

- (3) a. Sveta ne prišla.
 Sveta.NOM.FEM not come.3SG.FEM
 ‘Sveta did not come.’
 b. *Svety ne prišlo.
 Sveta.GEN.FEM not come.3SG.NEUT
- (4) a. Sveta ne byla v gorode.
 Sveta.NOM.FEM not was.3SG.FEM in city
 ‘Sveta has not been to a/the city.’
 b. Svety ne bylo v gorode.
 Sveta.GEN.FEM not was.3SG.NEUT in city
 ‘Sveta was absent from the city./Sveta was not in town.’

Third, GenNeg with GVs is linked to an interpretive effect. In particular, a GenNeg-marked argument of a GV is interpreted as non-referential (see (1a)), while a nominative argument is referential (see (1b)) (Bailyn 1997, Babyonyshev 2003). However, with the verb *byt’*, GenNeg can occur with either a referential argument, such as the proper name *Svety* ‘Sveta.GEN’ in (4b), or a nonreferential argument, such as the NP *kefira* ‘kefir.GEN’ in (2a).

The availability of GenNeg with referential arguments, such as the proper name *Sveta* in (4b), inhibits an appealing generalization about the direct relationship between GenNeg and existential interpretation of the sentence (Borschev and Partee 2002).¹ The “Existence Is Relative” Principle in Borschev and Partee 2002:188 resolves the problem only partially, as it only accounts for GenNeg on necessarily referential arguments, such as proper names. However, a GenNeg-marked NP that is not lexically specified for such a construal can be interpreted as referential in *byt’* constructions. In fact, it must be interpreted as referential in sentences like (5a), where the NP is preverbal.² The nonreferential interpretation is only available for a postverbal NP, as in (5b). By equating the assignment of GenNeg with existential interpretation, Borschev and Partee are unable to account for interpretive differences that arise solely through variations in word order in GenNeg sentences with *byt’*.

- (5) a. Doktora ne bylo v gorode.
 doctor.GEN.MASC not was.3SG.NEUT in city
 ‘The doctor was not in the city/in town.’
 b. V gorode ne bylo doktora.
 in city not was.3SG.NEUT doctor.GEN.MASC
 ‘There was no doctor in the city.’
 (Borschev and Partee 2002:216, 215)

The analysis of *byt’* that we believe comes closest to accounting for the above properties is Padučeva’s (1997, 2004) lexical-semantic

¹ In (2a), the sentence is interpreted existentially as asserting the nonexistence of a referent for the argument, while in (4b) the semantics of proper names (as well as word order; see footnote 9) disallows such a construal.

² Borschev and Partee (2002:218–219) themselves make this observation and acknowledge that their account offers no explanation for it.

account. Padučeva posits a division of *byt'* occurring with the specification of a location, as in (2), (4), and (5), into two separate verbs with distinct lexical semantics, which she calls *locative byt'₁* and *locative byt'₂*. *Byt'₁*, illustrated in (2a), (4b), and (5), belongs to the so-called *perceptual* group of GVs: its semantics includes a perceptual component related to the interpretation of an implicit observer, made salient by the assignment of genitive case to the argument under negation. According to Padučeva (1997), assignment of GenNeg to the argument of a GV is optional and results in the interpretation of the sentence as asserting the absence of the subject from the field of vision of this implicit observer. Conversely, *byt'₂* does not belong to the group of GVs, as it lacks the relevant semantic component; accordingly, GenNeg cannot be assigned to its argument (see (4a)).³ It is a separate predicate, whose semantics requires an agentive argument; it is therefore not compatible with the inanimate subject *kefir* in (2b).

The advantage of Padučeva's analysis is that it distinguishes different meanings of *byt'* that demonstrate different behaviors. Its disadvantage is that it treats *byt'* with a genitive-marked argument and a specified location—Padučeva's *locative byt'₁*—as an intransitive verb that behaves in the same way as other perceptual GVs, such as *prijiti* 'to come, arrive' in (1). In particular, assignment of GenNeg to the arguments of perceptual GVs is optional and interpretively conditioned (see (1)). Yet *byt'₁* does not allow this optionality: the sentence in (2b) cannot be interpreted as *byt'₁* with a nominative subject (Chvany 1975). Furthermore, *byt'₁* does not conform to Padučeva's assertion that GVs imply an observer as part of their semantics, as evidenced by (6), which is grammatical even though no implicit observer is possible at the specified location.

