

CHANGES AND PERSISTENCIES IN THE USE OF RUSSIAN MASCULINE GENITIVES IN *-U* New evidence from corpus linguistics

Introduction

The fact that some Russian masculine nouns of the first declension take the ending *-u* in the genitive singular has attracted the attention of many researchers in the field of Russian grammar. Among them there are some of the most famous Slavic linguists like Roman Jakobson (Jakobson 1971, Якобсон 1971), Aleksandr Isačenko (Isačenko 1982), Igor' Mel'čuk (Mel'čuk 1986), Boris Uspenskij (Успенский 1993), or Andrej Zaliznjak (Зализняк 2002), to mention only a few. The main emphasis of the previous research on Russian masculine genitives taking the *-u* ending has been on two issues:

(1) The status of the genitive forms in *-u* in contrast to the forms in *-a*. In other words, should the genitive in *-u* be granted the status of a separate case in the Russian case system (normally called 'partitive case' or 'second genitive', Russian: *количественно-отделительный падеж, второй родительный падеж, родительный партитивный*), or should the respective forms be considered only variants of the genitive "which can (and sometimes must) be used in specified contexts" (Mel'čuk 1986:53)? Since this issue will not be the topic of my paper, I will not expand on the different viewpoints here. Following the arguments put forward by Jakobson (1971), Якобсон (1971), Mel'čuk (1986), Зализняк (2002), and others, I will treat the forms in *-u* as markers of a special partitive case.¹

(2) The diachronic development of the distribution of the genitive in *-u* and the competing forms in *-a* in the history of the Russian language. It has been shown that the genitive ending in *-u*, which originally represented the genitive form of masculine nouns of the *u*-declension, spread to a lot of nouns belonging to the class of masculine *o*-stems (see e.g., Unbegaun 1935:78ff., Шахматов 1957:240ff., Черных 1962:190f.). Since the second half of the 17th century, however, a gradual decline in the use of genitives in *-u* in favour of the *a*-ending can be observed (cf. Sørensen 1958). This decrease continues during the 19th and 20th centuries and does not seem to be completed yet.

My paper will focus on the issue of this decline of genitives in *-u* during the last two centuries. First, I will shortly recapitulate the results of previous studies on changes in the distribution of the *a*- and *u*-ending of the Russian masculine genitive since the 19th century and their possible explanations. Afterwards, I will sketch the outline of my own empirical investigation and present its results.

1. The decline of the Russian genitive in *-u*: results of previous studies

The ongoing decline of the genitive in *-u* in contemporary Russian is noted even by traditional grammars such as the Academy Grammar:

В современном литературном языке формы род. п. на *-у* и *-ю* все больше вытесняются формами на *-а* и *-я*. [...] В целом употребление формы род. п. на *-у* постепенно идет на убыль. Причины этого явления, с одной стороны, в лексико-семантических, фразеологических и стилистических ограничениях ее употребления, с другой стороны, в неограниченности и нормативности форм на *-а* в свободных, а отчасти и во фразеологических соединениях. Основные сферы употребле-

¹ For a different interpretation of the status of the genitive in *-u* in contemporary Russian, compare Isačenko (1982:82). A typological sketch of the distribution of the partitive case in North European languages is offered by Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2001).

ния форм род. п. на *-у* – разг. речь и отражающие ее жанры художественной литературы. (Шведова 1980:487f.).²

Empirical evidence for this claim comes from studies conducted by Russian and Western linguists (Граудина 1966, Панов 1968:176–199; Крысин 1974:165–173, Paus 1994) which focus on the development of the use of partitives in *-u* during the 20th century. The most comprehensive account of changes in the use of Russian partitives in *-u* during the last half of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries is offered by Panov (Панов 1968:176–199). Panov examines the use of genitives in *-u* in three communicative styles: in written technical language, literary language, and colloquial speech. The analysis of a corpus of cookery books and recipes (considered an example of written technical language), drama (as representative of literary texts), and taped interactions between customer and shop attendant in grocery stores as well as written questionnaires (colloquial style) showed a general decline in the number of masculine nouns which admit the specific partitive ending in *-u*. Furthermore, a decline in the overall frequency of the use of partitives in *-u* since the beginning of the 20th century (for the written texts) and in the speech of the younger generation in comparison to the elder generations (for the data drawn from the questionnaires and taped conversations) was observable. Although the overall tendency turned out to be the same for all of the communicative styles considered, the speed with which the changes took place proved to be different. In the analysed cookery books, e.g., the decrease of the use of partitives in *-u* was most prominent after the 1920/30s whereas the plays examined showed a considerable corresponding decline only in the 1950/60s (Панов 1968:186f.).

Another result of the empirical investigation of Panov was that the nature and speed of the decline of the use of partitives in *-u* depended upon several factors:

1) The analysis of the questionnaire data showed that the decrease of the partitive in *-u* was connected with some demographic characteristics of the informants. Age turned out to be the most important constraint on the use of the partitive ending since the informants born after 1930 showed a significant increase in the use of the ending in *-a* in partitive contexts and an overall decrease in the number of words which retained the partitive ending *-u* (Панов 1968:191). Other social factors such as the belonging of the informants to certain educational and/or professional groups as well as their regional background proved to be influential as well. The importance of these social factors for the distribution of the competing endings was corroborated by other studies as well (see e.g. Граудина 1966, Крысин 1974:165–173, Paus 1994).

