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## **Instrument, Causal Chain, and Second Predicative Cases in the History of Russian**

### **Introduction**

The present paper deals with the substitution in predicative position of the so-called second nominative and accusative<sup>1</sup> by the instrumental case that took place historically in Russian. The possible semantic and morphosyntactic factors motivating the spread of this case into the sphere of predication are examined in connection with passive constructions where the use of the instrumental is associated with agentivity and causation. According to Martínez [2001: 330], “[t]he relation expressed by the instrumental in the case of the typical instrument is a physical interaction between an agent and a tool, on the one hand, and a tool and a patient, within a causal chain.” The nominative and the accusative stand at the two opposite poles in the chain of causation, correlated prototypically with the agent and patient, and the instrumental, as an intermediary between the two, shares the qualities of both, the agent and the patient. It is hypothesized that the changes affecting the nominative and the accusative at the time may have contributed to the substitution by the instrumental case in the predicative noun<sup>2</sup>.

As is well-known, in the course of its historical development from Common Slavic, the Russian declensional system, in contrast to those of other Slavic languages, has remained quite stable, insofar as the number of cases preserved from prehistory to the present day. However, several significant changes in case usage occurred within the system itself, such as the rise of morphological animacy<sup>3</sup>. The nominative-accusative was coming out of usage for the masculine singular animate \**o*-stem nouns in direct object function. It is possible that the change from the predicative accusative and nominative to the instrumental was also influenced by the rise of the category of animacy.

While the predicative usage of the instrumental does not directly depend on the causal chain, it does alternate there with the two cases that occupy the opposite ends of the chain — the nominative and the accusative, encoding the prototypical agent and patient respectively. It is proposed that the instrumental replaces the nominative and the accusative in predicative function due to the fact that the instrumental is compatible with both.

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<sup>1</sup> Kryś’ko [Kryś’ko 1997: 250–251] makes the point of differentiating between the second predicative and the second object case as far as the accusative is concerned — the distinction otherwise not usually made in the literature on the second cases.

<sup>2</sup> It has been observed that the process of the substitution affected predicative nouns before adjectives [Potebnja 1958: 484, 492, 500].

<sup>3</sup> [Kryś’ko 1997] is a major work on the rise of animacy in Russian especially notable because it disputes the orthodox views on the problem.

Following Wierzbicka [Wierzbicka 1980: 123], the idea of *demotion* that seems to apply to the instrumental case in passive constructions as well as predicatively may be what unifies these usages. In contrast to the canonical nominative subject, the instrumental of the agent in passive usage could be considered a demoted subject. In predicative function, the instrumental (replacing the second nominative) does not agree with its nominative subject (agent). On the adoption of the instrumental for the second accusative, a loss of agreement between the first (direct object and patient) and the second accusative also occurs. It is due to this lack of agreement, that the predicative instrumental could be considered a demoted predicate.

### 1. The elusive instrumental

The instrumental is regarded as one of the most complex cases in Russian [Janda and Clancy 2002: 19]<sup>4</sup>. It exhibits a great diversity of semantic meanings: space, time, means and tool, manner, measure, comparison, limitation, reason/cause. Syntactically, it serves as subject, predicate, object, and attribute [Bauerova 1963: 302]<sup>5</sup>. It is also particularly prone to becoming an adverb. Potebnja [Potebnja 1958: 32] believes the spatial meaning of the instrumental to be its basic meaning.

As Bernštein [Bernštein 1958: 26] notes, in his introduction to the collection of articles devoted to the Slavic instrumental, a question arises, what, besides the form, unites the many types of the instrumental? Wierzbicka [Wierzbicka 1980: 129] remarks on the fact that some of the meanings of the Russian instrumental “are so idiosyncratic that they do not even have exact equivalents in other Slavic languages.” The versatility of the instrumental meanings is illustrated in Jakobson’s [Jakobson 1984: 108] parallel examples in (1).

- (1) *On el rebenkom ikru.*  
 ‘He ate caviar as a child’  
*On el pudami ikru.*  
 ‘He ate caviar by the pood’  
*On el ložkoj ikru.*  
 ‘He ate caviar with a spoon’  
*On el dorogoj ikru.*  
 ‘He ate caviar on the way’  
*On el utrom ikru.*  
 ‘He ate caviar in the morning’  
*On el grešnym delom ikru.*  
 ‘He ate caviar I am sorry to say’.

Notwithstanding Jakobson’s conclusion about the peripheral role of the referent of the instrumental resulting from his quest for invariant meanings of all Russian cases<sup>6</sup>, attempts to establish a single, original, meaning of the instrumental are unconvincing [Bauerova 1963: 289]. The fact that the instrumental is a result of the merger of several Proto-Indo-European (PIE) cases may be in part responsible for this.

