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Iconicity in question: the case of 'optional' prepositions in Lithuanian

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1. The problem

There are two constructions expressing the extraction¹ of discrete items from a group of those items in Lithuanian; the so-called ‘genitive of distinction’ (*išskirties kilmininkas*, see Jablonskis, 1957:577-579) and the preposition *iš* which combines with a term in the genitive (see (1) and (2)):

- (1) *vien-as* *ju*
one-NS PRO.3.GP
One of them
- (2) *vien-as* *iš* *ju*
one-NS PREP PRO.3.GP
One of them

In this language, the ‘genitive of distinction’ is traditionally distinguished from the partitive genitive (*dalies kilmininkas*) because the former corresponds solely to the very specific instance where an element of a group is extracted, where the group in question is necessarily in the plural form and where the item pointed out through this extraction is expressed either by a numeral (mainly *vienas* ‘one’), a pronoun or a superlative (see (3a,b,c)).

- (3a) *vien-as* (*iš*) *proting-iaus-ių* *paukščių-ių*
one-NS (PREP) intelligent-SUP-GP bird-GP
one of the most intelligent birds
- (3b) *kiekvien-as* (*iš*) *kaimyn-ų*
each-NS (PREP) neighbour-GP
each of the neighbours
- (3c) *didž-iaus-ias* (*iš*) *ju*
big-SUP-NS (PREP) PRO.3.GP
the biggest of them

This instance is indeed specific and should not be merged with the partitive as it is the only one which gives rise to a competition with the preposition *iš* (see the impossibility of *iš* in (4)):

- (4) *gabal-as* *pyrag-o* / **gabal-as* *iš* *pyrag-o*
piece-NS cake-GS piece PREP cake-GS
a piece of cake

¹ The meaning of the term ‘extraction’ will become clearer in the body of the article.

The variants resulting from the competition between the ‘genitive of distinction’ and the preposition *iš* (see (1)-(3)) are often considered as syntactic synonyms (Šukys 1998: 143, 410) and presented as such in Lithuanian grammars. J. Šukys (1998) considers that the preposition in such instances is *optional* and that one can choose freely between the two synonymous constructions. He even insists on the fact that the tendency for Lithuanian speakers – especially journalists – to generalize the use of the preposition to the detriment of the genitive alone should be limited. According to him, this tendency became decidedly more noticeable during the Soviet period, because the extraction from a group cannot be expressed by the genitive alone in Russian, the preposition *iz* being the only way to express this notion in this language. These considerations seem doubtful.

First of all, we do not believe that synonymy may exist in languages and following Haiman (1980), among many others, we consider that “different forms must have different meanings”, according to what he calls iconicity of isomorphism.

Secondly, there are instances when the genitive alone can never replace the prepositional phrase. For instance, when the group from which an element is extracted is a singular noun expressing a group/a set of indistinct elements:

(5a)	<i>vien-as</i>	<i>iš</i>	<i>daugel-io</i>	/	(5b)	<i>*vien-as</i>	<i>daugel-io</i>
	one-NS	PREP	lot-GS	/		one-NS	lot-GS
	One among many others						
(5'a)	<i>vien-as iš</i>	<i>klas-ės</i>	/	(5'b)	<i>*vien-as</i>	<i>klas-ės</i>	
	one-NS PREP	class-GS	/		one-NS	class-GS	
	One of the class						

Thirdly, a detailed study of the contexts where these two constructions appear shows that they are not used at random. We will show that they are actually based on accurate discriminative semantic criteria.

Therefore, as a framework for our study, we will first put forward general hypotheses on the function of a case and of a preposition in general, and then specific hypotheses on the semantic value of the two markers under scrutiny: the preposition *iš* and the genitive case in Lithuanian.

