There and back: the case of Russian ‘go’

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This article is concerned with the problems of deixis and deictic verbs. It provides empirical evidence for a more fine-grained semantic treatment of the main Russian verb of motion idti, commonly translated as ‘go’. It is argued that the cases of neutralization between Russian prijti ‘come’ and idti ‘go’ are not accidental, they are accounted for by the interplay of the deictic and “generalized motion” components in the meaning of idti.

Idti as a “generalized” verb of motion

The system of Russian verbs of motion is notoriously complex and includes a considerable number of non-derived verbs specifying manner of motion. These verbs classify situations of movement according to their intrinsic features such as moving on foot, idti, moving by vehicle, exat’, moving in a special (non-natural) way because of an obstacle in front/on the path of the subject, lezt’ ‘climb’, and so on.

Along similar lines, the prototypical movement of a snake (polzti ‘crawl, creep’) is lexically opposed to that of a bird (letet’ ‘fly’), a fish (plyt’ ‘swim, sail’), or a horse (skakat’ ‘gallop, jump’). All this allows one to consider Russian as a fair example of the so-called classifying languages, because it expresses the idea of movement differently depending on some additional parameters (such as type of subject or manner of movement). An opposite type is exemplified by French, which is a typical non-classifying (or “unitary”) language. In most contexts, French does not (or, at least, may not) distinguish between movement of a person, a snake, a fish etc., using one and the same “generalized” verb aller ‘go’ (see Gak 1988 and 1998, Guiraud-Weber 1992, among others). This strategy is impossible in Russian.

The opposition is, however, not that straightforward. The problem is that in Russian, recourse to “generalized” lexemes for describing different types of movement is also allowable, though not all candidates for this role proposed by modern explanatory dictionaries provide a real alternative. The verbs most frequently mentioned in this respect are dvigat’sja ‘move; stir; advance’ and peremeščat’sja ‘move; shift; transfer’.
They are usually claimed to be capable of denoting a “pure” locomotion, abstracted away from its specific characteristics – a claim that appears highly controversial on closer examination. In fact, *peremeščat’sja* is stylistically not neutral and is possible only in abstract contexts such as (1)-(2), so it can hardly be used for describing the physical motion of persons or artifacts; witness (3).ii

(1) *Ob”ekty* *peremeščajutsj* v *prostranstve* s
objects.NOM move[are transported] in space.LOC wit
*opredelemnoj* *skorost’ju.*
certain.INST speed.INST
‘(Physical) objects move in space with a certain speed.’

(2) *Promyšlennaja* *zona* *peremestilas’* v
industrial.NOM zone.NOM moved[was transported] in
*drugie* *rajony* *goroda.*
other.ACC districts.ACC town.GEN
‘The industrial area has moved to other parts of the town.’

(3) *Poezd* *[lošad’/] *čelovek/* *mašina ...]*
train.NOM horse.NOM human being.NOM car.NOM
*peremeščaetsja* po lesu/ po doroge.
moves[is transported] along forest.DAT along road.DAT
‘A train [a horse/a person/a car ...] is moving through the forest/on the road.’

In view of all this, the verb *peremeščat’sja* cannot really be considered a generalized Russian verb of motion. As for the verb *dvigat’sja*, the problem is more delicate.
However, it cannot be used in generalized contexts either, because, as we shall see later (section 3), its prototypical repertoire is much more restricted than it is presented in dictionaries.

Thus, the most frequently proposed candidates are inadequate. Yet, a generalized verb of motion does exist in Russian. In this paper, I will argue that it is idti (with its basic meaning ‘go on foot, walk’) that has to be considered the main Russian generalized verb of motion. The numerous facts which support this claim are striking. Let us consider them in turn.

Though the prototypical uses of idti apply to people and animals, this verb is also widely used as a cover term for different types of movement. Thus, idti can be used with nouns such as poezd ‘train’ or mašina ‘car’ (along with exat’ applied mainly to wheeled transport) as in (4); korabl’ or sudno ‘ship, boat’ (along with plyt’ ‘swim; float; sail’) as in (5); samolet ‘plane’ in (6); pyl’ ‘dust’ (along with letet’ ‘fly’) in (7); sneg ‘snow’ (along with padat’ ‘fall down’), in (8); and voda ‘water’ or krov’ ‘blood’ (along with teč’ ‘flow; run’) in (9).

