THE PRAGMATIC MOTIVATION OF ANTIPASSIVE IN RUSSIAN

1. Introduction: the phenomenon of antipassive in Russian

The notorious grammatical complexity of the so-called Russian vozvratnye (literally, ‘reflexive’) verbs, i.e. the verbs with the postverbal -sja affix, chiefly stems from the heterogeneity of various functions of sja, which range from purely grammatical to exclusively lexical ones. In particular, with the majority of imperfective transitive verbs sja is used for the formation of passive form, more or less undoubtedly showing the properties of an inflectional affix. Other uses of sja seem to be nearer to the derivational pole of the corresponding continuum and cover a number of valency-affecting functions that are cross-linguistically associated with the phenomenon of the middle voice, such as reflexive proper, decausative, reciprocal etc. In some cases these valency-affecting operations are accompanied by idiosyncratic effects in the lexical semantics. Moreover, there are sja-verbs that are related to their derivational bases in a rather idiosyncratic, non-predictable way or do not have any non-sja correspondence. Besides, sja-affixation may serve several discrepant functions with one and the same verb
lexeme. As can been seen from this brief account, the cover term *vozvratnye* ('reflexive') is a fairly conventional and somewhat misleading one. I thus resort to a non-interpretative terminological alternative, viz., ‘sja-verbs’.

The various functions of Russian *sja*-verbs have been thoroughly described in a number of studies (Gerritsen 1990; Janko-Trinickaja 1962). Among traditionally distinguished groups of *sja*-verbs there is one that is most relevant for the discussion here, namely, those verbs that are often referred to as ‘possessive reflexive *sja*-verbs’ (Gerritsen 1990: 80–85), ‘*sja*-verbs of (semantically) incorporated (inanimate) object’ (Kretov 1978) or ‘partitive object reflexives’ (Geniušienė 1987). This type of *sja* use is exemplified by (1), if compared to its transitive counterpart (2):

(1)  
Ja  zažmuril-sja. zažmuril-sja must be boldfaced  
I  screwed.up-SJA  
‘I screwed up my eyes.’ = (2)  

(2)  
Ja  zažmuril  glaza. zažmuril must be boldfaced  
I  screwed.up  eyes.ACC

In other words, each verb of this kind presupposes a particular type of semantically incorporated object that could be recovered out of context. This sentence must be deleted.

*Sja*-verbs of this type have a semantically incorporated participant (e.g. ‘eyes’ in 1), namely the participant that could be coded in the position of the direct object of the correlative transitive non-*sja* verb, as in (2). It is absolutely crucial that the meaning of this incorporated object is an inherent part of the semantics of *sja*-verbs of this type, e.g. one may find ‘to screw up one’s eyes’ as the lexicographic meaning of the verb *zažmurit’sja*. A rather elaborate classification of such *sja*-verbs has been proposed by Kretov (1978). His main emphasis was on the types of objects that are incorporated into semantics of these verbs. Kretov distinguishes the four following types of objects (and corresponding verbs): i) ‘body parts’ (see example 1; this subgroup is argued to be central among ‘*sja*-verbs of incorporated object’), ii) ‘spiritual parts’ (e.g. *sosredotočit’sja* ‘to concentrate one’s attention’ derived from *sosredotočit’ ‘to concentrate’), iii) ‘objects of personal use’ (several further subtypes are distinguished, such as clothes, money, vehicles etc., cf. *zastegnut’sja* ‘to button one’s clothes up’ from *zastegnut’ ‘to button up’ or *zapravit’sja* ‘to refuel one’s vehicle’ from *zapravit’ ‘to refuel’) and iv) ‘works, one’s creation’ (cf. *pečatat’sja* ‘to have one’s work published’ from *pečatat’ ‘to print, to publish’).
All in all, verbs of the zažmurit’sja type may be viewed as a sui generis
extension of the proper reflexive model; the cognitive basis of this type of
derivation is a well-known process of metonymic identification of the possessor
with its (inalienable) possessive that is further widened by the «metaphoric
extension of inalienability to nouns whose referents are normally presumed to be
alienable» (Levine 1980: 18).

As a valency-affecting operation, derivation of sja-verbs of incorporated
object may be viewed as an instance of antipassivisation, if antipassive is broadly
understood as an intransitivising mechanism which either suppresses or demotes
the O (transitive object) preserving the A (transitive subject) (Polinskaja 1986).
However, it must be kept in mind that each sja-verb of this type presupposes
a particular kind of semantically incorporated object that could be recovered out
of context. Besides, this model shows very restricted applicability: even with
transitive verbs whose usual direct objects are body-parts, sja-derivation of the
type discussed is often impossible, cf. transitive vsklokočit’ ‘to tousle’ (mostly
one’s hair) which does not form sja-derivative *vsklokočit’sja in the intended
meaning ‘to tousle one’s hair’. In other words, if the process at issue is subsumed
under the rubric of antipassivisation, then an appropriate label for the verbs of
this kind would be ‘lexical antipassives’, since this type of sja-derivation does
indeed suppress the transitive object of the base verb, but both the very
possibility of derivation and semantic interpretation of the sja-derivative are
idiosyncratically associated with individual verb lexemes.