2. Hypotheses

2.1. Cases and prepositions are relators²:

The relational role of cases and prepositions was noted long ago and meets with some consensus: Blake (1994), Denis & Sancier Château (1994), Hagège (1997), among many

² For a development of this question, see de Penanros (2013).

others, speak of marks of dependency toward a predicate. The term ‘relator’ was created to refer to this function. Following these authors, we will consider that case and preposition are relators which introduce an abstract location: in each instance, preposition and case ending establish an asymmetric relation between two terms X and Y, where Y is the source of determinations for X. We note this relation XRY, where Y corresponds to the noun introduced by the preposition or to the base of the case ending and where X corresponds to the term referring to the element extracted from the group.

- (6) *vien-as(X)* *turting-iaus-ių(Y)* (*R=Genitive*)
 one-NS rich-SUP-GP
 One of the richest
- (7) *vien-as(X)(X')* *iš* *turting-iaus-ių (Y)(Y')* (*R=iš*) (*R'=Genitive*)
 one-NS PREP rich-SUP-GP
 One of the richest

This hypothesis has the advantage of placing case and preposition at the same level. It has an immediate consequence: there are 2 relations in the prepositional phrase with *iš*, that set up by the preposition *iš* and that introduced by the genitive case which necessarily combines with this preposition (see R and R' in (7)).

2.2. Semantics of *iš* and of the genitive in lithuanian

Given this general hypothesis, we can propose specific hypotheses on the semantics of the preposition *iš* and the genitive in Lithuanian. These abstract characterizations result from the detailed analysis of the two markers taking into account the variations in their respective uses. We argue that any preposition, just as any case (in a particular language), has a semantic *identity* which can not be defined by some basic meaning, but by the specific role it plays in the interrelations between the terms of the context in which it appears, interrelations which constitute the meaning of the utterance.

Semantics of *iš*:

1. *iš* is a relator: it sets up a relation of location between terms X and Y, where Y is the source of determinations for X;
2. *iš* marks that Y has a double status: it has an Interior (noted I) and an Exterior (noted E);
3. *iš* means that X, which is initially located in Y's Interior, is located in Y's Exterior.

This semantic characterization allows us to account for all the uses of the preposition *iš*. In the present issue, the parameters of the formula are interpreted as follows: in (7), *vienas (X)*, while originating from the group of the richest (Interior of Y), is located in the Exterior of this group, meaning that it is extracted from it.

(7) *vien-as(X)* *iš* *turting-iaus-ių (Y)* (*R=iš*)
 one-NS PREP rich-SUP-GP
 One of the richest

Semantics of the genitive:

- 1- The genitive case is a relator: it sets up a relation of location between the terms X and Y, where Y is the source of determinations for X
- 2- Y, the basis of the casual suffix, is the locator of a quantitative dissociation and a qualitative association. The genitive case marks that X is quantitatively dissociated from Y and qualitatively associated to Y.

“Quantification and Qualification are two central concepts of the Theory of Enunciative Operations used to represent the construction of an occurrence of a notion, which involves a quantitative delimitation (operation of quantification) and a qualitative delimitation (operation of qualification). The former noted QNT concerns the spatio-temporal determination of an occurrence, its location relative to time and consequently the existence of the occurrence. The second, noted QLT relates to the nature, the properties, the qualities of an occurrence.

The quantitative delimitation is in no way related to quantification in the mathematical sense of the word: on the contrary, it is reminiscent of the 'judgement of existence' of logicians, while qualitative delimitation echoes their 'judgement of attribution’” (in Glossaire français-anglais de terminologie linguistique du SIL: Théorie des opérations énonciatives: définitions, terminologie, explications, J. Chuquet, H. Chuquet, E. Gilbert, <http://www-01sil.org> (cf. Culioli 99)).

Thus, in (6) *turtingiausių* is the locator (Y); *vienas* (X) is located by this term as being quantitatively dissociated from it but qualitatively associated to it: *vienas* is quantitatively dissociated from *turtingiausių* (it is an element taken out of the whole) but it remains qualitatively associated to it (it is a rich person just like the others).