- (6) Nikto na svete ne znal o tom, što
no.one on Earth not knew about that that
doktora ne bylo v gorode, kogda
doctor.GEN.MASC not was.3SG.NEUT in city when
gorod vzletel na vozdux.
city flew on air
'No one on Earth knew that the doctor was not in the city
when the city blew up.'

This constitutes an interpretive basis for proposing that *byt'₁* is a separate type of verb whose syntactic and semantic behavior differs from Padučeva's characterization of GVs.

2 Semantic Properties

Following Padučeva (2004), we propose an analysis that distinguishes two independent lexical entries for *byt'* with a specified location, one of which (Padučeva's *byt'₂*) is predicative/argument-taking—that is,

³ The assignment of GenNeg in this instance results in the sentence in (4b), where the verb can only be interpreted as *byt'₁*.

it is a predicate with a meaning similar to ‘to visit’ or ‘to have been to (at some point in time)’. Unlike Padučeva, we analyze her *byt’*₁ not as a predicate but as the copula in a copular construction with a locational prepositional predicate, with the meaning ‘to be (located) in’.⁴ Both predicates—*byt’*₂ and the prepositional predicate used with copular *byt’*₁—are transitive, involving two obligatory arguments: one functioning as the grammatical subject and another denoting a location.⁵

In the *byt’*₂ construction, as in (7), the verb *byt’* functions as the main predicate of the sentence. It takes two arguments: an internal Location argument—usually denoted by a PP—and an external Agent argument. In both affirmative and negated sentences, the subject must bear nominative case, which is the default case assigned to overt subjects in Russian; GenNeg is not possible with this verb. The assignment of nominative case to the subject in the context of sentential negation in (7b) indicates that this is predicative *byt’*, and the sentence is interpreted as asserting that the Agent has not visited the Location denoted by the PP.

(7) a. *Predicative byt’ – affirmative sentence*

Doktor byl v gorode.
doctor.NOM.MASC was in city
‘The doctor has been to a/the city.’ or ‘The doctor visited a/the city.’

b. *Predicative byt’ – negated sentence*

Doktor ne byl v gorode.
doctor.NOM.MASC not was in city
‘The doctor has not been to a/the city.’ or ‘The doctor did not go to a/the city.’

In (8) and (9), the verb *byt’* functions as a copula, establishing a predication relation per Williams (1980) between the grammatical subject and a predicate, which in these sentences is the preposition *v* ‘in’.

⁴ To the best of our knowledge, no one has proposed this division of *byt’* into predicative and copular in the discussed constructions. While Padučeva (1997, 2004) and Chvany (1975) analyze both as predicative and propose an agentive variant, Brown (1999) treats *byt’* as a copula in all instances. However, many scholars have noted that GenNeg-marked NPs are consistently non-agentive (Borschev and Partee 2002, Kagan 2013), while Agents typically carry nominative case. We capture this observation in section 3 by proposing that GenNeg is assigned by a complex Neg head to Spec,VP. Since Agents are never merged VP-internally, they receive nominative case from finite Infl.

⁵ As one anonymous reviewer points out, a polysemic distinction between predicative and copular with a further split between existential and nonexistential copular readings may not be the most attractive solution. However, the parallels with English indicate that this is not limited to Russian.

- (i) The doctor has not been to the city.
- (ii) a. The doctor was not in the city.
b. There was no doctor in the city.

Further typological research on this observation may reveal a broader pattern crosslinguistically.

This prepositional predicate takes two arguments: an internal nominal Location argument and an internal nominal Theme argument, the latter functioning as the grammatical subject.⁶ Affirmative sentences with this prepositional predicate, as in (8a) and (9a), have a meaning similar to ‘to be located at x (at a specific point in time)’, where x is the place denoted by the internal Location argument of the preposition. In the context of sentential negation, as in (8b) and (9b), the assignment of genitive case to the subject of this copular construction is obligatory (Chvany 1975, Bailyn 1997). We argue that this is because morphological case is used to distinguish these two lexical items: GenNeg identifies the copular construction, while nominative case is reserved for the subject of predicative *byt’* (see also Matushansky 2012 on the connection between lexical semantics and morphological case).