<sup>4</sup> The Russian term *tvoritel’nyj* is really broader than *instrumental*: ‘the making, creating case’.

<sup>5</sup> See in particular the extensive overview of the instrumental in Potebnja [1958: 431–517].

<sup>6</sup> [Janda 1993] is a study driven by a similar goal.

Bernštein [Bernštein 1958: 8], while noting that this is pure hypothesizing although the hypothesis is definitely attractive and credible, relates Popov's [Popov 1881] much criticized view that PIE went through two stages in the development of the case system. The first stage was characterized by the existence of only two cases: the nominative (with the ending *-s*) that was also vocative, and the accusative (with the ending *-m*). The endings supposedly stem from the demonstrative pronouns, *-s* for proximate to the speaker, and *-m* for distant.<sup>7</sup> These two cases expressed all the meanings and fulfilled all the functions of the cases that subsequently developed from them. Popov, Bernštein writes, considered the accusative more ancient than the nominative. The accusative could be thus used for the subject, which is still the case in the neuter declension.

At the second stage hypothesized by Popov, other cases appeared, mostly from the accusative which had a great range of meanings and functions, being "a common oblique case". Incidentally, the accusative, according to Popov, had a multitude of meanings and functions so that even the term 'object' when applied to the accusative becomes something vague and difficult to define [Popov 1881: 13, cited in Bernštein 1958: 8]. This certainly echoes what has been said about the instrumental.

Popov's views on the genesis and the evolution of PIE accusative are given a more nuanced account by Krys'ko [1997] who devotes to them the entire first chapter of his book on the object and transitivity in terms of Russian historical syntax. In particular, he underlines Popov's ideas of the derivational character of the proto-nominative and proto-accusative (Krys'ko's terminology), a semantic nature of the distinction between the two, as well as the lack of the original functional distinctions between them; he also notes the lack of Popov's insistence on the primacy of the proto-accusative [Krys'ko 1997: 24–25, 27–28].

It could be noted that the Slavic instrumental has no direct counterpart in Greek [Bauerova 1963: 288], thus no influence on the translations into OCS can be suggested as the motivation for the advancement of the instrumental at the cost of the second nominative and accusative. Regarding the question of the instrumental substituting the second predicative cases rather than the other way around, textual evidence from OCS, as well as the modern usage are unambiguous as to the direction of this morphosyntactic change.

### 1.1. The Comitative

The Slavic instrumental combines the instrumental (proper?) denoting a tool or a means, and comitative, denoting an association, a relation with something [Bernštein 1958: 14]. There is a long history of debate on which of the two (instrumental or comitative) is primary.<sup>8</sup> Martínez [Martínez 2001: 329], in his examination of the syncretism of comitative and instrumental in ancient Greek, argues against the prev-

<sup>7</sup> Luraghi [1987: 356] speaks of the PIE case endings as "relational markers" that originate from particles to a varying degree integrated into the paradigm. They "convey semantic and/or syntactic information in a sentence, with respect to the relationship between nominal constituents and predicates or nominal constituents between each other."

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, [Potebnja 1958: 433–437].

alent opinion based on Lakoff and Johnson's [Lakoff and Johnson 1980: 135] metaphor "an instrument is a companion", that the instrument meaning is more abstract, and that the syncretism of the instrumental and the comitative is asymmetrical and unidirectional. According to this view, comitative meaning gets metaphorically extended to instrument. Making his case for the opposite development, Martínez [2001: 330] points out that the comitative (which is prototypically represented by animate nouns), may stand for a more abstract relation, and identifies it variably as "co-agent, co-patient, or merely a person present at the same event frame as the primary participant". Luraghi [Luraghi 2001: 388, 387], when dealing with the comitative, also mentions that prototypical comitative is animate and shares a lot of features with agent. Based on the fact that a co-agent performs the same action as the agent, she brings in the idea of "split agency". Thus, according to Luraghi, the diachronic development has taken the following path: Comitative > Instrumental > Agent.

Animacy is, of course, commonly considered as one of the characteristics of a prototypical agent. Others include intentionality and control [Luraghi 2001: 388]. The typical instrument, in contrast, is expressed by inanimate object.

Instrument/agent syncretism is very unusual for Indo-European (IE) languages, Slavic and Indo-Aryan being exceptional in this regard, Russian being exceptional among Slavic [Ibid.: 389]. Conversely, there is no syncretism between instrumental and comitative in most Slavic languages, in another contrast to most IE languages. Slavic keeps instrumental and comitative apart (except for parts of South Slavic) by the usage of the preposition.