(6) *vien-as(X)* *turting-iaus-ių(Y)* (*R=Genitive*)
 one-NS rich-SUP-GP
 One of the richest

3. Observations

These two ways are close: in one instance, one considers that X, while belonging to Y, is located by the exterior of Y, in the other, one means concomitantly that X and Y are associated and dissociated. This proximity explains the possibility to replace one construction by the other in numerous contexts. Actually, one can most often change one construction for the other; especially when a superlative is involved: see (8) and (9) which seem quite similar but which differ in the construction used; it is to be noted that one could replace one construction by the other in both examples.

(8) *Turtuolių sąrašė B. Berezovskis – vien-as turting-iaus-ių Rusij-os žmon-ių.*
 one-NS rich-SUP-GP Russia-GS people-GP

In the list of the rich, there is B. Berezovsky, **one of the richest** people of Russia.

(9) *Šis žmogus jau dabar yra multimilijonierius,*
vien-as iš turting-iaus-ių D. Britanij-os žmon-ių,
 one-NS iš rich-SUP-GP G. Britain-GS people-GP

gyvenantis devynių aukštų pastate Londone, Čelsio rajone.

This man is already a multimillionaire now, **one of the richest** people in Great Britain, who lives in an 8 storey building in Chelsea in London.

At the same time, these two cases are different: introducing an explicit marker of location (*iš*) in addition to the genitive seems to come down to focus on the extraction at stake, and, as a consequence, X becomes salient. In other words, when two markers are used, it is as though X was ‘more’ extracted from the group than when only the genitive is used: indeed, when the two markers co-occur, X is not one among others, it is one special element clearly distinguished from the others.

3.1. *Iš* or the saliency of X

Thus, the construction with the preposition *iš* is mainly used in contexts where X is in one way or another emphasised.

The prepositional construction is used in more than 90% of the cases where the phrase is the object of the verb *rinktis* "to choose" or its derivatives.

(10) *Reikia rinktis vien-a iš jų.*
 must choose one-AS is PRO.3.GP
 One must choose one of them.

Contexts of ‘presentation’ are also privileged contexts to have *iš* :

(11) *Prašom susipažinti. Čia vien-a iš mano draug-ių, Meilutė.*
 here one-NS iš my friend-GP

Let me introduce you. **Here is one of my friends**, Meilutė.

It is possible not to use the preposition here, but the presentation then seems more casual, the person being simply quoted as a friend among others, without any particular emphasis.

The indicators of the emphasis on X can be most varied: the pronoun *pats* (self) in (12), the exclusive negation *nė* in (13), etc.

(12) *Trys žmonės atsidūrė po sniegu,*
tik vienas iš jų išsigelbėjo pats.
 only one iš them saved.REFL himself

3 people found themselves under the snow, only one of them, alone, saved himself.

(13) *Ji verkė: Diotalevis mirė šeštadienį, vidurnaktį.*

Ir nė vieno, nė vienas iš draugų šįryt neatėjo į jo laidotuves,
and not one-GS not one-NS iš friends this morning NEG-come.PST to his funerals
kokia gėda! Net ponas Garamondas, sako, jis kažkur užsienyje. Tik aš, Gracija, Liučianas ir
kažkoks ponas.

She was crying : Diotalevis died last Saturday, at midnight. And **no one, not a single one of his friends came to his funerals this morning**, what a shame ! Even Mr Garamondas, one says he is abroad. There was only me, Gracija, Luchianas and a gentleman.

In (13), you can not remove the preposition. In this context, the repetition aims at focalizing on X which corresponds to ‘not one’: ‘*nė vienas iš draugų*’ (not a single one of his friends) is a repetition of ‘*nė vieno*’ (no one) which aims at emphasizing on the fact that strictly no element of the group ‘friends’ came.

3.2. Genitive case or unmarked extraction

On the contrary, the construction with the genitive alone only prevails in contexts where X is one among others, without any particular emphasis.

(14) *Jau užregistruotas ir šios "sporto šakos" pasaulio rekordas - 15,41 gramo. Australo kolekcija, gerai saugoma ir kruopščiai kataloguota,*

tėra tik vien-as keist-ų ir nuostab-ių "žygdarb-ių",
REST-be.PRS only one-NS strange-GP and surprising-GP exploits-GP

užregistruotų Guinnesso pasaulio rekordų knygoje, pasirodžiusioje praėjusį penktadienį.