2) The distribution of the competing inflections varies widely by lexical item. Panov (Панов 1968:181) states a correlation between the overall relative frequency of the lexical item (especially in colloquial speech) and the tendency to preserve the genuine partitive ending *-u*. In other words: The more frequent an individual lexeme is, the higher the rate of the use of the ending in *-u* (see also Paus 1994:261).

3) According to Panov (Панов 1968:192f.) and other researchers (Крысин 1974:170, Paus 1994:250f.), the speed of the substitution of the partitive ending *-u* with the genitive ending *-a* depends on syntactic factors, too: thus, the ending *-u* is nowadays used (aside from clearly idiomatic expressions) in undoubtedly partitive contexts only, with a

2 “In contemporary literary language the forms of the genitive in *-u* and *-ju* are more and more replaced by the forms in *-a* and *-ja*. (...) All in all, the use of the genitive form in *-u* is gradually decreasing. The reasons for this development lie, on the one hand, in the lexico-semantic, phraseological and stylistic constraints on its use, and, on the other side, in the unrestricted and normative character of the forms in *-a* in free and, to some extent, idiomatic expressions, too. The main spheres of use of the genitive forms in *-u* are colloquial speech and genres of fiction which reflect colloquial speech.”

general preference for positions where the noun in the partitive functions as a complement to a transitive verb. However, the ending in *-u* occurs less frequently with nouns following an adverb of quantity or a noun with quantitative meaning. Moreover, the occurrence of modifying adjectives clearly disfavors the use of the partitive in *-u*.

Apart from these semantic and syntactic factors the distribution of the competing inflections may also be influenced by pragmatic constraints. Paus (1994) postulates the pragmatic constraint that the use of the partitive ending *-u* is favored most in what he calls interactive contexts:

Interactive contexts are those in which one person directly addresses an explicit or implicit invitation or request to another person, or responds to an invitation or request. Interactive constructions can be defined syntactically; they always have overt or implied first or second person subjects, and they always have an overt or implied verb of offering or requesting, or a VP which expresses desire or lack of desire. (Paus 1994:253)

In other contexts, e.g. when requests or offers are reported about some third person rather than stated or quoted directly, forms in *-a* are more likely to be used according to Paus's observations.

2. Aims and scope of the present study

The previous studies on the distribution of genitives in *-a* and *-u* in partitive contexts are largely based on data obtained from responses to written questionnaires and, to a lesser extent, from interviews conducted with informants (Граудина 1966, Крысин 1974, Paus 1994, partially also Панов 1968). Thus, they mainly focus on the real or proposed use of nouns in partitive contexts in oral speech. This seems reasonable if we take into account that the use of the partitive in *-u* is nowadays considered stylistically marked and typical for colloquial speech (cf. the quotation from the Academy Grammar). However, as the studies by Panov and Paus show, the use of the partitive forms in *-u* in spontaneous oral communication yields higher rates than in responses to written questionnaires (Панов 1968:198, Paus 1994:251). This leads to the conclusion that in controlled speech situations some speakers tend to avoid the use of partitives in *-u* because they consider it to be a marker of bad style or even substandard speech (dialect, or *просторечие*). Consequently, it seems reasonable to challenge the value of studies which are based on data obtained from questionnaires alone. In contrast to existing studies, my focus will be on the examination of the use of partitives in *-u* in written language. The only reference point for my study will thus be the study of Panov on the use of partitives in *-u* in technical and literary language.

The data of my study were drawn from the Russian National Corpus as the largest electronic corpus of Russian texts currently available on the Internet.³ In late summer 2006, it consisted of more than 120 million word forms.⁴ As far as text types are concerned, the corpus contains samples of fiction (mainly prose, from the masterpieces of Russian literature to contemporary detective novels) as well as samples of non-fictional texts (mainly taken from newspapers and magazines, but also from scientific and technical texts as well as other genre). Thus, it predominantly represents written standard language from the middle of the 18th century onwards. The proportion of texts representing taped oral communication is very small in comparison with written texts, but since the main focus here will be on written language, this poses no problems for the

³ See www.ruscorpora.ru.

⁴ The data collection for this study was finished in August 2006, texts included in the corpus after this date could not be considered any more. Currently, the corpus contains more than 140 million word forms.

current study.⁵ Another advantage of the Russian National Corpus is the fact that all texts are morphologically and semantically annotated. Therefore, it offers tools for searching not only individual word forms or lexemes, but also parts of speech or even semantic and grammatical categories (case, number, gender etc.). This turned out to be very useful for the purpose of this study, since it was possible to search for all nouns occurring in the “second genitive” in the corpus. However, due to the complexity of Russian morphology, the quality of the automatic morphological annotation of the texts is still far from perfect. Unfortunately, the proportion of manually disambiguated texts in the corpus is too small in order to rely on them only. Thus, I had to check all occurrences of supposed second genitives in the data and manually sort out all cases of incorrectly annotated forms⁶ in order to get a full account of all nouns occurring with partitive ending *-u* in the corpus.