There is, however, another productive type of sja use that curiously has not
yet received any attention in the literature, cf. examples (3)–(4). In terms of their
valency-affecting behaviour, these verbs are reminiscent of lexical antipassives
discussed above:

(3) Vy tam sami zavern-ete-s’? zavern-ete-s’ must be
You there yourself wrap-2Pl-SJA
‘Will you wrap (your purchase, package) yourself?’

(4) Esli xoč-eš’ tknut’-sja, to tdni-s’
If want-2Sg stick.in-SJA, then stick.in-SJA
over there
‘If you want to plug in (your mobile phone charger), plug (it) in there’.

The example in (4) must look in the following way:

(4) Esli xoč-eš’ tknut’-sja, to tdni-s’
If want-2Sg stick in-SJA, then stick in-SJA von tuda.
over there
‘If you want to plug in (your mobile phone charger), plug (it) in there’.

Let’s discuss the utterance in (3) in some detail. The dialog took place in a grocery store; the saleswoman addresses a customer who has just bought something that needs wrapping. The question is whether or not the customer would wrap this package himself. However, instead of using a transitive construction with the verb zavernut’ ‘to wrap’, the saleswoman chose to derive a sja-counterpart of zavernut’ thus eliminating the direct object slot (sja-verbs are always intransitive) or, more precisely, just object slot, although the proposition coded in (3) remains semantically transitive. In other words, (3) contains an implicit participant ‘purchase, package, parcel’ that is not and could not be syntactically expressed. Thus, derivation of sja-verb in (3) is a case of an intransitivising, object-suppressing, agent-preserving operation, i.e. it also meets the definition of antipassive.

This type of sja use may be tentatively labelled as ‘grammatical antipassive sja-verbs’ (henceforth, ‘ANTI’, for brevity). Elsewhere, I have discussed semantic and syntactic properties of this type of sja use (Say, in print). Due to space limitations I can only briefly summarize the findings arrived at in that study. i) ANTI constructions are equivalent to their transitive counterparts in terms of propositional semantics, so that sja derivation of this kind merely signals a shift in the speaker’s perspective on the situation. ii) The implicit object in ANTI is not an inherent part of the lexical semantics of the verb as is the case of lexical antipassives; rather, it is a semantic variable that is to be identified by the hearer based on the context. iii) Formation of ANTI, unlike that of lexical antipassives, generally lacks unmotivated idiosyncratic lexical restrictions. iv) By and large, ANTI shows many of the properties of inflection, as opposed to a more or less undoubtedly derivational profile of lexical antipassives.

The phenomenon of ANTI will be in the focus of the remaining parts of the present article. In particular, I will try to speculate on the problem that has remained almost untackled in my study of the grammatical properties of these verbs (Say, in print), that is, to unearth those pragmatic factors that force speakers to use ANTI construction instead of its more usual and roughly synonymous transitive counterpart.

The remainder of this paper will be organized as follows. Section 2 is primarily devoted to sociolinguistic matters, namely, to the discussion of ANTI’s frequency and status in various registers of speech. In section 3, I will briefly compare ANTI with the unspecified object construction(s), showing
that in Russian the two types of constructions are kept distinct, unlike in many other languages. Section 4, which is in a certain way central for the questions raised in this study, contains an analysis of the general pragmatic function of ANTI as opposed to both proper transitive clauses and elliptical constructions. In section 5, a number of consequences of the general functional characteristic of ANTI are briefly discussed. Basic conclusions of the paper are recapitulated in Section 6.

2. Sociolinguistic aspects of ANTI

The study is based on the analysis of a minor corpus of utterances with ANTI that were mostly collected in informal conversations, more rarely at academic events, some examples were registered in mass media, and a few were encountered in written texts (see also below). It is difficult to measure objectively the productiveness of this pattern. However, it may be prematurely mentioned that it is a relatively frequent one; on average, I register one utterance of this type per day.

It must be acknowledged from the very beginning that the phenomenon of ANTI has a somewhat substandard / colloquial status, it is basically typical of informal registers of speech; these forms are not registered in the dictionaries and they are not encountered in existing grammatical descriptions of the Russian sja-verbs. With this in mind, and taking into account the implicitness of the construction, I tried to obtain, whenever possible, speaker’s metalinguistic and/or introspective comments on utterances with ANTI registered in his or her speech.

Based on the obtained speakers’ introspective comments, one can draw a generalisation that is absolutely crucial for further discussion: *utterances with ANTI are not errors*, i.e. they (at least their vast majority) were not produced due to an operational malfunction; conversely, they corresponded to the speaker’s intention, even when evaluated as substandard by their “authors”. Not in a single case did the speaker correct him- or herself spontaneously, without external request to be more explicit. In other words, whatever be its degree of standardness, ANTI deserves examining as a productive and regular inherent phenomenon in the (morpho-)syntax of Russian.

Before leaving the topic of sociolinguistic status of ANTI, two more short comments are in order that concern possible discourse side-effects of ANTI.