- (8) a. *Nonexistential copular byt’ – affirmative sentence*
Doktor byl v gorode.
doctor.NOM.MASC was in city
‘The doctor was in the city.’
- b. *Nonexistential copular byt’ – negated sentence*
Doktora ne bylo v gorode.
doctor.GEN.MASC not was in city
‘The doctor was not in the city.’
(Borschev and Partee 2002:214, 216)
- (9) a. *Existential copular byt’ – affirmative sentence*
V gorode byl doktor.
in city was doctor.NOM.MASC
‘There was a doctor in the city.’

⁶ As expected, sentences with predicative *byt’*, as in (7), can contain agent-oriented modifiers (see (i) and (ii)), whereas no sentences that unambiguously contain the copular *byt’* can do so (see, e.g., (iii)).

- (i) Doktor namerenno (včera utrom) ne byl v gorode čtoby
doctor deliberately yesterday morning not was in city to
ne popast’sja na glaza načal’stvu.
not be.caught on eyes superiors
‘The doctor deliberately didn’t go to the city (yesterday morning) to avoid being spotted by his superiors.’
- (ii) Doktor namerenno (včera utrom) byl v gorode čtoby
doctor deliberately yesterday morning was in city to
vstretit’sja s japonskoj delegaciej.
meet with Japanese delegation
‘The doctor deliberately visited the city (yesterday morning) in order to meet with the Japanese delegation.’
- (iii) Doktora (*namerenno) (včera utrom) ne bylo v gorode
doctor.GEN deliberately yesterday morning not was in city
(*čtoby ne popast’sja na glaza načal’stvu).
to not be.caught on eyes superiors
‘The doctor (*deliberately) was not in the city (yesterday morning) *(to avoid being spotted by his superiors).’

b. *Existential copular byt'* – *negated sentence*

V gorode ne bylo doktora.
in city not was doctor.GEN.MASC
'There was no doctor in the city.'
(Borschev and Partee 2002:215)

The affirmative nonexistential copular construction in (8a) is identical to the affirmative predicative construction in (7a). However, the obligatory assignment of genitive case to the grammatical subject in a negated context of sentential negation in (8b) disambiguates copular *byt'*.

In the present tense, copular *byt'* is disambiguated in a negated sentence by a distinct form of negation (see (10b) and (11b)). As argued in section 3, the form *net* results from a syntactic operation that merges the copula with the negation, creating a complex Neg head.

(10) a. *Nonexistential copular byt'* – *affirmative sentence*

Doktor v gorode.
doctor.NOM.MASC in city
'The doctor is in the city.'

b. *Nonexistential copular byt'* – *negated sentence*

Doktora net v gorode.
doctor.GEN.MASC not in city
'The doctor is not in the city.'

(11) a. *Existential copular byt'* – *affirmative sentence*

V gorode est' doktor.
in city is doctor.NOM.MASC
'There is a doctor in the city.'

b. *Existential copular byt'* – *negated sentence*

V gorode net doktora.
in city not doctor.GEN.MASC
'There is no doctor in the city.'

In negated sentences with predicative *byt'*, this form of negation is unavailable (12). By hypothesis, this is because only a copula can undergo the aforementioned syntactic process.⁷

⁷ The present tense form of the predicative *byt'* is not easy to determine, as sentences with negative *ne* and a covert *byt'* as in (i) tend to be interpreted as the nonexistential copular construal with constituent negation, as indicated in the parentheses. This is plausibly because in the absence of any contextual clues, the covert form of *byt'* fails to betray the presence of a predicate that takes an agentive argument (whereas the overt present tense form of *byt'* is already used for the disambiguation of copular sentences as existential (see footnote 8)). However, contextual clues can make the covert predicative *byt'* detectable (see (ii)). Note that *ne* rather than *net* must be used in this instance (compare (iia) and (12)), strongly suggesting that the verb that selects a nominative Agent is not a copula.

(i) a. Doktor ne v gorode (a v derevne).
doctor not in city but in village
'The doctor is not in the city (but in the village).'