The purpose of my paper will be to examine whether and how the decrease of the Russian partitive in *-u* is reflected in data of written language which were obtained from the Russian National Corpus. It thus seeks to answer the following questions:

- (1) Is the number of nouns which can take the partitive ending *-u* decreasing in the corpus data?
- (2) Are the described semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic constraints⁷ on the use of partitives in *-u* also valid for the corpus data?

Consequently, my study aims at reviewing the results of previous studies in the light of new data types and extending the analysis (in comparison with the study of Panov) from the second half of the 20th century until the beginning of the 21st century.

3. Inventory of nouns taking the partitive ending *-u* in the data

According to traditional grammars, the occurrence of a specific partitive ending *-u* in contemporary Russian is restricted to a limited set of nouns:

форма на *-u* и *-ю* образуется только у слов, называющих неодушевленные предметы, не поддающиеся счету: вещества, материалы и тому подобные массы (*бархат, мармелад, чай*) или абстрактные понятия (*покой, треск, шум*). (Шведова 1980:486).⁸

⁵ However, separate corpora of dialect texts and poetry are available, but not included in the main body of the corpus. For more information about the structure of the corpus, see <http://www.ruscorpora.ru/corpora-structure.html>.

⁶ Such incorrectly annotated forms included, e.g., masculine nouns with prepositional case ending in *-u* (*в лесу* ‘in the forest’), the accusative case of feminine nouns (*пару* < *пара* ‘pair’, error caused by the homonymy with partitive *пару* < *пар* ‘steam’), and also the dative case of masculine nouns (*Сталину* ‘Stalin’). The problem for the automatic annotation of partitive forms in Russian results from the fact that the partitive case “represents a non-autonomous case, i.e. it has a (morphological) marker that does coincide with a marker of another case which can appear on the same base (stem)” (Mel’čuk 1986:66). Therefore, partitives in *-u* are always homonymous to the forms of the dative case and sometimes also coincide with the forms of the prepositional case (compare the partitive case in *из лесу* ‘from the forest’ vs. the prepositional case in *в лесу* ‘in the forest’).

⁷ As a matter of fact, the influence of the mentioned sociolinguistic variables on the distribution of the forms in *-u* and *-a* cannot be located in written data extracted from corpora, so they will be outside the scope of the present study.

⁸ “The form in *-u* and *-ju* occurs only with words denoting inanimate objects which cannot be counted: substances, materials and other similar mass nouns (*velvet, jam, tea*) or abstract items (*rest, crack, noise*).”

These inanimate, uncountable masculine nouns can be semantically divided into several groups:⁹

- (1) mass nouns, including designations of solid, liquid, or gaseous substances (*бензин* 'petrol', *воск* 'wax', *газ* 'gas', *керосин* 'kerosene', *кипяток* 'boiling water', *пар* 'steam', *пепел* 'ashes', *порошок* 'powder', *пот* 'sweat', *рассол* 'pickle', *угар* 'carbon monoxide', *яд* 'poison'), building materials (*материал* 'material', *цемент* 'cement'), clothes (*бархат* 'velvet', *ситец* 'chintz', *шелк* 'silk'), food and beverages (*бульон* 'broth', *горох* 'peas', *изюм* 'raisins', *коньяк* 'cognac', *лимонад* 'lemonade', *мармелад* 'jam', *перец* 'pepper', *рис* 'rice', *ром* 'rum'), drugs (*аспирин* 'aspirin', *йод* 'iodine', *мышьяк* 'arsenic'), plants (*лен* 'flax', *мох* 'moss', *хмель* 'hop(s)'), precipitation (*град* 'hail', *снег* 'snow'), rubbish (*навоз* 'dung', *сор* 'litter', *хлам* 'rubbish'), kinds of soil (*ил* 'silt', *песок* 'sand', *торф* 'peat') etc.;
- (2) nouns designating different physical states, such as kinds of noise (*визг* 'squeal', *звон* 'peal', *крик* 'cry', *писк* 'peep', *хохот* 'laughter', *шорох* 'rustle'), smell (*запах* 'smell', *смерд* 'stink'), weather phenomena (*жар* 'heat', *мороз* 'frost', *холод* 'cold'), etc., as well as abstract nouns designating aspects of human activity and mental states (*вздор* 'nonsense', *гонор* 'conceit', *пыл* 'ardour', *срам* 'shame', *ужас* 'horror', *форс* 'swank', *шик* 'smartness');
- (3) some collective nouns, e.g. *народ* 'people', *сброд* 'the rabble'.

Furthermore, (4) some other nouns can take the partitive ending *-u* as well, but only as part of prepositional phrases (with or without quantitative meaning) or other forms of idiomatic expressions, e.g. *с виду* 'in appearance', (*выгнать*) *из дому* '(to turn out of) house and home', *дать/с маху* 'let the chance slip/rashly, off-hand' etc.

The following table shows the number of lexical items which appear with partitive forms in *-u* in the Russian National Corpus. The nouns are grouped according to the four semantic classes mentioned above. In order to cope with the big amount of data and to get a general idea of the diachronic development of the inventory of nouns with genitive forms in *-u* in the corpus, I divided the whole period of time covered from 1801 to 2006 into smaller periods, each of 20 years. Thus, the first column indicates the period of time in which the examined texts were written. For obvious reasons, the subcorpora of contemporary Russian (from 1960 up till now) consist of considerably more texts than the subcorpora of texts from earlier periods.¹⁰ It was thus possible to check all nouns occurring with genitives in *-u* in the corpus only for texts which were written before 1960. For the texts which were created after 1960, I confined myself to checking whether the types of nouns which occur with genitives in *-u* in earlier texts can be found with partitive ending *-u* in the texts of the last three periods as well. Consequently, it

⁹ All examples are taken from my corpus sample.