The world record of this "sport" is also already listed: 15.41 grams. The collection of the Australian, which is well preserved and carefully cataloged is only one of the strange and amazing “feats” recorded in the Guinness book of world records, which was published last Friday.

In (14), the ‘collection of the Australian’ is presented as being only (see the use of the restrictive particle *te-*) one exploit between all the ones listed in the Guinness book.

(15) *Jaunieji rašytojai,*

o tarp jų buvo ir vienas mano mėgstamiausių rašytojų
and among them was also one-NS my favorite-GP writer-GP

Justinas Marcinkevičius, ža vėjo savo kūrybiniais ieškojimais,

The young authors, and **among them also featured one of my favorite writers** Justinas Marcinkevichius, delighted us by their creative researches.

In (15), the preposition phrase *tarp jų* (among them), the adverb *ir* (also) show that Marcinkevichius is only one of the writers present, just like the others.

(16) *Vienas mano brolių - Vilkdalgis, o kitas , dar geriau - Petunijus.*
one my brother-GP Iris.M and other-NS even better Petunia.M

Patys įsivaizduokite, kokie turi būti žmonės, kuriems šauna į galvas užkarti savo vaikams tokius vardus!

One of my brothers is called Iris, and the other one, even better: Petunio. You can well imagine by yourselves what can be these people who can have the idea of dubbing their children with such first names!

In (16), the coordination of two terms working as a couple *vienas, o kitas* (the one, and the other one) puts both elements of the group ‘brothers (Y)’ at the same level, which excludes a differentiated consideration of the brothers, and thus any saliency of one of them (X).

This function of the genitive also explains that this construction is overrepresented when X corresponds to the pronoun *kiekvienas* (each), which, as it marks a scanning of all the units of the class, is suitable for an interpretation in terms of “each element just like any of the others”. *Iš* is of course possible with this pronoun and it appears in contexts of focalization, but one can note the proportion in favor of the genitive alone in the Lithuanian database: *kiekvienas jų* (each of them, 406 occ) / *kiekvienas iš jų* (each of them, 264 occ).

This grid of analysis in terms of focalization allows us to account for the use of *iš* or of the genitive alone in the various contexts where they appear, even in contexts like (8) and (9), repeated here, where the two constructions are possible in both cases : still, the genitive alone was used in (8) because it is about a name in a list (*sąrašė*) -that is one among others- , whereas in (9), X is a central element, the determination of which is completed in the right context.

(8) *Turtuolių sąrašė B.Berezovskis – vien-as turting-iaus-ių Rusij-os žmon-ių.*
one-NS rich-SUP-GP Russia-GS people-GP

In the list of the rich people, there is B. Berezovsky, **one of the richest** people of Russia.

(9) *Šis žmogus jau dabar yra multimilijonierius,*
vien-as iš turting-iaus-ių D.Britanij-os žmon-ių,
one-NS iš rich-SUP-GP G. Britain-GS people-GP
gyvenantis devynių aukštų pastate Londone, Čelsio rajone.

This man is already a multimillionaire now, **one of the richest** people in Great Britain, who lives in an 8 storey building in Chelsea in London.

4. Analysis

The preposition *iš* is not a free option. The two constructions expressing an extraction of discrete elements from a group are not synonyms but correspond to two different semantic operations. We could sum up this difference by saying that the construction involving the genitive alone constructs an unmarked extraction from a group, whereas the construction involving two markers (the preposition *iš* plus the genitive) constructs a marked extraction insofar as it focuses on the extracted element (X). Introducing an explicit marker of extraction (the preposition *iš*) in addition to the genitive results in a focus on the extraction expressed in the construction.

It is possible to describe this in terms of *iconicity of motivation* as the instance marked semantically (with focalization) is also marked syntactically insofar as two markers co-occur. However, this observation and its analysis which links directly form and meaning without taking into account detailing the linguistic operations implemented by the linguistic forms at stake, seems unsatisfactory. In the present issue, this analysis comes up against one phenomenon it does not account for: the instance when Y corresponds to a singular noun expressing a group/a set of indistinct elements (See (5b)).