- (12) *Doktor net v gorode.
doctor.NOM.MASC not in city

The obligatory nature of GenNeg with copular *byt'* under negation indicates that, in this context, the default case assigned to the grammatical subject is in fact the genitive case (Chvany 1975, Bailyn 1997). As the unmarked variant, genitive case is assigned indiscriminately and is not linked to some specific interpretive effect or other, such as referential or existential interpretation. Instead, we propose that word order determines the interpretation of the NP: in the postverbal (VP-internal) position, the GenNeg-marked NP is a second-order predicate that expresses properties of sets—that is, a “generalized quantifier” (Barwise and Cooper 1981, Keenan 1987, Francez 2009). Conversely, movement to Spec,IP removes the quantificational construal of the NP and turns it into a referential expression (cf. McCloskey 2014, Jasinskaja and Šimik to appear), where *referentiality* is understood in the sense of Geist’s (2008) epistemic specificity: when using a referential expression, the speaker has a particular referent in mind that they believe to exist in the real world (see also von Heusinger 2011, Farkas 2002). The existential reading is only available with the former.⁸

The copular constructions in (8) and (9) have the same numeration but demonstrate two different neutral word orders (contra Brown

-
- b. Doktor v gorode (a ne v derevne).
doctor in city but not in village
‘The doctor is in the city (and not in the village).’
- (ii) a. Doktor segodnja namerenno ne v gorode čtoby ne popast’sja
doctor today deliberately not in city to not be.caught
na glaza načal’stvu.
on eyes superiors
‘The doctor is deliberately not visiting the city today to avoid being spotted by his superiors.’
- b. Doktor segodnja namerenno v gorode čtoby vstretit’sja s
doctor today deliberately in city to meet with
japonskoj delegacij.
Japanese delegation
‘The doctor is deliberately visiting the city today in order to meet with the Japanese delegation.’

⁸ While in negated copular sentences the (non)existential interpretation is disambiguated by different syntactic positions and thus by distinct interpretations of the NP, in present tense affirmative sentences this is done via overtness of the copula (see (11a)). That is, syntactically governed interpretations of the NP can be contextually overridden. However, an overt copula unambiguously identifies the NP as being a generalized quantifier in any context. Plausibly, GenNeg is by default associated with the quantificational reading, which can only be removed by movement to Spec,IP. However, as GenNeg is unavailable in affirmative sentences, the quantificational reading (and resulting existential interpretation) of the NP must be disambiguated by other means. A consequence of this is that in past tense affirmative copular sentences, as in (8a) and (9a), where the copula cannot be covert, the existential and nonexistential readings are not clearly disambiguated. That is, in a neutral context, the position of the NP determines its construal; however, contextual considerations can override this.

1999), that is, word orders that do not require any contextual license and that can be uttered out of the blue and with neutral intonation. In (9), the postverbal position of the grammatical subject results in its interpretation as a generalized quantifier: the speaker does not have a specific referent—a specific doctor—in mind; rather, any member of the set of doctors could make the sentence true. The two sentences are thus interpreted existentially. In (9b), the negation takes wide scope over this generalized quantifier subject, and the sentence is interpreted as asserting that it is not the case that the city contained any member of the set of doctors (at a specific point in time). Compositional semantics preclude the narrow scope reading of the negation with respect to the generalized quantifier. Meanwhile, in (8), NP-movement of the grammatical subject to the preverbal position encodes its referential reading: here, the speaker has a specific doctor in mind. The negated sentence in (8b) is interpreted nonexistentially, asserting that the referent of the subject cannot be found at the location *x* at a specific point in time; in other words, it asserts the referent's absence from a certain place at a certain time.

This analysis easily accounts for the data with *byt'* presented in section 1. The predicative verb *byt'*—like most Russian verbs—disallows genitive case assignment to its agentive argument (for reasons to be explained in section 3) and requires the assignment of nominative case in all instances (see (4a) and (7)). Conversely, the genitive-marked subjects of the negated sentences in (2a), (4b), (8b), and (9b) indicate that in these sentences *byt'* functions as a copula, with which GenNeg case assignment to the grammatical subject is obligatory, even if this subject is referential, as in (4b) and (8b).⁹ The ungrammaticality of (2b) thus results from the assignment of nominative case—which disallows the copular reading and forces the predicative reading of *byt'*—to an inanimate subject, which cannot be interpreted as an Agent and is therefore incompatible with the lexical semantics of this predicate.¹⁰

⁹ In line with our analysis, a postverbal proper name in a copular construction, as in (i), is incompatible with the referential construal of the grammatical subject: it must be construed as a quantifier rather than an R-expression.