¹⁰ The number of texts or documents which set up the subcorpora in August 2006, is as follows: 1801–1820: 19 texts; 1821–1840: 130 texts; 1841–1860: 174 texts; 1861–1880: 193 texts; 1881–1900: 305 texts; 1901–1920: 294 texts; 1921–1940: 127 texts; 1941–1960: 567 texts; 1961–1980: 1,038 texts; 1981–2000: 4,785 texts; 2001–2006: 26,997 texts. Despite the considerably lower number of texts which build up the subcorpora for earlier periods, the inventory of covered text genres is generally diverse from the very beginning of the examined period of time. Thus, the earliest subcorpus from the beginning of the 19th century contains not only works of fiction, but also personal letters, excerpts from diaries and memoirs as well as essays and pieces of journals. Due to the huge amount of texts, it is not possible to give an exact overview of the proportions of each text genre in every single subcorpus. Since the present study is concerned with the use of the partitive in written texts only and the proportion of texts representing oral communication is negligible within the whole corpus, the subcorpora provide a basis for comparison, even if I cannot claim statistical significance.

may be the case that the list is not complete for texts written after 1960. For the same reason no token count can be offered. Due to the unequal number of texts and differences in the inventory of text genres which constitute the subcorpora for each period, no statistical significance can be claimed for the results. But nevertheless, the absolute number of types occurring with partitive ending in *-u* gives a rough impression of the changes and/or persistencies with regard to the number of nouns which can take the partitive ending *-u* during the examined period:

	Mass nouns		Collective nouns		Abstract nouns		“Idiomatic nouns”		Σ
	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	
1801–1820	8	36	3	13	6	27	5	22	22
1821–1840	43	59	5	6	14	19	10	13	72
1841–1860	52	55	4	4	27	28	11	11	94
1861–1880	46	54	3	3	24	28	11	13	84
1881–1900	44	55	3	3	20	25	13	16	80
1901–1920	32	55	1	1	15	25	10	17	58
1921–1940	22	47	3	6	11	23	10	21	46
1941–1960	29	50	2	3	10	17	16	28	57
1961–1980	71	56	4	3	31	24	19	15	125
1981–2000	69	53	4	3	34	26	21	16	128
2001–2006	48	51	4	4	27	28	15	15	94

The data offer no empirical evidence for the reduction of the inventory of nouns which admit the partitive ending *-u*. Although there is a gradual but steady decline in the number of nouns with partitive ending *-u* from the second half of the 19th to the end of the first half of the 20th centuries, their number starts to increase again from 1941 onwards, and the texts which were written after 1960 contain the highest number of nouns with genitives ending in *-u*. This tendency has certainly to be connected with the rising number of texts included in the corpus. However, the relatively stable distribution of nouns with partitive ending within the four semantic classes throughout the whole examined time span also suggests that no dramatic changes have occurred since the 19th century.

As far as the representation of individual lexemes in the data is concerned, several groups of nouns can be distinguished. Few nouns are attested to with the specific partitive ending *-u* throughout the whole covered period of time. This group contains the mass nouns *лес* ‘wood’, *табак* ‘tobacco’, *чай* ‘tea’, the collective noun *народ* ‘people’, the abstract nouns *покой* ‘rest’ and *страх* ‘fear’ as well as some concrete and abstract nouns occurring in prepositional or idiomatic expressions with the ending *-u* only (*вид* ‘appearance’, *дом* ‘home’, *нос* ‘nose’, *час* ‘hour’, *шаг* ‘step’). If we include nouns which are missing only in up to two of the examined intervals of time, the list is completed by the following lexemes: *воздух* ‘air’, *дым* ‘smoke’, *жир* ‘fat’, *квас* ‘kvass’, *лук* ‘onion’, *мед* ‘honey’, *песок* ‘sand’, *порох* ‘powder’, *сахар* ‘sugar’, *снег* ‘snow’, *суп* ‘soup’, *шоколад* ‘chocolate’ (mass nouns); *свет* ‘light’, *смех* ‘laughter’, *толк* ‘sense’, *шум* ‘noise’ (abstract nouns); *мах* ‘stroke’, *раз* ‘time’, *умолк* ‘stop’ (“idiomatic nouns”). On the other end of the scale, there are nouns which are present much more irregularly in the data. For the purpose of the present study, nouns which cannot be attested to in the texts written after 1961 (in spite of the bigger amount of texts of this period in the corpus in comparison with earlier periods) are of special interest. These

include *атлас* 'satin', *бальзам* 'balsam', *бурьян* 'weeds', *град* 'hail', *динамит* 'dynamite', *дурман* 'stramonium', *жасмин* 'jasmine', *жемчуг* 'pearl', *коленкор* 'calico', *лом* 'scrap', *нафталин* 'naphthaline', *ревень* 'rhubarb', *рейнвейн* 'Rhine wine', *торф* 'peat', *фосфор* 'phosphorus', *шафран* 'saffron', *шербет* 'sherbet' (mass nouns); *бой* 'fight', *доход* 'income', *дрязг* 'squabbels', *простор* 'space', *смак* 'relish', *трепет* 'trembling', *треск* 'crack', *ужас* 'horror' (abstract nouns). However, this might be due to their general lower frequency in texts (after all, a corpus represents only a – hopefully representative – sample of language use). In order to get a clearer picture of possible instances of persistencies and changes in the use of partitives in -u, we must additionally check the general frequency of the respective lexeme or – even better – the occurrence of competing genitives in -a in partitive contexts for each period. This will be the topic of Section 4.