(4) poezd/ mašina idet/ edet mimo.
Train.NOM car.NOM goes[walks] goes[rides] by
‘The train/the car is going by.’

(5) korabl’/ sudno idet/ plyvet.
ship.NOM boat.NOM goes[walks] sails
‘The ship/the boat is going/is sailing.’

(6) samolet idet na posadku.
plane.NOM goes[walks] on landing.ACC
‘The plane is landing.’
Moreover, there are many contexts where *idti* not only can, but *must* be used, while non generalized verbs of motion are excluded. The typical examples are (10) and (11):

(10)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lošadi/</th>
<th>kon'kobežcy</th>
<th>idut</th>
<th>s</th>
<th>xorošej</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>horses.NOM</td>
<td>skaters.NOM</td>
<td>go[walk]</td>
<td>with</td>
<td>good.INST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skorost'ju.</td>
<td>speed.INST</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘The horses/the skaters are going at a good speed.’

(11)  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kačeli</th>
<th>idut</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>vpravo,</th>
<th>to</th>
<th>vlevo.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>swing.NOM</td>
<td>go[walk]</td>
<td>now</td>
<td>right</td>
<td>now</td>
<td>left</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘The swing is going to the right and then to the left.’

In (10), neither *skačut* ‘are galloping’ (applying to horses) nor *skol'zjat po l'du* ‘are gliding on ice’ (applying to skaters) would be appropriate; similarly, in (11), a more
specific verb like kačat’sja ‘seesaw’ cannot be used. The subjects in (10) and (11) are moving, but idti can apply to motionless, stationary subjects as well as in (12) and (13).vi

(12) Ėta lestnica idet na pervyj ètaž.
this.NOM staircase.NOM goes[walks] on first.ACC floor.ACC

‘This staircase leads to the ground floor.’

(13) Tam budet škola, a potom idet naš dom.
there will.be school.NOM but then goes[walks] our.NOM house.NOM

‘There’ll be a school (first), and then comes our house.’vii

Notice that neither dvigat’sja nor peremešcat’sja, though supposed to convey the generalized meaning, are possible in the contexts of this type as seen in (6’), (8’), (10’), or (12’).

(6’) *Samolet dvižetsja/ peremeščaetsja na
plane.NOM moves[is in motion] moves[is transported] on
posadku.
landing.ACC
lit. ‘The plane is moving onto landing.’

(8’) *S utra dvižetsja/ peremeščaetsja
from morning.GEN moves[is in motion] moves[is transported]
sneg.
snow.NOM
lit, ‘Since morning, snow is moving.’

(10’) ‘Lošadi dvižutsja/ peremeščajutsja s
Horses. NOM moves [are in motion] moves [are transported] with xorošej skorost’ju.

good. INST speed. INST

lit., ‘The horses are moving at a good speed’.

(12’)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>this. NOM</th>
<th>staircase NOM</th>
<th>moves [is in motion]</th>
<th>moves [is transported]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Èta</td>
<td>lestnica</td>
<td>dvižetsja/</td>
<td>peremeščaetsja</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na</td>
<td>pervyj</td>
<td>ètaž.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on</td>
<td>first. ACC</td>
<td>floor. ACC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

lit., ‘This staircase moves/is moving to the ground floor.’

The main problem of *idti

However frequent the “generalized” uses of *idti referred to above may be, they are by no means unrestricted. In many cases, the only possible way to get a grammatically correct sentence is to use a classifying verb of motion, which cannot be replaced with *idti, as in (14) – (15):

(14) Zolotaja rybka plyvet <*idet> k stariku.

golden. NOM fish. NOM swims goes [walks] to old. man. NOM

‘The goldfish is coming to the old man.’

(15) Lastočka s vesnoju v seni k nam letit <*idet>. (Majkov)

swallow. NOM with spring. INST in hall. ACC to we. DAT flies goes [walks]

‘A swallow arrives at our doorstep with the spring.’
Thus, the problem is to explicate the conditions under which *idti* is valid as a generalized verb of motion, as well as the factors which exclude generalized uses.