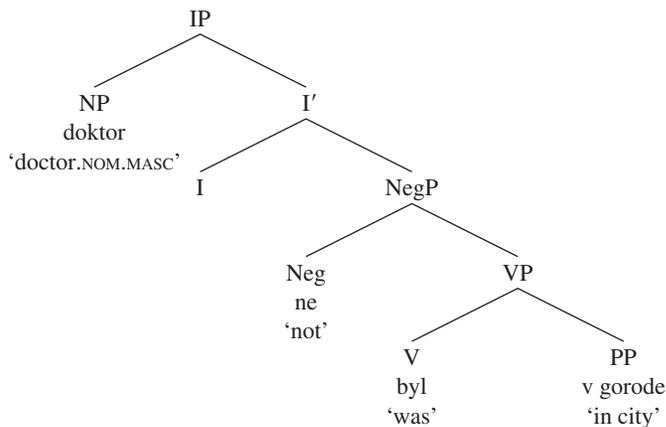
(i) V gorode ne bylo Svety.
in city not was.3SG.NEUT Sveta.GEN.FEM
'There was no one by the name of Sveta in the city.'

¹⁰ Notably, apart from the predicative *byt'* that takes an agentive argument, illustrated in examples (i) and (ii) of footnote 6 and example (ii) of footnote 7, in which agent-oriented modifiers signal that the referent of the subject consciously initiates or does not initiate the action expressed by the predicate, there seems to be another rare instance of predicative *byt'* that roughly corresponds to (*po*)*byvat'* (see (i)). Unlike the agentive predicative *byt'* (and the copular *byt'*), this predicate is incompatible with a reference to a specified moment in time (see (ii)), as it entails motion to and from the given location and can therefore not refer to static presence or absence in a particular location at a specific point in time. (This twofold interpretation is also noted by Padučeva (2004:53).)

3 Syntactic Analysis

Plausibly, the two distinct lexical interpretations of *byl'* have two distinct syntactic realizations. Thus, predicative *byl'*, shown in (13), functions as a standard agentive transitive verb, with an external Agent argument and an internal Location argument. Following Kratzer (1995), we assume that VP-internal positions are reserved for internal arguments: the verb's external Agent argument does not originate predicate-internally in Spec,VP. It may be assumed that this argument is merged in Spec,vP or directly in Spec,IP (Neeleman and Van de Koot 2002, 2010), as in (13). To express its internal Location argument, the verb *byl'* selects for a PP, *v gorode* 'in the city', which is merged VP-internally in the verbal complement position;¹¹ and it selects for an NP, *doktor* 'doctor.NOM.MASC', which is merged directly in Spec,IP and assigned the Agent thematic interpretation. This NP receives structural nominative case via agreement with the finite Infl.

(13) Syntactic representation of (7b)



- (i) a. ?Čemodan (*namerenno) ne byl v багаžнике. =
 suitcase deliberately not was in trunk
 b. ?Čemodan (*namerenno) ne (po)byval v багаžнике.
 suitcase deliberately not was in trunk
 ‘The suitcase was (*deliberately) not located in the trunk at any point within some timeframe.’
- (ii) *Čemodan včera utrom ne byl v багаžнике.
 suitcase yesterday morning not was in trunk

Although an inanimate NP can marginally be used with this predicate, as shown in (i), this NP is obligatorily referential. As a result, an NP that resists this reading (and hence does not move to Spec,IP), such as *kefir* in (2b), is incompatible with this predicate (**Kefir ne byl(po)byval v magazine*). Here, we do not consider examples such as (i) because not all native speakers accept them and those that do require very restricted contexts.

¹¹ Since this selection is thematic, it can be represented via the assignment of a θ -role to the PP argument in the complement-to-V position, which maps onto the Location interpretation at LF; alternatively, a designated syntactic position for the Location argument may be proposed in line with the Uniformity of Theta-Assignment Hypothesis (UTAH; Baker 1988).