To sum up the results of the qualitative analysis, we can state that there is no clear empirical evidence in the corpus data for a decrease in the number of nouns which occur with the partitive ending -u. This seemingly contradicts the findings of previous studies on the decline of the partitive in Russian, but this discrepancy can be accounted for if we take into consideration the following facts:

a) A great deal of the texts in the corpus are taken from the belles-lettres, and authors of fictional texts sometimes tend to use the partitive forms in -u in order to mark the speech of some of their characters as colloquial, dialectal, or non-standard;¹¹ furthermore, fictional texts are generally said to retain the partitive forms in -u with higher frequency than other genres of written language (compare the statement taken from the Academy Grammar and the observations of Panov about the slower decline of the partitives in -u in plays in comparison to cookery books);

b) Lexemes which are characterised by an overall higher frequency can be expected to appear more often in a corpus than lexemes with a low frequency. Most of the nouns attested to in my data with the partitive ending represent basic vocabulary. According to the findings of Panov cited above, there is a correlation between the overall relative frequency of a lexeme and the rate of its retention of the genuine partitive ending -u. This might be another factor which contributes to the relatively stable number of lexemes with the partitive ending -u in my data.

4. Development of the quantitative ratio of the forms in -u to the forms in -a

According to traditional grammars, the relationship between the genitive (or partitive) form in -u and the form in -a is characterised by a certain asymmetry in contemporary Russian: This asymmetry results in the fact that the forms in -a can appear even in semantically partitive contexts, i.e. with partitive-quantitative meaning whereas the forms in -u are restricted to partitive contexts only, leaving aside clearly idiomatic expressions. This leads to the fact that the form in -a frequently substitutes the genuine partitive ending -u:

Формы род. п. на -у и -ю в подавляющем большинстве случаев выступают как варианты наряду с формами с флексией -а и -я, которые могут иметь то же количественное значение. (Шведова 1980:486).¹²

¹¹ This refers to the stigmatisation of the forms in -u according to the belief of some native speakers (see Paus 1994:258).

¹² "The genitive forms in -u and -ju occur in the vast majority of cases as variants side by side with the forms with ending -a and -ja which can convey the same quantitative meaning."

Thus, the status of the partitive forms in *-u* in the examined texts and periods of time should best be characterised by analysing their quantitative relationship with the competing forms in *-a*, i.e. by establishing the rate of replacement (or tendency towards replacement) of partitive by genitive forms in *-a* in partitive contexts.

Чай ‘tea’ turns out to be one of the best lexical items for such a comparison since it is one of the most frequent lexemes with partitive ending in my data and occurs in all typical partitive contexts (cf. Isačenko 1982:91f., Mel’čuk 1986:52f.), namely

(a) as a direct object after transitive verbs (*пить* ‘to have a drink’, *выпить* ‘to drink’, *купить* ‘to buy’, *дать* ‘to give’ etc.), especially after transitive verbs with the prefix *на-* (*напиться* ‘to quench one’s thirst’, etc.) and verbs of desire (*хотеть* ‘to want’, *требовать* ‘to demand’, *просить* ‘to ask for’ etc.), in order to express an indefinite amount of the corresponding material:

- (1) Ну, давай *чаю* *выпьём*, я сделаю паузу на пятнадцать минут.
now let’s tea.PART drink.1PL I make.1SG break.ACC.SG for fifteen minute.GEN.PL
(Ю. Башмет, Вокзал мечты, 2003)
‘Now, let’s drink some tea, I will take a break for fifteen minutes.’
- (2) Я *налила* себе *чаю* и подняла глаза на мужа:
I pour.PST.SG.F yourself tea.PART and lift.PST.SG.F eye.ACC.PL at husband.ACC.SG
“Леш, тебе чай или кофе?”
Leša.VOC.SG you.DAT.SG tea.ACC.SG or coffee.ACC.SG
(Е. Орлова, Такой же хороший, как ты, “Даша”, “№10”, 2004)
‘I poured myself some tea and lifted my eyes up to my husband: “Leša, you want tea or coffee?”’
- (3) *Чая* *хочу*, просто умираю!
tea.PART want.1SG simply die.PRS.1SG
(М. Милованов, Кафе “Зоопарк”, 2000)
‘I want some tea, I’m simply dying!’