First, in those fairly rare cases when it is encountered in written speech, ANTI is sometimes used to impart somewhat colloquial flavour to the text, as in
the following example from Pasternak’s early prose (“Tri glavy iz povesti”, 1922):

‘Welcome. Get.undressed. Take.off-SJA’. (= ‘Take off you overcoat’).

It might be noticed that the ANTI form snimajtes’ is used in the direct speech, not in the author’s text. Besides, and it is not coincidental, this utterance is generally imitating (somewhat jokily) the informal register, which is reflected in both its laconic syntax and the spelling of the first word which is spelled požalite, instead of orthographic požalujte, in accordance with the truncated pronunciation of this word in colloquial speech.

Second, it must be acknowledged that sometimes the use of ANTI has a comic effect, intended or otherwise. This effect is usually based on the homonymy with other possible readings of a particular sja-verb. The following are among the most doubtless cases, to give just a couple of examples:

(6) Oj, mne nikak ne povesit’-sja!
‘Oh, I can’t hang-SJA’. (= ‘can’t hang my coat on the coat rack’). add ‘I’ to the translation in the brackets so that it be ‘I can’t hang…’

(7) Nu čto, pošli sdavat’-sja!
‘Well, let’s go to pass-SJA’. (= ‘pass the exam’).

The comic effect of (6) is due to the possibility of alternative reading ‘Oh, I can’t hang myself’; in (7) the verb used (sdavat’-sja) could be understood in both the meaning provided in the gloss and as ‘to surrender, to give ourselves up’.

3. ANTI and ‘unspecified object’ constructions

For anyone who has some acquaintance with the cross-language behaviour of antipassives, it is quite natural to expect that this category would appear, in the first place, in the constructions with ‘unspecified’ or ‘generic’ object, since this is probably the most common use of the antipassive in the languages of the world (Cooreman 1994: 52). This is, however, not the case of the Russian ANTI. This short section is actually designed as a sort of precautionary measure; in other words, here I will show in what typologically expected functions the
Russian ANTI is not used (and how these functions are implemented in Russian) in order to then proceed to the following section where it will be shown what are the functions in which ANTI is indeed used.

The last sentence must look as follows: This short section is actually designed as a sort of precautionary measure; in other words, here I will discuss some typologically expected functions in which the Russian ANTI is not used (and how these functions are implemented in Russian) in order to then proceed to the following section where it will be shown what are the functions in which ANTI is used. Note that contrastively focused ‘is not used’ and ‘is used’ must be italicized.

There are (at least) two types of constructions in Russian that convey the meaning of generic unspecified object. The first and more specialized one is one more type of *sja* use, which expresses the idea that “[t]he action named by the verb is in some sense characteristic of the subject” (Levin 1993: 39, on a very similar phenomenon in English). This type of *sja*-verbs is usually referred to as ‘absolutive *sja*-verbs’; the usual example of an absolutive *sja*-verb is *kusat’sja*, see (9) as opposed to the transitive use of the base verb *kusat’* (10):

(8) sobaka  *kusaeť-sja*  *kusaeť-sja* must be boldfaced
dog  bites-SJA
‘The dog bites (is a biter)’

(9) sobaka  *kusaeť*  *mal’čik-a*  *kusaeť* must be boldfaced
dog  bites  boy-ACC
‘The dog bites a/the boy.’

There are two properties of absolutive *sja*-verbs that must be emphasized. First, and most importantly, these verbs differ significantly from their bases in terms of the so-called ‘lexical aspect’; in particular, the basic use of *kusat’sja* is not to denote a particular event of biting which is an ‘achievement’ in Vendler’s terms, but rather a ‘state’ of being a biter, i.e. a characteristic property of the subject. This means that *kusat’* and *kusat’sja* convey discrepant semantic predicates and that derivation of absolutive *sja*-verbs appears to be an ‘event-changing’ operation (as opposed to ‘function-changing’, see Haspelmath 2002:218). Second, the process of derivation of absolutive *sja*-verbs is unproductive, it is limited to a very small group of verbs that mostly have the meaning of aggressive physical behaviour, such as *bodat’sja* ‘to butt’, *ljagat’sja* ‘to kick (about a horse)’ etc. All in all, absolutive *sja*-verbs are clearly distinct from ANTI (‘grammatical antipassive *sja*-verbs’) in Russian, see also Table 1.
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Absolutive sja-verbs</th>
<th>Grammatical antipassive (ANTI)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexically restricted (a handful of verbs)</td>
<td>Productive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always imperfective</td>
<td>Either perfective or imperfective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristic property, not event</td>
<td>Event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified object</td>
<td>Implied object</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second and more common way to express the idea of unspecified object in Russian is to use lexically transitive verbs without any direct object, i.e. absolutely. Typical examples of such constructions could be found in (10) and (11):

(10)  – Čto delaet Petja? – On čitaet $\emptyset_{3c}$.
     – What is doing P.? – He is reading $\emptyset_{3c}$.
     – ‘What is Petja doing?’ – ‘He is reading’.