In the case of the copular construction, illustrated in (14), the preposition functions as the main predicate of the sentence,¹² selecting for two internal arguments: a Theme NP, which acts as the grammatical subject of the sentence, and a Location NP. The prepositional predicate merges first with the Location argument—an order of merger that seems to be semantically forced—then with the Theme argument *doktora* ‘doctor.GEN.MASC’ in Spec,PP. Both arguments are θ -marked in PP-internal positions, but the Theme NP undergoes case-driven movement to Spec,VP headed by the copula in order to receive genitive case from the complex Neg head under exceptional case-marking (cf. Bailyn 1997).¹³ As sentential negation is quantificational, it plausibly patterns with other Russian quantifiers in being able to assign structural genitive (cf. Bošković’s (2006) genitive of quantification); furthermore, in the absence of agreement of the NP with Infl, this appears to be the only option. Even though Neg, as a proclitic to V, is not typically in the right syntactic configuration to assign case, movement and head adjunction of the copula to Neg, and the resulting formation of a complex Neg head where *ne* acts as a prefix, plausibly makes case assignment by Neg possible. One of the consequences of this incorporation is that Neg and the copula form one prosodic word, where word stress in the past tense form *obligatorily* falls on the prefix;¹⁴ and the present tense form, as in (10b) and (11b), is plausibly derived by the PF rule $\text{Neg}^0 /ne + \text{BE}_{\text{Null}}/ \Rightarrow /net/$. The Theme NP then undergoes further A-movement to Spec,IP not for reasons related to case, but to encode a referential (and hence nonexistential) interpretation.

¹² By analogy with English, Russian locative PPs containing a predicative preposition can be replaced by the deictic adverbial forms *zdes* ‘here’ and *tam* ‘there’ in an appropriate context (i.e., the referent PP must be present in either the linguistic or the extralinguistic context) similarly to the way a VP containing a verbal predicate can be replaced by *so*: *John* [_{VP} *ate a burger*] and *Mary did so too*.

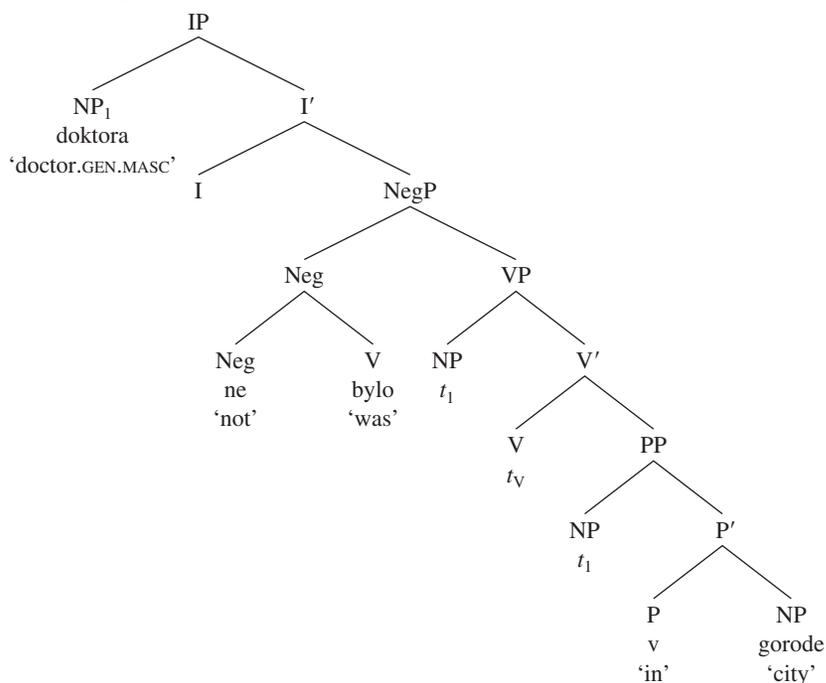
¹³ If external arguments are never merged VP-internally, the proposed analysis predicts that arguments of nominal and adjectival predicates and experiencer arguments of prepositional predicates will not carry GenNeg.

- (i) a. Ivan/*Ivana ne pečalen/student.
Ivan.NOM/GEN.MASC not sad/student
‘Ivan is not sad/a student.’
- b. Ivan/*Ivana ne v otčajanii.
Ivan.NOM/GEN.MASC not in despair
‘Ivan is not in despair.’