My solution to this problem is as follows. For all the contexts which allow *idti*, it is possible to isolate one property they have in common: the motion denoted by the verb is always *non-arbitrary* (and hence goal-oriented). That is the reason why *idti* is most typical for vehicles that have a fixed itinerary and run according to a certain timetable, as in contexts like (16)-(17), where no classifying verbs such as *exat’* or *plyt’* are possible, especially when the goal is overtly expressed.

(16)  
\begin{align*}
\text{Poezd/} & \quad \text{avtobus/} \\
\text{train.NOM} & \quad \text{bus.NOM} \\
\text{v} & \quad \text{Peterburg.} \\
\text{in} & \quad \text{Petersburg.ACC} \\
\text{‘The train/the bus/the ferry goes/does not go to Petersburg.’}
\end{align*}

(17)  
\begin{align*}
\text{Poezda} & \quad \text{idut} \\
\text{trains.NOM} & \quad \text{go[walk]} \\
\text{bol’simi} & \quad \text{with greatINST delaysINST} \\
\text{‘The trains are running very late.’}
\end{align*}

On the other hand, only the classifying *exat’* (and not the generalized *idti*) can apply to bicycles, horse carriages, sledges, etc., moving without any strict timetable or fixed itinerary, witness (18). As for traveling stage-coaches, *idti*, as expected, can easily be used, so that sentences like (19) are possible.

(18)  
\begin{align*}
\text{Kareta} & \quad \text{edet} \\
\text{coach.NOM} & \quad \text{goes[rides]} \\
\text{*idet} & \quad \text{goes[walks]} \\
\text{v} & \quad \text{korolevskij} \\
\text{in royal.ACC} & \quad \text{dvorec.} \\
\text{palace.ACC} \\
\text{‘The coach is going to the royal palace.’}
\end{align*}
Following this strategy, *exat*’ and *idti* can be opposed in some contexts. Thus, if the meaning ‘the bus is going to the wrong place’ is expressed with the help of *exat*, as in (20), it implies most likely that the driver is absent-minded; or also in (21) with a similar sense.

(20) \[ \textbf{Avtobus idet} \quad \text{v} \quad \text{druguju} \quad \text{storonu.} \]

\[
\text{bus.NOM \ goes[walks] \ in \ other.ACC \ direction.ACC} \\
\text{The bus is going in the wrong direction.}
\]

(21) \[ \textbf{Avtobus edet/ *idet} \quad \text{kuda} \quad \text{glaza gljadjat} \]

\[
\text{bus.NOM \ goes[rides] \ goes[walks] \ where \ eyes.NOM \ look} \\
\text{The bus is moving aimlessly/at random.}^{ix}
\]

On the contrary, when *idti* is used, as in (20’), it is rather a passenger who is absent-minded: he has taken the wrong bus, or the itinerary has changed without his knowledge.

(20’) \[ \textbf{Avtobus idet} \quad \text{v} \quad \text{druguju} \quad \text{storonu.} \]

\[
\text{bus.NOM \ goes[walks] \ in \ other.ACC \ direction.ACC} \\
\text{The bus is going in the wrong direction.}
\]

This opposition is due to the fact that normally a bus has a fixed itinerary and its movement is goal-oriented. So, bus transportation perfectly corresponds to the semantics
of the generalized *idti*, but, unlike trains, which are unable to depart from their route arbitrarily, buses do not have rails. This fact can provoke a semantic shift from the prototypical case of routine bus transportation, when a bus suddenly changing its usual direction behaves, with regard to the lexical choice of the verb of motion, more like a car, a horse, or a bicycle, which are mostly described by the classifying *exat*.

Interestingly, nouns of the latter type can display a similar effect, with the opposition between arbitrary *exat* and goal-oriented *idti*. Let’s consider the pair *za nami idet mašina ~ za nami edet mašina* (lit. ‘a/the car is going after us’) in the context of the following situations (22a) and (22b).

### (22)

**a.** Ne *volnujtes’, za nami * idet mašina.  
*NEG worry after we.INST goes[walks] car.NOM*  
‘Don’t worry, a car is already coming to pick us up at the airport.’