(11)  Petja čitaet $\emptyset_{3x}$ očen’ medlenno.
     Petja reads $\emptyset_{3x}$ very slowly
     ‘Petja reads very slowly.’ (= ‘Petja is not able to read fast’).

In both (10) and (11) čitaet must be boldfaced. Petja in the gloss of (11) must be P.

In order to represent the semantics of these constructions somewhat formulaically, I have supplemented them with the symbol of zero, which is to be understood as an existential zero or, more precisely, as ‘something’ (which is not identified in any way) in (10) and as ‘anything’ in (11) (for the discussion of various interpretations of zeros in absolutive constructions and their symbolic representation see Kozinsky et al. 1988: 668–673). This type of use is, however, possible with only a small part of transitive verbs, estimated as 8% by Ronai (1986: 182). Most of these transitive/intransitive (i.e., labile) verbs are verbs that denote ‘accomplishments’ when used transitively (e.g. ‘read the book’), that is, telicity in transitive uses of these verbs is created compositionally, due to the fact that their direct objects are their incremental themes (gradual patients). When used intransitively, these verbs are atelic, i.e. they denote activities or, more rarely, states.

Absolutive constructions must be kept distinct from those superficially intransitive constructions in which the position of the direct object of the verb is not occupied but the reference of the semantic object can be established from the
context. Constructions of this latter type are ‘elliptical’ in a broad sense of the word; these ‘elliptical’ usages are less lexically restricted than the absolutive uses of lexically transitive verbs discussed above. In order to highlight the difference between the two types of constructions, let’s take a look at an elliptical construction (12) as compared to an absolutive construction with a cognate verb (13):

(12)  *Ty uže s"je-l*  \( \emptyset_{\text{ref}}? \)
     You already eat(perf.)-PAST
     ‘Have you eaten (it) up?’

(13)  *Ty uže e-l*  \( \emptyset_{\text{rel}}? \)
     You already eat(imperf.)-PAST
     ‘Have you already eaten?’

The use of the construction in (12) is only made possible contextually. It has a semantic object that is not overtly expressed but whose reference must be available to the hearer; in other words, the inference the hearer is licensed to make is that the speaker asks whether ‘it’ exists or has been already eaten up, where ‘it’ is some referent whose identity is contextually known to both interlocutors (hence, the zero in the direct object position has ‘ref’ < ‘referential’ in subscript). Conversely, (13) is an instance of the absolutive construction; here, the object-position is eliminated from the semantic argument structure. No specific object is implied, nor any effect on that object. The crucial distinction between constructions with \( \emptyset_{\text{rel}} \) and \( \emptyset_{\text{ref}} \) is necessary for the discussion of the functions of ANTI in the following section. Word order in the string of words highlighted must be has already been eaten up

4. ANTI as a compromise

As follows from the discussion above, ANTI is used to code semantically transitive propositions without overt mentioning of the object. In other words, ANTI constructions are roughly synonymous to transitive constructions in terms of propositional semantics. Besides, as was mentioned in Section 3, most of the Russian transitive verbs could be used with \( \emptyset_{\text{ref}} \), that is, their direct object could be elliptically dropped in some contexts provided its reference is contextually / deictically established. It must be stated right away that the use of \( \emptyset_{\text{ref}} \) pattern is
much less restricted than that of ANTI, as can be shown by the following example:

(14) *Ja ne xotel ee, obižat', no, kažetsja, vse-taki
    obidel ∅ / *obidel-sja.
    I not wanted her offend, but, it.seems, nevertheless
    offended ∅ / *offended-SJA
    ‘I did not want to offend her, but it seems that I did, nevertheless.’

Example (14) must look as follows:

(14) *Ja ne xotel ee, obižat', no, kažetsja, vse-taki
    I not wanted her offend, but, it.seems, nevertheless
    obidel ∅ / *obidel-sja.
    offended ∅ / *offended-SJA
    ‘I did not want to offend her, but it seems that I did, nevertheless.’

While zero anaphora is perfectly grammatical in this sentence, ANTI seems to be impossible here, firstly because of the type of the object to be elided, that is, animate ‘her’ (see also Section 6), and secondly, because of the availability of a more natural reading of the sja-verb obidet’sja, that is, ‘take offence’, which would yield undesirable ambiguity of the sja-construction in this case.

It must be thus understood that there are many cases when ∅ref construction seems to be not replaceable by ANTI; however, the converse of the last statement is not true, that is, in most cases when ANTI is registered, it is not unimaginable that the ∅ref construction were used instead. Taking into account the explicit “full” transitive construction, we now see that whenever ANTI is actually used, it wins, so to speak, in a tough competition with at least two alternatives. This may be illustrated by example (3) repeated here as (15) – an instance of actual use of ANTI registered in speech – that is contrasted with its two potential paraphrases, more explicit (16) and elliptical (17):

(15) Vy tam sami zaavern-ete-s’?
    You there yourself wrap-2Pl-SJA
    ‘Will you wrap (your purchase, package) yourself?’ = (17)

(16) Vy tam sami zaavern-ete svoju pokupku1?
    You there yourself wrap-2Pl-SJA own purchase

1 I deliberately chose svoju pokupku ‘(your) own purchase’ as an NP that could convey the intended meaning. Of course, the implicit object of (15) could be equally well referred to otherwise.
'Will you wrap your purchase yourself?'