(5a)	<i>vien-as</i>	<i>iš</i>	<i>daugel-io</i>	/	(5b)	* <i>vien-as</i>	<i>daugel-io</i>
	one-NS	PREP	lot-GS	/		one-NS	lot-GS
	one among many others						

In such a case, only the prepositional phrase is possible. We then have with (5a) the co-presence of two markers (the preposition *iš* and the genitive), but the focalization on X which appears in all the other instances where this combination of markers occurs, is here absent. The expression ‘*vienas iš daugelio*’ means one among many others, one just like all the others (See (17)):

(17)	<i>Man</i>	<i>tai</i>	<i>buvo</i>	<i>vien-as</i>	<i>konkurs-as</i>	* <i>daugel-io/iš</i>	<i>daugel-io</i> .
	PRO.1.DS	this	was	one-NS	competition-NS	*lot-GS/ iš	lot-GS

Jo tikrai nesureikšminu.

For me, it was a competition among many others. I really do not over-evaluate it.

As this context - quite representative of the use of this expression - shows, the extraction is here operated by the preposition *iš* plus the genitive, but with no focalization on the term corresponding to X (*vienas konkursas* in (17)): here the competition in question is taken into account exactly at the same level as all the others.

We propose an alternative analysis in order to account for all these instances. This analysis works the hypothesis that cases and prepositions are relators and that, as a consequence, in any prepositional phrase – in Lithuanian like in any language where these two categories appear – two relations are established. Thus, it is the composing of the relation of quantitative dissociation expressed by the genitive case with the preposition *iš* (marking the shift from the Interior to the Exterior) which results in the focus on the extraction, and the saliency of X. To be precise, in (7), the terms *vienas* (one) and *turtingiausias*- (the richest) are respectively taken as the X and the Y both of the genitive and of the preposition *iš*. These terms are involved in a relation established by the genitive and re-invested in a similar relationship constructed by *iš*, which results in a focalization on the extraction at stake.

One can describe this phenomenon resorting to the concept of *saliency*: the marker *iš* re-inscribes the terms X and Y in a second relation – semantically similar to that set up by the genitive case – which adds to it. The saliency, which is a source of intensification, causes an

interpretation in terms of focalization on X, the term extracted. This saliency happens only because the elements X and Y already involved in a relation (set up by the genitive) are reintroduced in another relation which transforms the first one in spreading it, reinforcing it. In other words, there is some saliency in the expression in (7), because that in (6) exists:

- (6) *vien-as(X) turting-iaus-ių(Y)* (R=Genitive)
 one-NS rich-SUP-GP
 One of the richest
- (7) *vien-as(X)(X') iš turting-iaus-ių (Y)(Y')* (R=iš) (R'=Genitive)
 one-NS PREP rich-SUP-GP
 One of the richest

On the other hand, there is no saliency in the expression in (5a) because (5b) is not possible:

- (5a) *vien-as iš daugel-io* / (5b) **vien-as daugel-io*
 one-NS PREP lot-GS / one-NS lot-GS
 one among many others

In (5a), the terms corresponding to X and Y are not taken a second time to be reinvested in a second relation in order to give a reinforcement, since the concise relation with the genitive alone is not possible: there is no saliency here and the focalization owing to the use of *iš*, logically, doesn't show.

The question yet unresolved is that of the function of the genitive in (5a), when (5b) is impossible. One way to answer this question is to consider that, when the genitive alone is not possible, it does not work in the same way: we argue that it marks a relationship 'left pending' or 'on hold'. In (5a), the genitive case constructs Y as the *potential* locator of a relation marking qualitative association and quantitative dissociation. The role played by the preposition is to find a term standing for X.

5. Outcome

The general outcome of this analysis is, first, that a saliency shows every time the terms corresponding to X and Y are possible both with the case alone and with the preposition which combines with this case. Second, there will be no saliency when the prepositional phrase is in competition with a case that the preposition does not select, because it is not the same relationships which are involved (maybe not the same X, etc.).

