and Pereltsvaig (1997), have taken the fact that the GenNeg construction is almost invariably (but see Section 5) found under the relatively local scope of negation as grounds for seeking to assimilate it to negative polarity phenomena. Pesetsky suggests that the GenNeg construction reflects the presence of a null NPI quantifier (analogous to English *any*) which in turn governs the genitive in its complement, as many quantifiers do. Pereltsvaig extends Pesetsky’s analysis to explain the interactions between GenNeg and aspect. These analyses face some difficulties when the NP in the GenNeg construction is a pronoun or a definite NP headed by a demonstrative or an explicit quantifier. This is a very large topic which we can barely mention here.

6.5. The nature of the NP in the Genitive of Negation construction.

We noted earlier that Babby (1980) made a strong claim that one of the conditions on the NES construction was that the NP must be indefinite; but that he himself has numerous counterexamples. But indefinites are clearly the unmarked case.

Steube and Späth (1999) include some discussion of Borschev and Partee (1998a) and make it clear that the notions of “non-referentiality” and “indefiniteness” often mentioned in connection with the GenNeg cannot be simply dismissed just because of the existence of examples with proper nouns or demonstrative *ètot* ‘this’. These authors also note that the full range of factors affecting Russian word order is not yet fully understood.

When a proper name or a definite is used in an ES, then usually one of several factors is present. (i) The **LOCation** may be understood as stage-level: (15) says there was ‘no Ivan at lecture, i.e. no stage of Ivan in the given spatiotemporal location. (ii) The NP is understood as naming a kind or a type, and the sentence asserts there is no instantiation of that kind or type at the given **LOCation**. (iii) The NP is definite but “intensional”: it names something that has been

intensionally established in the discourse, of which the sentence says there is no extension in the given LOCation, as in example (i) in Note 56, from (Babby 1980: 118.)

Similarly, the disputed “topics” in examples like the *kefir* example do not have all the prototypical properties of topics. It appears that all the disputed examples involve intensionality. Note, for instance, that while the noun *kefira* ‘kefir’ is “old”, “already under discussion”, in the second sentence in (11), it is not “referential”. Babby (1980) gives interesting examples of definite NPs, even pronouns, in the GenNeg, all of them sentence-initial and all intensional. His example in note 56 shows a non-referential pronoun in the GenNeg.

These issues are discussed in Partee (2000), but many fundamental questions remain open.

7. Concluding remarks.

The problem of Genitive of Negation in Russian existential sentences is endlessly interesting and difficult because it relates so strongly to so many different kinds of principles from morphology to pragmatics, and because the structures involved are of necessity highly theory dependent and hence subject to change with changes in theoretical frameworks. There are many more questions about it than we have raised here. As noted by Bailyn (1997) and Abels (2000), until recently there seemed to be an either-or attitude about functionalist vs. syntactic explanations, but now it is generally acknowledged that parts of both may be necessary to an adequate account.

While we are still far from a full account, a picture may be emerging. The Perspectival Center status of the LOCation and the corresponding not-ordinary-subject status of the THING are both marked choices. A language which simply let one make the LOCation the subject would align subject and Perspectival Center, and syntactic predicate with what is predicated of it; that would represent a full ‘syntacticization’ of the distinction. On the other hand, one could imagine a language in which there was no difference except word order, and the existential sentence was realized just by making the Perspectival Center the Theme and the rest of the sentence the Rheme, indicated by word order. Russian seems to do something in between; the best way to characterize it syntactically is still not clear, but as functional and formal approaches are brought together the pieces are beginning to fall into place.

Appendix. Data from Serbo-Croatian⁶¹.

(A-1) AF/GEN

[*Na stolu*] *je bilo* (*raznih*) *knjiga* *i časopisa.*
 On table was-N.SG (various-GEN.PL) books-GEN and magazines-GEN
 ‘On the table were (various) books and magazines.’