(17)  
\[Vy \text{ tam sami } zavern-ete \emptyset_{ref}.\]  

‘Will you wrap (it) yourself?’ (preferably accompanied by a deictic gesture)

Thus the question arises what are those pragmatic factors that force speakers to choose ANTI, as represented in (15), as opposed to its potential paraphrases. The answer proposed here rests on the belief that both regular transitive construction and zero argument construction have discourse implications that are not always desirable for the speaker. In this sense ANTI constructions appear to be a kind of compromise that allows the speaker to avoid those unnecessary pragmatic side-effects. Let’s discuss the alternatives of ANTI in order.

In the transitive construction, which is in a certain way the default use of lexically transitive verbs, an explicit NP is used in a syntactically prominent position of the direct object, e.g. svoju pokupku in (16). The usual inference that may be made from the use of a transitive construction is that “the change / preservation of the state of the DO [direct object – S.S.] referent is pragmatically relevant” (Kozinsky et al. 1988: 675). Antipassivisation, i.e. demotion of the Undergoer from the position of the direct object, is a cross-linguistically widespread device that “highlights the activity, and thereby takes some weight off its effect upon the object” (Catford 1976: 169). This is exactly the function that is found with the Russian ANTI.

Another cross-linguistically valid generalization with respect to the use of transitive constructions is that “the majority of languages conform to a principle of discourse organisation according to which the newly introduced referent is preferably put in DO position” (Kozinsky et al. 1988: 273 and further reference to inter alia Givón 1979). This is also true for Russian. For instance, if the referent of ’purchase, parcel’ from (15)–(17) had high persistence in Givón’s terms (e.g. 1990: 570 and further reference therein), i.e. were talked about in further discourse, the speaker would have more or less inevitably used the transitive construction (16); in other words, overt mentioning of a new referent is almost indispensable for further anaphora. The actual context in which ANTI (15) was registered is quite different: the speaker, i.e. the saleswoman, was not actually talking about the change of state of the Undergoer ’purchase’, and did not need to introduce this new referent into the sphere of discourse, but rather, was trying to focus attention on the participant who brings about the presumptive event, cf. the use of sami ‘(your)self’.\(^2\)

\(^2\) It is a well established cross-linguistic generalization that antipassive is often used in order to put the Agent in the focus of the utterance, cf. discussion in Cooreman (1994: 74ff.).
The following text must be added after the reference to Givón 1979, after a semicolon but inside the brackets: this currently widely discussed hypothesis is known as Preferred Argument Structure, see e.g. DuBois et al. 2003.

As for another alternative to ANTI, i.e. zero-anaphora, its use is mainly restricted to those cases when the elided participant is thematic and its reference is firmly established in the previous discourse, e.g. by way of overt mentioning, cf. “[u]ninterrupted theme [in Russian – S.S.] is zero. (...) The theme is overtly marked on its first occurrence. Thereafter it is marked with anaphoric zeroes” (Nichols 1985: 173). A typical example of $\emptyset_{\text{ref}}$ in the direct object position is (18):

(18)  
\[ \text{Ja obožaju gamburgery: } \text{bereš'} \emptyset_{\text{ref}} \text{ v ruki, razvoračivaš'} \emptyset_{\text{ref}} \text{ on ešće teplyj etc.} \]
  
  ‘I adore hamburgers: you.take $\emptyset_{\text{ref}}$ in (your) hands, unwrap $\emptyset_{\text{ref}}$, it (is) still warm...’

In this utterance, ‘hamburgers’ are the theme; the reference of the zero argument of the two transitive verbs in boldface is easily recovered from syntactic context, although the usual, non-zero, anaphora could have been used here as well.

We are now in a position to contrast pragmatic characteristics of the three competing constructions at issue, schematically represented in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overt DO</th>
<th>ANTI</th>
<th>$\emptyset$-anaphora</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>recoverability of O</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relevance of the change of the state of O</td>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>referential persistence of O</td>
<td>Possible</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>previous mentioning of O</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>Very unlikely</td>
<td>Possible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be thus seen that the two ‘implicit’ constructions, viz. ANTI and the construction with $\emptyset_{\text{ref}}$ object, are different from the ordinary transitive clauses in that they need a contextually recoverable referent (line 1) and in that they do not have a suprapositional implication that the change / preservation of the state of object (O) is pragmatically relevant (line 2). ANTI is, on the other hand, different from constructions with $\emptyset_{\text{ref}}$ in that the reference of its implicit object is usually not established based on the previous mentioning. Rather, non-overtness of the object in ANTI is based on its obviousness and irrelevance for both interlocutors (line 4; this point will be discussed in more detail below). Finally, ANTI is different from both transitive and ‘elliptical’ constructions in that the
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The implicit object of ANTI is very unlikely to appear further in the discourse, that is, it shows very low referential persistence (line 3). In other words, Russian ANTI generally conforms to the schematic representation of relative topicality of Agent and Patient that was established by Givón for more usual antipassives in ergative languages, where these constructions are normally contrasted with default ergative (transitive) constructions and potentially also with passives, see Table 3 (adopted from Givón 1984: 164):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clause type</th>
<th>relative topicality of Agent (AGT) and Patient (PAT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ergative</td>
<td>AGT &gt; PAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antipassive</td>
<td>AGT &gt;&gt; PAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>PAT &gt;&gt; AGT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is thus maintained that the raison d’être of Russian ANTI is 1) a striving on the speaker’s part to avoid unnecessary foregrounding of the (pragmatically irrelevant) Undergoer, i.e. not to put it into syntactically prominent position of the direct object and 2) non-topical status of the Undergoer and its inaccessibility for the syntactic recovery (anaphoric reference tracking), hence undesirability of $\emptyset_{\text{ref}}$.