(b) after nouns, adjectives and adverbs functioning as quantity markers (*стакан* ‘glass’, *чашка* ‘cup’, *порция* ‘portion’ etc.; *много* ‘much’, *немного* ‘some’, *побольше* ‘a little more’ etc.):

- (4) А баба кричала, хвалила, что это сладкое
and woman.NOM.SG shout.PST.SG.F compliment.PST.SG.F that this sweet.SG.N
лучше сахара, один пакетик на четыре *стакана* *чая*.
better sugar.GEN.SG one package.NOM.SG for four glass.GEN.SG tea.PART
(А. Кузнецов, Бабий яр, 1965–1970)
‘And the woman shouted, praised that this sweet was better than sugar, one package for four glasses of tea.’
- (5) Завтра же дайте мочу на анализ, не пейте
tomorrow PARTICLE give.IMP.2PL urine.ACC.SG for analysis.ACC.SG not drink.IMP.2PL
много чая. и ешьте без соли совершенно.
much tea.PART and eat.IMP.2PL without salt.GEN.SG absolutely
(М. Булгаков, Мастер и Маргарита, 1929–1940)
‘Tomorrow immediately provide urine for analysis, do not drink much tea and eat things without any salt at all.’

(c) in negative sentences denoting the absence of quantity or a negated direct object¹³:

- (6) Чаю, возможно, не будет..
 tea.PART maybe not be.FUT.3SG
 (В. Шукшин, Штрихи к портрету, 1973)
 'Maybe there will be no tea.'

(d) in elliptical constructions where the partitive functions as the main constituent of the clause (cf. Jakobson 1971:39, Шведова 1980:488):

- (7) – Может быть, чаю? – озабоченно улыбаясь, спросила Алевтина.
 maybe tea.PART worried smile.ADV PARTICIPLE ask.PST.SG.F Alevtina.NOM
 (А. Волос, Недвижимость, 2000)
 'Maybe some tea? – asked Alevtina while she smiled worriedly.'

Thus, apart from studying the mere quantitative relationship between the competing forms in *-u* and *-a*, this lexeme offers the possibility to examine in which of the syntactic contexts mentioned above the partitive forms in *-u* turn out to be most resistant to replacement by the competing ending *-a*, and in which contexts the ending *-u* decreases first.

Table 2 shows the diachronic development of the quantitative relationship between the forms *чая* 'tea.GENITIVE' and *чаю* 'tea.PARTITIVE' in partitive contexts:

	чаю 'tea.PARTITIVE'		чая 'tea.GENITIVE'	
	abs.	%	abs.	%
1801–1820	5	55	4	44
1821–1840	16	94	1	5
1841–1860	45	91	4	8
1861–1880	59	88	8	11
1881–1900	55	85	9	14
1901–1920	30	81	7	18
1921–1940	12	50	12	50
1941–1960	17	77	5	22
1961–1980	74	76	23	23
1981–2000	164	67	79	32
2001–2006	72	38	117	61

Although the figures reveal a constant decrease of the forms in *-u* in favour of the competing forms in *-a*, the changes up to the year 2000 are not that substantial as one might think. The most considerable changes in the distribution of the two forms in written language seem to have taken place only very recently. Only in the texts written between 2001 and 2006 the rate of the forms in *-a* surpasses the rate of the genuine partitive ending *-u*. If compared with the figures for the years 1981–2000, the quantitative relationship between the two competing forms is almost reverse. Since the composition of these two subcorpora with respect to text genres is more or less the same for both, the

13 Uspenskij (Успенский 1993:130) explains the possibility of using partitive forms in *-u* to denote a negated direct object by the following argument: "The introduction of a negation favours the perception of a mass as something dividable: The mass is divided into its constitutive components, and the negation refers to every single component." (translation mine, B.B.). Compare also Jakobson (1971:41).

figures clearly indicate a tendency towards replacement of the partitive ending by the genitive ending in partitive contexts. However, the radical change in the frequency of partitive forms in the corpus might be influenced by the number of texts which compose the subcorpora, too. The latest subcorpus contains nearly 27,000 texts, while the corpus for 1981–2000 is composed of only roughly 4,800 texts. Consequently, due to the lower number of texts and authors individual preferences for one form or the other might play a more prominent role in the earlier subcorpora.

A closer look at the distribution of the two forms with regard to the syntactic contexts reveals some further interesting details:

	Transitive verb +				Noun denoting quantity +			
	<i>чаю</i> (PART)		<i>чая</i> (GEN)		<i>чаю</i> (PART)		<i>чая</i> (GEN)	
	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%
1801–1820	2	100	0	0	2	33	4	67
1821–1840	8	100	0	0	8	89	1	11
1841–1860	31	100	0	0	12	75	4	25
1861–1880	36	95	2	5	16	73	6	27
1881–1900	34	100	0	0	13	59	9	41
1901–1920	24	86	4	14	6	67	3	23
1921–1940	8	61	5	38	3	23	6	67
1941–1960	14	100	0	0	2	29	5	71
1961–1980	49	91	5	9	19	59	13	41
1981–2000	125	93	10	7	22	26	63	74
2001–2006	58	84	11	16	10	9	96	91