The second side of this general outcome is easy to make out. All we have to do is to look at all the other uses of the preposition *iš*, which are uses where the competition with the genitive alone is not possible.

- (18) *Jis eina iš virtuv-ės.*
 he goes PREP kitchen-GS
 He goes out of the kitchen.

- (19) *Jis mirè iš bad-o / bad-u.*
 he died iš hunger-GS/ hunger-IS
 He died of hunger.

The construction in (18) is the unmarked way to express the movement out of a place. The preposition *iš* is necessary, the genitive alone cannot express this notion. There is no focalization. There are otherwise several possibilities to focus on one element of this sentence in particular word order and intonation.

In (19), the preposition phrase competes with the instrumental case: we have shown elsewhere (See de Penanros (2013c)) that these two constructions do not have the same terms standing for their X, and that the difference between the two has nothing to do with a question of focalization.

Verifying the first side of this general outcome implies studying other instances of competition between constructions of the type $N_{case_x}/Prep N_{case_x}$.

We therefore propose to study the different constructions of the verb *pereiti* (pref-go), which is a prefixed verb expressing the idea of crossing. The morpheme *per* corresponds both to a prefix and a preposition, which express shifting from one point to another. The addition of the prefix *per-* to an intransitive verbal base results in the construction of a transitive verb expressing the idea of crossing:

- (20) **eiti gatv-ę*
 go street-AS
- (21) *per-eiti gatv-ę*
per-go street-AS
 To cross the street
- (22) *per-eiti per gatv-ę*
per-go per street-AS
 to cross the street

In (21), *gatvę* (street-AS) is the term constructing the two points requested by the prefix *per-*. Despite its translation in English, (21) is not a synonym of (22). It is possible to show that the preposition *per* is used in instances where one focuses for one reason or another on this crossing, on its different stages and steps.

The preposition *per* is thus required in (23) because the current does not have a destination, the idea important here is that it goes through all the points constituting the interval ‘body’, just as in (24) with the shiver in the back.

- (23) *Elektros srov-ė per-ėjo ??Ø / per vis-q kūn-q.*
 electric current-NS per-went ?? Ø / per all-AS body-AS
 The electric current ran through his whole body.

The militia in charge of the traffic had established the following fact: the teacher L. **Lisenkaitė had crossed the street in a prohibited place**, causing an accident-prone situation. There had been no accident, but one could have taken place.

The second side of our general outcome is then verified here: we have the accusative alone when the relation is ‘unmarked’, that is when the place in question simply corresponds to the interval requested by the prefixed verb *pereiti*; we have the preposition and the accusative when the relation set up by the verb is organized differently to focus on one of its aspects.

The other case of competition of this kind in Lithuanian concerns the reference to the instrument of verbs of activity: the instrument can be introduced either with the instrumental alone or with both the instrumental and the preposition *su* which requests this case. A Holvoet (2004:17) describes this kind of instances by saying that the use of the preposition is a reinforcement of the case.

- (30) *Jis atkimš-o butel-į (su) kamščiatrauk-iu.*
 he unscrew-PST bottle-AS (with) screw-driver-IS
 He unscrewed the bottle with a screwdriver.

In fact, the use of the preposition is a way to remove the instrument from the direct scope of the verb, in order to rework the relationship between the verb and the instrument in order to focus on the latter. One can compare for instance (31) and (32) where the two constructions are in complementary distribution.

- (31) *Dalia, jeigu mama mirs,*
aš nu-si-dur-siu ??šit-uo peil-iu / su šit-uo peil-iu.
 I PREF-REFL-stab-FUT1 ??dem-IS knife-IS/ with dem-IS knife-IS
 Dalia, if mum dies, **I will stab myself with this knife.**

- (32) *Kosčėjus Nemirtingasis šoko po traukiniu, po to nusišovė, vėliau nusiskandino, pasikorė, nušoko nuo stogo, nu-si-dur-ė peiliu / ??su peil-iu - žodžiu išgėrė žmogus ir truputį pasilinksmino.*

PREF-REFL-stab-PST knife-IS / ?? with knife-IS

Koschejus Immortal had thrown himself under a train, after this he had shot himself, then drowned himself, hung himself, jumped off a roof, knifed himself; in a word, the man had been drinking, and had had a little fun.