Now that the general function of ANTI has been proposed it is germane to provide a number of examples in support of the above hypothesis. It is important that the non-overtness of the object in ANTI stems in its pragmatic irrelevance which is not to be confused with its definiteness/referentiality status. In order to show that I will illustrate the use of ANTI with the implied objects occupying various positions on the referentiality/definiteness scale, starting with the typologically most expected contexts with non-referential objects, as in (19) and possibly (20):

Add a comma after the words in blue above.

The text to be added as a footnote: From this point on, the Russian examples are not provided with proper morpheme-by-morpheme or word-by-word glosses, since morphosyntactic details are not relevant for the discussion. The -$s$ja affix is, however, glossed right in the translation and the corresponding verbs are boldfaced.

\[(19)\quad \text{Nel’zja makat’-sja!}\]

Add a footnote here. It might be recalled that in many languages non-referential objects are downgraded by means of noun incorporation.
‘It is not allowed to dip-SJA.’ {The speaker explains to his interlocutor that it is not hygienic to dip the bread you bite into the honey pot.}

(20) *Potom ja budu stirat’-sja.*
    ‘Then I will wash/launder-SJA’. {The interlocutors are planning the order in which they will use the washing machine that they share; the actual meaning is rather ‘I will do my washing later’}. It is curious, however, that contexts with non-referential objects constitute only a marginal minority of ANTI uses. More often, the implicit object in ANTI is referential, either indefinite as in e.g. (21)–(22) or definite as in e.g. (23)–(25) or (3)=(15) above:

(21) *To est’ vse ravno vecerom nužno otsčelknut’-sja, daže esli ty ostaeš’ sja na noč’.*
    ‘That is, you have to otsčelknut’-SJA, even if you stay for the whole night’. {The speaker explains how a system that automatically controls the employees’ attendance to office is working. In the previous discourse the speaker introduces a novel transitive verb otsčelknut’ (=‘click out’) for a manipulation that you have to perform on your magnetic card when you enter/leave your office. The implicit object is ‘magnetic card’}. Replace the dot with a question mark after the words in blue above.

(22) *Vy čto, obmenjat’-sja?*
You what, to.change-SJA?
≈ ‘Is it to change-SJA that you have come?’ (= ‘to change money’) {The speaker is a security guard in a currency exchange office. The person entering the office is naturally expected to be willing to exchange money}.

(23) *Ty uže zavel-sja?*
    ‘Have you already started-SJA.’ (= ‘started the engine’) {Asked in a car.}

Replace the dot with a question mark after the words in blue above.

(24) *Ne dav-i-s’, otkroj novaju.*
    ‘Don’t squeeze-SJA, open (a) new (one)’. {The addressee is trying to squeeze the last drops of sour cream from an almost empty pack}.

(25) *Ty čto, xočeš’ vyrovnjat’-sja?*
    ‘Are you going to align-SJA?’ (= ‘align the car’) {A passenger asks if the driver is going to park the car parallel to the edge of the road}.
One more shade of pragmatic irrelevance of the implicit object in ANTI is that there are many ANTI utterances that seem to be perfectly adequate and understandable in their contexts but in which, nevertheless, the hearer is not licensed to make any meaningful inference with respect to the object implied (except for the rather tautological fact that it was the object which the Agent intended to / had to / was going to expose to the action denoted by the base transitive verb), as in (26):

(26)  Sejčas prodam-sja i pođu skažu devočkam, čtoby vam kuročki prinesli.
     ‘Now I will sell-SJA and (then) will go to the girls to tell them to bring you a chicken’.

The utterance was pronounced by a food-seller who provides passengers of long-distance trains with the food during the journey. The meaning of prodamsja can be paraphrased as ‘sell everything I have / want to sell’; the hearers are not supposed to know what exactly is going to be sold, nor to be interested in that. Other examples of such hard-to-paraphrase ANTIs could be found in (27)–(28):

(27)  Nu čto, vygruži-s’ i pojdem.
     ‘Well, unload-SJA and let’s go.’ {The hearer has brought to the hospital something that is necessary for the speaker; they plan to take a walk; before that, the hearer has to unload the bag}.