**b.** *Smotri, za nami edet (kakaja-to) mašina.*  
*look after we.INST goes[rides] goes[walks] some.NOM car.NOM*  
‘Look, a car is following us.’ (‘we are moving; a car is moving behind – perhaps, accidentally’)

The semantic opposition between the generalized *idti* and classifying verbs of motion holds for motion in water as well. In the case of water transport (of different kinds), the motion can be considered determined, or goal-oriented. In such contexts the generalized *idti* is appropriate, while an alternative classifying verb *plyt* (with a variety of other possible meanings, as ‘sail’/’swim’/’float’) is problematical as seen in (23)-(24).

### (23)  
*Korabl’ idet plyvet v port/ v otkrytoe*  
*ship.NOM goes[walks] sails in harbor.ACC in open.ACC*
more.

sea.ACC

‘The ship is going to the harbor/to the open sea.’

(24) Ėsminec idet [^plyvet] k beregu/ k
destroyer.NOM goes[walks] sails to shore.DAT to
vražeskomu korablju.
enemy.DAT ship.DAT

‘The destroyer is going toward the shore/toward the enemy ship.’

At the same time, sailing for pleasure, when the direction and the itinerary are not
specified, tends to be described with the help of plyt’ and not idti, as in the passage from
a popular song in (25).

(25) Plyla [*šla^x], kačalas’ lodočka.
sailed went[walked] rolled boat.NOM

‘There was a boat sailing and rolling.’

Similarly, a yacht can either idti ‘go’ or plyt’ ‘sail’ (depending on the situation), but
during a regatta yachts can only ‘go’ (e.g., go first, last, with a good time, etc.). The same
principle, as already noted, applies to racers, skaters, race-horses, and so on, witness the
examples under (10). Even fish can ‘go’, demonstrating goal-oriented movement for a
certain purpose as in (26).

(26) Ryba idet kosjakom/ v seti/ na nerest
fish.NOM goes[walks] school.INST in net.ACC on spawning.ACC
v reki.
in rivers.ACC

‘Fish are schooling/are going into the net/are going to spawn in the rivers.’

However, the movement of each individual fish, which has no presupposed itinerary, is to
be described only with the help of plyt’, and in this case idti does not apply to fish; this
reverts us to the example (14) above.
Let us turn now to objects moving in the air. Heavenly bodies are the highest, and among them people distinguish the sun, the moon and the planets, the motion of which is considered strictly regular. No wonder that these objects can only idti ‘go’ across the sky and never letet’ ‘fly’ in examples such as (27)-(28). Comets, however, do ‘fly’ in (29) as do clouds in the contrastive pair of (30) describing different ways of speaking about clouds.

(27) Solnce medlenno šlo/ *letelo k zenitu.
    Sun.NOM slowly went[walked] flew to zenith.DAT
    ‘The sun was slowly approaching its zenith.’

(28) Vzošla/ *vzletela luna.
    went.up[walked] flew.up moon.NOM
    ‘The moon has risen (lit. ‘went up/*flew up’).’

(29) Kometa letela po nebu.
    comet.NOM flew along sky.DAT
    ‘A comet was flying across the sky.’

    go[walk] fly storm.clouds.NOM
    ‘Storm clouds are coming/*flying (sc. ‘to bring rain/bad weather’).’

    b. Po nebu letjat oblaka.
    along sky.DAT fly clouds
    ‘There are clouds flying across the sky.’

Among airborne objects, birds, as they are reflected in Russian folk taxonomy, can only ‘fly’ (letat’) and not ‘go’, since they are supposed to never have goals or obligations (recall the Russian saying svoboden kak ptica ‘free as a bird’). This explains why it is impossible to have idet instead of letit in Majkov’s line given above under (15).

Somewhat less expected is the fact that aircraft of all types are supposed to behave more like birds than like ordinary regular transport: planes, rockets and the like only ‘fly’, as in (31)-(32):
(31) Naš samolet letit [*idet] v Pariž čerez
our.NOM plane.NOM flies goes[walks] in Paris.ACC through
Japoniju.
Japan.ACC
‘Our plane is flying [*going] to Paris via Japan.’