In (31), the demonstrative ‘*šitas*’ which pinpoints on a particular knife, hinders the use of the instrumental alone. In (32), on the contrary, we have the neutral expression to express the action of stabbing oneself, in a context where different ways of killing oneself are enumerated: the knife itself, as such, is irrelevant and the instrumental alone suffices to introduce this instrument. This contrast shows that the two constructions correspond to different operations: the instrumental case alone is used to express the instrument requested by the verb in an ‘unmarked’ way; on the other hand, in order to focus on this instrument, an

additional marker is used, re-inscribing the terms X and Y in a second – supposedly semantically similar - relation in order to focus on one of the elements.

6. Conclusion

It thus appears that in these two examples of competition between a preposition and the case selected by this preposition alone, both examples involving a predicative relationship, we find the same regularities: the case alone is used to express the unmarked predicative relationship, whereas the preposition phrase is used to focus on one of its aspects. These two examples turn out to be entirely comparable to what we had in the instance of the extraction from a group, except that a verb is here involved and that the tangle of relations involved is therefore even more complex.

However, the study of these two examples lacks a detailed analysis of the accusative and of the preposition *per* (across) on the one hand, of the instrumental case and of the preposition *su* (with) on the other hand, in order to show precisely how the two operations associated to the markers involved combine and, thus, to explain the mechanism of the focalization which appears in these combinations. Our hypothesis is that there must be a proximity between the semantics of *per* (across) and the accusative on the one hand, between that of *su* (with) and the instrumental on the other hand. Indeed, as Colombat (1981) underlines, the semantic value we can associate to a case when it is used alone seems absent when this same case is selected by a preposition, especially when this preposition can combine only with this case:

“Comment expliquer qu'un cas qui à lui seul peut marquer un rapport puisse perdre ainsi cette valeur générale pour ne dépendre que d'une préposition?”

This apparent loss of all semantic value when it is the only case which can be selected by a given preposition recalls the issue of empty preverbs developed in Slavic and Baltic languages. Indeed, while some prefixed verbs clearly appear as new lexical units (ex: *pinti* (to braid) / *išpinti* (to unbraid)), in some instances, the addition of a prefix to a verbal base gives rise to a verb which has the same meaning as the simplex, but which is perfective, contrary to the simplex (ex: *kepti* (to cook_{IMPF})/*iškepti* (to cook_{PERF}). It was shown (see Paillard (2004), de Penanros (2000, 2010)) that, in this instance like in the others, the prefix is never semantically empty.

“On observe que *iš-* est considéré comme préverbe sémantiquement vide dans les cas de coïncidences sémantiques avec la base verbale: les bases verbales concernées posent toutes, en effet, d'une certaine façon, la prise en compte de deux états, ce qui est en écho avec la sémantique de *iš-* » (de Penanros 2010 : 121)

We argue that a similar principle is at work in the group [preposition+case]. Thus, the preposition *iš* combines with a noun with the genitive case because the semantics of the genitive echoes that of this preposition; in other words, the preposition *iš* requires a term Y

which is constructed as the locator of a qualitative association and a quantitative dissociation. This principle is supposedly general, not only for the Lithuanian cases and prepositions, but for all the languages where these two categories co-occur. It would account for the semantic correspondence between cases and prepositions noted by numerous authors (see Luraghi (1989), Feuillet (1992)).

Therefore, a detailed study of the semantics of the prepositions *per* and *su* and of the accusative and instrumental cases in Lithuanian remains to be achieved. This research is necessary to confirm our thesis: the concept of iconicity of motivation alone does not allow to account for the phenomena observed for it is not so much because more markers are used that we have a focalization, but because two semantically close relationships involving the same terms are fully implemented.

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