(28)  Zdravstvujte, razdevajtes’, dostavajte-s’ raskладyvajte-s’.
     ‘Hello, undress, take out-SJA (= ‘what you have brought’), spread-SJA (= ‘those things’) out’.

5. Typical contexts for ANTI

Now that the basic pragmatic prerequisites of the usage of ANTI in Russian have been established, I can briefly mention some types of contexts or, more precisely, co-situations in which the necessary stipulations are typically created.
5.1. Pre-established pairing of Agent and Undergoer

The first and most general type of discourse contexts that entail pragmatic irrelevance of the potential direct object is represented by those cases when the pairing of Agent and Undergoer is established prior to the utterance at issue, so that none of them is entirely ‘new information’. In other words, ANTI is typical in those cases when both participants are parts of a cultural or situational frame which is accessible by both speakers⁴. This can be illustrated by the following example:

(29) *Sječas* Ekaterina Ivanova budet *perezarjažat'-sja*.  
Now, Ekaterina Ivanova is about *to.reload-SJA*

This utterance is registered in a TV-report from a biathlon competition; the object implied is ‘rifle’. It can be safely said that the audience acquainted with the basic rules of biathlon expects biathletes to perform a limited number of activities, and reloading their rifles is one of these activities. In other words, the reference of the implicit object is obvious in given situation, hence, ANTI is used. Some more similar examples could be found in (30)–(32):

(30) *Sječas* naedu, *ukrpupnju-s'*.  
Now I will move forward, *I.will.enlarge-SJA*

‘Now I will move forward and zoom in’ (lit. ‘I will enlarge-SJA’ = ‘the picture area’). {The speaker has a camera in her hands}.

(31) ‘A, *stabiliznem-sja!’

‘Ah, let’s *stabilise-SJA!’ (= ‘stabilise the winnings’). {The transitive verb *stabiliznut’* is a novel verb introduced in a TV show in which players gain money. *Stabilizirovat’ vyigryš’* to stabilise the winnings’ is to fix it at a certain level thus preventing possible loss. This option, according to the rules of the game, is available to player at every moment of the game}.

(32) *Kak-to* ty *ploxo* vystavil-sja.  
Somehow you badly *put.out-SJA*

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⁴ Cf. the notion of *frames-based generic reference* (Givón 1990: 926): “A culture is much like an organism. Its generically-shared knowledge presumably stored in the *permanent semantic memory*, is hierarchically organized, with smaller sub-frames (‘nodes’) fitting into larger frames (...). When a particular frame is activated (...), its subframes, including potential referents, are automatically also activated (...). Most commonly, frame-based access to reference is used in a *mixed* system, interacting with text based access. (...) The availability of referents through cultural frames is not restricted to *definite* referents, nor even to *referring nominals*” (Givón 1990: 926-27).
≈ ‘I don’t like the way you have put out the ball.’ {Pronounced when playing pool. Having committed a fault the hearer has put the erroneously scored ball back onto the billiard-table, according to the rules}.

Most of the frames involved in the examples of ANTI above are possessive in a broad sense of the word. However, it is not necessarily the case as can be seen from the following example:

(33)  
Ja ne vsegda, no v bol’sinstve slučaev povtorjaju-s’.
‘I repeat-SJA in majority of cases, though not in all of them.’ (= ‘repeat the bid of the previous player’).

The utterance was registered during a game of cards, in which the players are making bids in turns. According to the rules, it is never possible to repeat one bid twice, but there are cases in which you can repeat the bid of the previous player. Thus this situation is such that an otherwise imaginable reading ‘repeat my own bid’ is ruled out.

Example (33) may serve as a connecting link to a short discussion of one particular type of situations where stipulations for ANTI are often met, i.e. those contexts that refer to rigidly regulated spheres of human behaviour. A paragon case of such rigidity is found in various games or sports, see e.g. (29), (31)-(32). Playing cards, for instance, generally seems to be a perfect environment for ANTI, since the repertoire of activities that are allowed by rules and generally expectable is usually quite limited and well known to the players; class membership of possible direct objects of many transitive verbs used in playing cards is obvious for the players and need not be explicated. For instance, ‘cards’ themselves are a good example of such an entity that is often obvious; thus its overt mentioning is superfluous, hence ANTI is likely, as in the following examples:

(34)  
Ne kladi-s’, sejčas ne tvoj xod.
‘Don’t put-SJA, it is not your lead now’. (= ‘don’t put your cards’).

(35)  
Teper’ možeš’ skidyvat’-sja.

It can be recollected that possessive relations are always involved in the semantic representation of lexical antipassives. The difference between lexical antipassives and possessive ANTIs (grammatical antipassives) in this respect lies mainly in higher stability, non-contextuality of the frames relevant for the formation of lexical antipassives, such as relations between body-parts or ‘spiritual parts’ and their possessors.
‘Now you may throw-SJA’ (= ‘get rid of your card’)

(36) (…) ešče do togo, kak on načal vykladyvat'-sja.
    ‘(…) even before he started laying.out-SJA’. (= ‘laying his cards out).