Thus, the genuine partitive ending *-u* is preferred most in contexts where *чай* ‘tea’ functions as a direct object of a transitive verb. The rate of the forms in *-u* is quite stable throughout the whole examined period of time and shows only a slight decrease for texts written after 2000. Replacement by the competing forms in *-a* is not frequent. In contexts where *чай* functions as a complement to a noun with quantitative meaning the development is clearly different. Since the 1960s, a rapid decline in the rate of the forms in *-u* in favour of the competing forms in *-a* is observable. In texts published after 2001, the form in *-a* is preferred in 91% of the respective partitive contexts. In texts written before 1960 the relationship between the two forms varies to a considerable degree. This leads to the assumption that semantic differences between the two forms as already described by Jakobson (1971:62) played a more decisive role in the selection of the ending than in recent times.¹⁴

Occurrence in other typical partitive contexts is too few to make substantial claims about tendencies in the quantitative development of the two forms. Nowadays, forms in *-a* tend to be more preferred when *чай* is used after an adverb denoting an indefinite quantity or in negated existential sentences whereas elliptical contexts clearly favour the use of the genuine partitive ending *-u*:

¹⁴ Jakobson has postulated differences between the two forms belonging to the content plane: In his opinion, *не пил коньяка* ‘he did not drink cognac.GEN’ means ‘he disliked cognac’ (in general), whereas *не пил коньяку* ‘he did not drink cognac.PART’ expresses a simple observation without any evaluation of the observed fact.

	quantity marker				negated sentence				elliptical construction			
	чаю (PART)		чая (GEN)		чаю (PART)		чая (GEN)		чаю (PART)		чая (GEN)	
	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%
1801–1820	--	--	--	--	1	100	--	--	--	--	--	--
1821–1840	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
1841–1860	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	2	100	--	--
1861–1880	1	100	--	--	2	100	--	--	4	100	--	--
1881–1900	3	100	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	100	--	--
1901–1920	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
1921–1940	--	--	1	100	1	100	--	--	--	--	--	--
1941–1960	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	100	--	--
1961–1980	2	100	--	--	2	28	5	71	2	100	--	--
1981–2000	--	--	3	100	2	50	2	50	15	93	1	7
2001–2006	--	--	5	100	--	--	5	100	4	100	--	--

These results strongly corroborate the findings of previous studies since they are in accordance with the proposed syntactic hierarchy that influences the rate of retention of the genuine partitive ending *-u*.

What still remains to be analysed is the effect of the presence of attributive adjectives on the distribution of the competing forms. In general, partitive and/or genitive forms in partitive contexts which are accompanied by an adjective occur quite infrequently in the corpus data. But the distribution of the two competing forms in such contexts reveals a clear tendency in favour for the selection of forms in *-a* when the noun is modified by an adjective:

	+ modifying adjective			
	чаю (PART)		чая (GEN)	
	abs.	%	abs.	%
1801–1820	--	--	1	100
1821–1840	2	100	--	--
1841–1860	2	100	--	--
1861–1880	4	80	1	20
1881–1900	9	90	1	10
1901–1920	2	50	2	50
1921–1940	--	--	5	100

1941–1960	2	40	3	60
1961–1980	4	44	5	56
1981–2000	18	41	26	59
2001–2006	6	15	35	85

However, only very recently the rate of the partitive ending *-u* has fallen substantially behind the rate of the forms in *-a*.

The analysed data offer no proof for the validity of the pragmatic constraints which were described by Paus (1994). The use of the partitive ending *-u* in interactive contexts is observable mainly in elliptical constructions and, to a lesser extent, in constructions where the partitive functions as a complement of a transitive verb. But even in the latter case the rate of the use of partitives in interactive contexts does not exceed 50% of all occurrences of partitives in this specific syntactic context. Furthermore, no clear quantitative development in favour of the preference of the partitive ending in interactive contexts is observable.

Thus, the analysis of the role of the syntactic context for the tendency towards replacement of the genuine partitive forms seems to corroborate the findings of previous studies. However, before drawing our final conclusions, we should examine the quantitative development of the competing endings for more lexical items and check, whether the tendencies described above hold true for them as well.

A representative of the class of collective nouns which admits the partitive ending *-u* and is attested to throughout the whole examined period of time is *народ* ‘people’. The following table shows the development of the quantitative relationship between the two forms in partitive contexts:

	<i>народу</i> (PART)		<i>рода</i> (GEN)	
	abs.	%	abs.	%
1801–1820	2	18	9	82
1821–1840	10	38	16	62
1841–1860	24	55	20	45
1861–1880	33	52	30	48
1881–1900	34	62	21	38
1901–1920	37	56	29	44
1921–1940	56	72	22	28
1941–1960	35	73	13	27
1961–1980	114	82	25	18
1981–2000	216	79	58	21
2001–2006	278	57	207	43

As in the case of *чай* ‘tea’, the data show a considerable decrease in the use of the partitive ending only for texts written between 2001 and 2006. However, even today the use of the partitive ending still prevails over the use of the competing form in *-a* in partitive contexts. In contrast to the diachronic development of the distribution of the two forms of *чай* ‘tea’, the data reveal no steady decline in the use of the forms in *-u* since the beginning of the 19th century, but rather the opposite tendency. The form in *-u* experienced a noticeable increase until the year 1980, which seems to be the turning point for the development of the frequency of the use of the partitive ending *-u*.