## 2. The predicate nominal in the history of Russian

Potebnja [Potebnja 1958: 478] considers the predicative usage of the instrumental new in Slavic, and actually objects to the very term *predicative* on the grounds that no non-agreeing case could be viewed as a predicate. The instrumental is predicative only by virtue of being a substitute for the second predicative cases [Potebnja 1958: 483]. He connects this meaning with the 'instrumental of image'. Bauerova [1963: 289] states that, in OSC, the predicative instrumental is practically unattested outside of the *Suprasliensis* (only two other attestations). Xodova [1960: 132–133], also writing about the predicative instrumental in OCS, makes an important observation that it is possible to speak about predicative instrumental only if the language has related constructions with compound predicates containing second predicative cases.

Bernštein [1958: 22] notes that the rate of spread differed depending on the lexical class. The tense of the verbal predicate was also a factor. Permanent vs. temporary characteristic is a feature that played a role in the choice of the case.

### 2.1. The second predicative cases

In Istrina's [Istrina 1919: 168–169] definition, the second oblique cases are in syntactic relations with the first, whereas the latter are directly governed by the verb. At the same time, the second cases carry a specific predicative sense and a degree of an independent relation with the verb as well, which becomes apparent

when they are substituted by the instrumental case. This, in Istrina’s opinion, distinguishes the second oblique cases from attributes and appositions that serve as modifiers of the first cases.<sup>9</sup>

According to [Xodova 1960: 130], the OCS data are unambiguous as to the norm for a predicate nominal: it is the nominative or the accusative case. The instrumental appears only in very few instances and with a very limited number of verbs. The auxiliary verb *byti* ‘to be’ is attested with the instrumental only in the past and future tense forms, past participles, and the infinitive. Below is an example from the Old East Slavic *Laurentian Chronicle* illustrating the instrumental *černiceju* ‘nun’ used alongside the nominative *grekini* ‘Greek woman’.

- (2) *u Jaropolka žena grekini bě i bjaše byla černiceju*  
 at J. wife Greek.NOM was and had been nun.INSTR  
 ‘Jaropolk’s wife was a Greek woman and she used to be a nun’ (Laur. Chron. 32)

Below are examples of the second accusative from the Novgorod Chronicle (Synod copy) cited by Istrina [Istrina 1919: 168–169].

- (3) *dumajušče s nimi kogo c<ě>sarja postavjati*  
 thinking with they.INSTR who.ACC ruler.ACC appoint  
 ‘pondering, together with them, whom they would appoint as a ruler’ (Novg. Chron. 133, 1)
- (4) *tŭgdaže Antona igoumenomŭ Nifontŭ arxiep<isko>pŭ postavi*  
 then *emph.* Anton.ACC Father Superior.INSTR Nifont.NOM bishop.NOM appoint  
 ‘This is also when Nifont, the bishop, appointed Anton as Father Superior’ (Novg. Chron. 26, 13)

Note that the accusative used is the new genitive-accusative manifesting the rising animacy, not the old nominative-accusative. Note also that the nouns cited are foreign borrowings — personal proper nouns and common nouns denoting rank, in many instances associated with the church hierarchy. These nouns denote prototypical agents and were at the forefront of the genitive-accusative innovation [Bratishenko 2003].

Luraghi [1987: 359, 368] considers animacy a crucial “lexical feature” that greatly influences case syncretism. She insists, quite rightly, that lexical features determine “the degree of acceptable ambiguity”. Lexical features may carry sufficient information in themselves diminishing or eliminating the need to codify it by morphosyntactic means.

Istrina points out that the great majority of the second accusatives of nouns in the Synod manuscript have been replaced by the instrumental. As already noted, the situation is different in adjectives where instrumental is not as quickly and as readily adopted.

<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, Istrina [1919: 14] speaks of the predicative instrumental as the one that “has developed” from the predicative nominative. Perhaps it’s just a matter of inexact terminology.

- (5) *vsju zemlju rousiskouju položiša poustou*  
 entire.ACC land.ACC of the Rus'.adjACC render empty.ACC  
 'and they devastated the whole land of the Rus' (Novg. Chron. 329, 12)

The second accusative is interesting in that it is syntactically a direct object but semantically a predicate of the first accusative. Recall Istrina's twofold definition of second oblique cases allowing for a degree of connection with the verb governing the first accusative, and a degree of independence. This ambiguity of status (direct objects and predicates are not typically correlated) may have played into the adoption of the instrumental for the second accusative. As will be discussed in the following section, the instrumental takes a position in the causal chain linking the agent and the patient.

### 3. The causal chain

It is beneficial to the understanding of the case variation in the predicative nominal to consider the instrumental from the perspective of causality, because it allows to connect this usage with non-predicative usages of this case. Most importantly, such perspective creates a broader context for the predicative usage by bringing in the interaction of the semantic roles of the three cases, the nominative, the accusative, and the instrumental. According to Talmy [2000: 487], "the element that functions as the Figure within the causing event in turn functions as the Instrument with respect to the entire causative situation". In connection with the causal value of the Russian instrumental, Palancar notes that cause is "an overwhelmingly frequent category in the semantics of Indo-European markers" [Palancar 2001: 366, 369]. Talmy goes on to say that "[t]he agent is treated as the primary cause of the event, leaving the instrument as the secondary cause which enters in direct contact with the patient affecting its structural stability" [Talmy 2000: 372].