5.2. ANTI and (chronological) ordering of events/activities

One more type of discourse contexts in which ANTI is especially frequent are those cases when the nature of the agent’s activity and its semantic object are accessible to both interlocutors act beforehand and what is talked about is merely the ordering of such activities. This establishment of relative order of events could be manipulative, e.g. (37) as well as (27), or not, e.g. (38) as well as (26) and (29) above:

delete act in the passage anove and replece not with otherwise.

(37) Ty idi poka, okryvaj-sja.
    ‘Meanwhile you may go and open-SJA’ (= ‘open the file’). {The speaker had promised the hearer to help with editing a certain file. Now the speaker is in a hurry and wants to quicken the work}.

(38) A potom ja podam-sja.
    ‘And then I will hand.in-SJA (= ‘hand in the documents necessary for the reissue of the lost passport’).

There is thus no wonder that words like potom ‘then, later, there after’, ešče ne ‘not yet’ and especially uže ‘already’ are frequent concomitants of ANTI. The latter adverb, uže ‘already’, is found in some 12% of utterances with ANTI, see e.g. (39)-(41):

dthis must be thereafter

(39) Nu čto, uže načali sdavat'-sja?
    ‘Well, have they already begun to hand.in-SJA?’ (= ‘hand in their papers’). {An assistant is entering a room in which schoolchildren are participating in an intellectual competition; he puts his question to the person who is a supervisor in that room}.

(40) Vy uže zakazali-s’?
    You already ordered-SJA
‘Have you already made you order?’ (The waiter asks visitors in a café).

(41) Ty uže zavjazala-s’?
‘Have you already tied.up-SJA?’ (= ‘tied up the strings on your clothing?’).

The utterances in (39)–(41) are cases of polarity (yes/no) questions; they are all similar in that the events that are discussed are expected by the speaker, and the question is whether or not the expected event has already taken place. Thus, for instance, (39) is part of a dialog in which both interlocutors share a priori knowledge that children (Agents) are supposed to hand in their papers (Undergoers) once they are finished. Thus, explicit identifying of the reference of the predicate’s semantic object is not necessary for purposes of communication in this case, namely, for the inquiry whether or not the expected activity has already begun.

Of course, ANTI is often found in yes/no questions even if there is no uže ‘already’, as in (42):

(42) Nu čto, ne budeš’ stelit’-sja?
‘Well what, not you.will spread-SJA
‘Well, won’t you make (your bed)?’

6. Conclusions

This paper was organized is a somewhat bottom-up fashion in that its most general conclusion was phrased as early as in the beginning of Section 4, so that the remainder of the paper actually contains examples that support and further elaborate the general hypothesis. This last section is actually just a brief recapitulation of the central conclusion complemented by some further comments.

The phenomenon scrutinized here (Russian ANTI) has received surprisingly little (if any) attention in the literature although it is a productive pattern in at least some registers of Russian. ANTI appears to be a compromise strategy, which is generally resorted to in case of a conflict between transitive lexical choice, on the one hand, and undesirability of transitive syntactic construal of the event, on the other hand. In particular, ANTI’s compromise status allows
speakers to tone down pragmatic relevance / saliency of the participant that could be otherwise coded as the direct object in the transitive clause. This very general characteristic accounts for more particular types of contexts in which ANTI is especially likely (see discussion in Section 5).

Another facet of ANTI that was not discussed in this paper in any detail but that seems to be also accounted for by its pragmatic status is lexical characterization of those verbs that are encountered in ANTI constructions. It appears that there are some lexical restrictions on the use of ANTI. For instance, ANTI is not registered with those transitive verbs that presuppose animate objects (e.g. obradovat’ ‘to gladden’) or those presupposing an inanimate subject (e.g. soderžat’ ‘to contain’). Besides, in accordance with a cross-linguistically valid generalization, ANTI is mostly derived from the so-called ‘Agent-oriented’ verbs, i.e. verbs that “convey information on the A's state, purposes or mode of activity” (Kazenin 1994: 151), and not from ‘Patient-oriented’ verbs, i.e. the verbs in which “the O is highly affected and the A is treated as a mere causer of the situation, without any characteristic of its physical/mental/emotional state, manipulative activity, etc.” (ibid.). It might be noticed, however, that both of these restrictions are not idiosyncratic, that is, they are not purely lexical restrictions, since they are entailed by the general pragmatic function of ANTI (for instance, the animacy restrictions echo the relative topicality of Agent and Patient in ANTI, as represented in Table 3).

Add , etc. in the previous passage.

It might be finally noticed that the functional profile of the Russian ANTI as outlined in this paper appears to be rather interesting in a typological perspective. Namely, if compared against the background of antipassives in other languages, the Russian ANTI shows properties of a very ‘young’ grammatical phenomenon, i.e. the phenomenon that is not significantly grammaticalised; in other words, the use of ANTI in Russian has always a discourse / pragmatic motivation and is not grammaticalised relative to particular syntactic contexts.

REFERENCES