With regard to syntactic contexts, the key areas of competition between the two forms are contexts where *народ* 'people' depends on a quantitative expression. Three cases have to be distinguished: (1) the indefinite quantity is expressed by a noun (e.g. *куча* 'heaps', *количество* 'amount', *масса* 'mass', *множество* 'multitude', *половина* 'half', *пропасть* 'a great deal of', *тысяча* 'thousands' etc); (2) the indefinite quantity is marked by an adverb or adjective (e.g. *достаточно* 'enough', *мало* 'few', *много* 'much, plenty of', *полно* 'full of', *порядочно* 'fair amount of', *столько* 'so much' etc.); (3) the quantity is indicated by numeral phrases (e.g. *народу было двадцать пять тысяч* 'there were roughly 25 thousand people').

	noun +				adverb +				numeral +			
	<i>народу</i> (PART)		<i>народа</i> (GEN)		<i>народу</i> (PART)		<i>народа</i> (GEN)		<i>народу</i> (PART)		<i>народа</i> (GEN)	
	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%	abs.	%
1801–1820	1	11	8	89	1	50	1	50	--	--	--	--
1821–1840	6	38	10	62	4	67	2	33	--	--	1	100
1841–1860	7	32	15	68	8	67	4	33	1	50	1	50
1861–1880	6	29	15	71	16	67	8	33	2	29	5	71
1881–1900	4	22	14	88	21	81	5	19	1	100	--	--
1901–1920	4	25	12	75	26	72	10	28	1	25	3	75
1921–1940	6	35	11	65	29	78	8	22	3	75	1	25
1941–1960	1	10	9	90	25	89	3	11	1	100	--	--
1961–1980	12	46	14	54	77	88	11	12	4	100	--	--
1981–2000	22	42	30	58	133	85	23	15	9	90	1	10
2001–2006	33	20	136	80	179	82	40	18	7	78	2	22

There is no clear evidence for an influence of the syntactic context on the replacement of the partitive ending by the ending in *-a*, except for the last examined period. Especially the occurrence of adverbs as quantity markers clearly favours the use of the partitive ending *-u* even today, and there are no signs of ongoing changes for this syntactic context. More indicators of such a change can be found in contexts with nominal quantifiers, at least for the time from 2001 up to today. However, the forms in *-a* have been prevailing over the genuine partitive forms in this context since the 19th century, so this cannot be termed a dramatic change.¹⁵ Partitive forms dependent on numeral phras-

¹⁵ Actually, the individual lexeme denoting the indefinite quantity seems to be a crucial factor for the selection of the ending. Some lexemes like *стечение* 'concourse', *скопление* 'gathering' or *толпа*

es occur too seldom to draw definite conclusions from the data, but there seems to be a slight tendency in favour of the genitive inflection *-a* in these contexts.

There is virtually no competition between the two forms in other syntactic contexts. Thus, in cases where the partitive does not depend on quantitative expressions in the surface structure, but functions as a semantic subject (e.g. *in народу на Чусовой умножилось* ‘the number of the people.PART on Čusovaja-Street increased’) no substitution by the genitive form in *-a* is attested to in the data. Such replacement can be observed in negated existential sentences of the type *нет/не будет/не было народу* ‘there are/will be/were no people.PART’, however, the respective examples occur very seldom in the data.

The only area where a change in the distribution of the two competing forms is observable, at least in recent times, is the combination with modifying adjectives. The occurrence of adjectives with the form *народу* ‘people.PART’ is generally quite infrequent in the data, but is even more marginal in the last examined period between 2001 and 2006 (only 6 examples vs. 35 for *народа* ‘people.GEN’). This parallels the findings for the lexeme *чай* ‘tea’.

5. Conclusions

The corpus data offer no empirical evidence for a reduction of the inventory of nouns which can take the ending *-u* in the genitive (or partitive) singular. The comparatively stable number of nouns which can be attested to in the corpus data with partitive ending *-u* might be due to the more conservative nature of written language as opposed to oral speech. Another possible explanation might be that individual lexemes with higher relative frequency, which are generally said to preserve the ending in *-u* better than lexemes with lesser frequency, are more prominent in corpus data. However, the analysis of the development of the quantitative relationship between the two competing forms, as illustrated for the lexemes *чай* ‘tea’ and *народ* ‘people’, at least partly reflects the often mentioned decline in the use of the partitive ending *-u* in contemporary Russian. The results point to the fact that the use of the genuine partitive ending *-u* is more and more restricted to certain syntactic contexts. This tendency is more conspicuous for *чай* ‘tea’, which is nowadays largely restricted to constructions where the noun functions as a direct object of a transitive verb and to elliptical constructions. Since the inventory of verbs which can take partitives as direct objects is quite limited (in the case of *чай* ‘tea’, these are mainly verbs of drinking and verbs of desire and offering), this leads to a more and more idiomatic nature of the use of partitives in *-u*. This tendency is corroborated by the fact that real idiomatical expressions form the second domain of the use of the partitive ending *-u* in contemporary Russian. However, the results for *народ* ‘people’ show that the speed of this development is also highly dependent on the individual lexeme. Research on more lexemes is needed in order to get a fuller account of the actual degree of idiomaticisation of the partitive forms in *-u* in contemporary Russian.

‘crowd’ foster the use of *народа* ‘people.GEN’, whereas nouns like *тьма* ‘thousands, a host’ or *пронать* ‘a great deal of, a world of’ occur more often with *народу* ‘people.PART’.

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