#### 3.1. The instrumental of the agent in passive constructions

Although the instrument itself is prototypically an inanimate object, it is potentially "animated" by an agent who, using it as an extension of his body, can generate force, cause change, or trigger actions affecting the environment. An instrument is only an instrument in the presence of an agent, which presupposes an inherent metonymic connection between the two semantic roles. It seems likely then that an animate noun in the instrumental case could represent an agent. Stolz [2001: 177] writes that "[i]nstruments and their users participate in a causal chain at points which are neighbours so close to one another that they might blend, in a manner of speaking."

Xodova [1960: 136–137], in her analysis of the instrumental in Old Church Slavonic (OCS), speaks of the *person-instrument* meaning of the instrumental, citing Ivič's [1954: 55–57] observation that, in antiquity, Slavic did indeed have the instrumental of nouns with animate reference<sup>10</sup>. The person-instrument in active

<sup>10</sup> In this regard, it is curious that the Ancient Greek *ὄργανον* and its Latin cognate *organum* have 'instrument, implement, tool' rather than 'part of the body' as their first meaning suggesting the semantic fluidity of the idea of an instrument.



constructions could represent both the person performing the action and the person fulfilling the will of the agent. When such person-instrument stood for the performer of the action in passive constructions, it could easily adopt the role of the “logical subject”, in Xodova’s terminology. This, the author believes, served as the path for the instrumental of the person-instrument to become the case of the agent in passive constructions. She adds that such instrumental was initially possible in Common Slavic only in passive participial constructions (by definition derived predominantly from transitive verbs), and not with reflexive verbs. The genitive with the preposition *otŭ* ‘from’ designated the agent in finite clauses<sup>11</sup>.

Schlesinger [1989: 192], too, examines the close association between instruments and agents (Russian being one of the IE languages that employs the instrumental for both semantic roles), pointing out, among other things, that, in the absence of an agent, the instrument may be regarded as such. The necessary distinction between the objective world state of affairs and the linguistic coding of the objective world allows him to claim that “what is objectively speaking an instrument is coded linguistically as an agent” [Ibid.: 195].

Arguing against the notion of the agent defined in binary terms, and for the idea of agent being a cluster concept with varying degree of membership in the category, he mentions that not only is intention not necessarily a feature of the agent, as agents can also do things accidentally, but also that animacy is not a defining characteristic separating instruments from agents; instrument can be animate as well. He proposes that *cause* is the feature uniting the two, based on the fact that instrument is identified with force, while the association between agent and force is evident. Agent is directly identified with force.

Foreseeing the reluctance of some researchers to include instrument under the category of agent, he defends the validity of his suggestion, as both agent and instrument are categories with varying degrees of membership [Ibid.: 194].

The instrumental agent in passive constructions is not a prototypical agent. This lack of prototypicality (captured by the idea of demotion in Wierzbicka’s [1980: 129] approach) may have been also at work in the predicate noun adopting the instrumental.

#### 4. Conclusion: The Instrumental and demotion

According to [Wierzbicka 1980: 129], “in accusative languages, the instrumental tends to be the case of the demoted agent in passive constructions and also the case of the demoted patient in ‘antipassive’ constructions.” When dealing with the predicative instrumental in Russian, Wierzbicka [1980: 123] develops this idea further. She proposes the notion of a demoted predicate, akin to those of a demoted subject or object, reasoning that “it seems to be an empirical fact that a language *can* work in terms of a concept of “demotion” which *is [italics in the original]* applicable not only to subjects but to predicate nominals”.

<sup>11</sup> Luraghi [1987: 363; 365–366; 368 fn38], writing about the genitive and ablative syncretism (which of course is what happened in Slavic), observes that the source of an action often corresponds to the source of motion.

Perhaps the nominal predicate is indeed demoted through the substitution of the nominative by the instrumental and the resulting loss of the syntactic agreement with the subject. If the second nominative (agreeing with the subject-agent) is replaced by the instrumental, the second accusative (agreeing with the object-patient) gets “pulled in” as well. The agreement between the first and the second accusative is similarly lost. The pre-existing semantic and syntactic discontinuity in the second accusative (semantically a predicate, syntactically an object) makes it especially predisposed to innovation.

Since the agent and the patient stand at the opposite poles in the chain of causation, and the instrument is a link between them with features of both, the instrumental case emerges as a fitting expression for either role, albeit with a demoted status.

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