Note: unlike Russian, Serbo-Croat also has genitive subjects in some affirmative sentences; namely, in the same ones that have genitive under negation.

⁶¹ For these data and the accompanying remarks we are indebted to Tijana Ašić formerly of the University of Belgrade. Sentences are labelled AF or NEG depending on whether they are affirmative or negative, and NOM or GEN according to the case of the subject. The THEME (according to her judgment) is in square brackets.

(A-2) NEG/GEN

[*Na stolu*] *nije bilo* (**raznih*) *knjiga* *i* *èasopisa*.
On table NEG-was-N.SG (various-GEN.PL) books-GEN and magazines-GEN
'On the table there weren't any books and magazines.'

Note: the impossibility of the added adjective holds also for Russian, and for English sentences with "any" under negation.

(A-3) AF/GEN :

**Knjiga* *i* *èasopisa* *je bilo* *na stolu*.
Books-GEN and magazines-GEN was-N.SG on table

Note: in this word order genitive is impossible in an affirmative sentence.⁶²

(A-4) AF/NOM

[*Knjige* *i* *èasopisi*] *su bili* *na stolu* (*a ne na podu*).
Books-NOM and magazines-NOM were-PL on table (and not on floor)
'(The) books and magazines were on the table (and not on the floor).'

(A-5) NEG/GEN

Knjiga *i* *èasopisa* *nije bilo* [*na stolu*].
Books-GEN and magazines-GEN NEG-was-N.SG on table
'Books and magazines were on the table.'

Note: Unlike in 4, this word order IS OK with genitive in a negative sentence.

(A-6) NEG/NOM

[*Knjige* *i* *èasopisi*] *nisu bili* *na stolu, vec na podu*.
Books-NOM and magazines-NOM NEG-were-PL on table (but on floor)
'The books and magazines were not on the table (but on the floor).'

(A-7) NEG/GEN

**Knjiga* *i* *èasopisa* *nije bilo* *na stolu, vec na podu*.
Books-GEN and magazines-GEN NEG-was-N.SG on table but on floor

The last sentence is impossible. In (A-6), [*knjige-NOM i èasopisi-NOM*] is Theme; but in (A-7), [*knjiga-GEN i èasopisa-GEN*] can't be Theme but it is Rheme – because you can't contrast two locations in (A-7) as you can in (A-6). So here in (A-7) you have still the Theme [*na stolu*], which, naturally, can't be contrasted. It follows that in (A-5), [*Knjiga-GEN i c"asopisa-GEN*] is a

⁶² It is interesting and puzzling that this word order is ungrammatical in the affirmative sentence only; this data would seem to argue against Babby's conjecture that the greater freedom of word order in Russian NES's and NDS's as compared to their affirmative counterparts is explained by the morphological disambiguation of Theme/Rheme in the negative case. Here we have morphological disambiguation in the affirmative sentences as well, but still less freedom of word order.

Rheme⁶³, even though it is sentence-initial.

And even when you have this sentence in the following text, similar to the *kefir* example, the same holds, even if the subject is pronominalized.

(A-8) (*Tražila sam svoje knjige i časopise.*)

‘I was searching for my books and magazines.’

Ali mojih knjiga i časopisa (or: *Ali njih*) *nije bilo na*
But my-GEN.PL books-GEN and magazines-GEN (or: But they-GEN) NEG-was-N.SG on
stolu.

table.

‘But my books and magazines (or: But they) were not on the table.’

As in Babby’s analysis of similar Russian cases, “my books and magazines”, or “they”, while already introduced and hence not “new”, is still a Rheme.

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⁶³ Note [BHP and VB]: We now see that this indirect argument that the THING is still Rheme rests on some unexamined assumptions that bear closer examination. In the Russian equivalent of the NES (A-5), with THVLOC word order, it is impossible to contrast either the THING or the LOCATION. So if contrast is a test for Rheme, then neither is behaving like a proper Rheme in these sentences. Further investigation is needed.

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