¹⁴ While the predicative *byt*’ can carry the main sentential stress in contrastive contexts, the copular *byt*’ cannot.

- (i) Doktor ne BYL v gorode a proxal mimo
doctor.NOM.MASC not was.MASC in city but drove past
goroda.
city
‘The doctor did not visit the city; he drove past it.’
- (ii) *Doktora ne BYLO v gorode . . .
doctor.GEN.MASC not was.NEUT in city

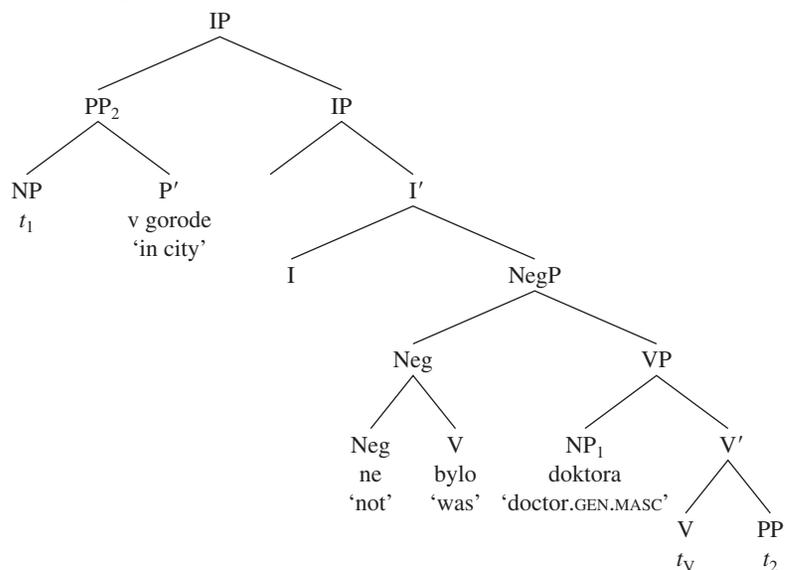
(14) *Syntactic representation of (8b)*



In the existential construction, as in (9b), the Theme remains in Spec,VP in order to be interpreted as quantificational. We propose that the surface word order is derived via topicalization of the remnant PP to an IP-adjoined position (see (15)), which is motivated by a phonological constraint that bans sentences from beginning with sentential negation.¹⁵

¹⁵ The constraint is unlikely to be syntactic or semantic, as the landing site for movement that satisfies this constraint is not limited to a specific syntactic position, and no interpretive effect is achieved by this movement.

(15) *Syntactic representation of (9b)*



4 Conclusion

We argue that GenNeg occurring with the verb *byt'* must be analyzed independently of GenNeg occurring with subjects of intransitive verbs or objects of transitive verbs. Crucially, we distinguish two distinct interpretations of the verb *byt'* with differing syntactic and semantic characteristics.

Predicative *byt'* is a transitive predicate with an external Agent argument and an internal Location argument, whose subject always bears nominative case; GenNeg assignment is not possible with this predicate. Copular *byt'* is a copular verb that occurs with a PP, whose head functions as the main predicate of the sentence. This predicate is also transitive, with two internal arguments: a Theme and a Location. In the context of sentential negation, the assignment of genitive case to the grammatical subject of the copular construction (the Theme NP) is obligatory and—unlike in GV constructions—is not used to encode its nonreferential status. Instead, referentiality is encoded by means of word order. With a referential subject, the sentence is interpreted nonexistentially as asserting the absence of the subject's referent from the specified location. With a nonreferential quantificational subject, the sentence is interpreted existentially as asserting the nonexistence of an individual bearing the property denoted by the subject in the location. Hence, the verb *byt'* does not display the optionality observed in the assignment of GenNeg to GVs. Rather, GenNeg is disallowed in the construction with predicative *byt'* and obligatory in the construction with copular *byt'*.

Syntactically, we propose that predicative *byt'* acts as a standard transitive verb. In the copular *byt'* construction, a referential NP A-moves to Spec,IP; a nonreferential NP remains in Spec,VP and the surface word order is derived through topicalization of the PP constituent.

Our analysis accounts for the apparent inconsistencies of GenNeg assignment with *byt'* and captures the observation that copular *byt'* is signaled by a different morphological form of negation in present tense negated sentences in which GenNeg is assigned.

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