(32) V svjazi s ploxoj pogodoj samolety ne
in connection.LOC with bad.INST weather.INST planes.NOM NEG
letajut [*xodjat] v Bamako.
fly go[walk] in Bamako.ACC
‘The planes are not flying/going to Bamako because of the bad weather.’

Recall that sentences of the same type about regular rail transport require only idti ‘go’,
the classifying exat’ being impossible in (16)-(17) above, as well as contexts like (33):

(33) a. V svjazi s remontom polotna
in connection.LOC with repair.work.INST embankment.GEN
23. maja poezda idut [*edut] tol’ko
23rd.GEN May.GEN trains.NOM go[walk] go[ride] only
do Vladimir.GEN
to Vladimir.GEN
‘Due to repair work on the embankment on May 23, the trains are going
only as far as Vladimir.’

b. V svjazi s remontom polotna
in connection.LOC with repair.work.INST embankment.GEN
23 maja poezda ne idut [*ne edut]
23rd.GEN May.GEN trains.NOM NEG go[walk] NEG go[ride]
do Možajskaja.
to Možajsk.GEN
‘Due to repair work on the embankment on May 23, the trains for
Mozhaisk are cancelled.’
Thus, it can be seen that a standard (“horizontal”) movement of the aircraft in the air – including the movement which implies a goal – is represented in Russian as if it were undetermined.

However, a vertical (up-and-down) movement of the aircraft may have a different linguistic treatment depending on whether it is viewed as controlled or not: in this case, both possibilities do exist. On the one hand, *idti* is the only verb which can describe planes (deliberately) flying higher and lower, as in (34) and also (35) with *kačeli* ‘swing’ as a subject.

(34) *Samolet idet [letit] na posadku/ idet*
plane.NOM goes[walks] flies on landing.ACC goes[walks]
[*letit] vniz, zatem rezko povoračivaet i idet
flies down then abruptly turns and goes[walks]
[*letit] vverx i vlevo.
flies up and left
‘The plane comes in to land/goes down, then turns suddenly and goes up and to the left.’

(35) *Kačeli idut [letjat] vverx/ idut vniz.*
swing.NOM go[walk] fly up go[walk] down
‘The swing is going [*flying] up/going down.’

On the other hand, a non-controlled vertical movement is never described with the help of *idti*. For example, in the situation of a free fall the verb *padat* ‘fall [down]’ can never be substituted for *idti*, so that a bomb, a stone or a wrecked plane can only ‘fall’, and not ‘go’ down, witness (36).

(36) *Bomba/ kamen’/ poterpevšij avariiju*
bomb.NOM stoneNOM suffered.from.NOM accident.ACC
*samolet padaet [idet] <vniz>.*
plane.NOM falls goes[walks] down
‘A bomb/stone/wrecked plane is falling [*going] down.’
Interestingly, in Russian snow can both ‘fall’ and ‘go’, while rain and hail can only ‘go’ as in (37)-(39); perhaps, this is due to the fact that the movement of raindrops and hailstones (which are distinctly heavier than snowflakes) is viewed as less controlled or determined.

(37) *Padaet/ idet sneg.*
    falls goes[walks] snow.NOM
    ‘It is snowing (lit. ‘snow is falling/going’).’

(38) *Dožd’ šel vsju noč’.*
    rain.NOM went[walked] all.ACC night.ACC
    ‘It rained all night.’

(39) *S utra šel grad.*
    from morning.GEN went[walked] hail.NOM
    ‘It had been hailing since morning.’

Another case which is worth considering in this connection is vertical movement in water. Normally, there is no freedom in water – hence everything which is going to sink has to ‘go’ to the bottom, as reflected in Russian *idti ko dnu* (synonymous to another classifying verb *tonut* ‘sink’, e.g., *korabl’ idet ko dnu/tonet* ‘the boat is sinking’). This does not hold, e.g., for submarines: when a submarine is (deliberately) moving down to the bottom, it is usually said to ‘dive’ (*pogružat’sja*). The movement in the opposite direction is, in a sense, less definite and therefore it is described by classifying verbs, applying both for water, *vsplyvat’* ‘surface’ (lit. ‘sail/swim up’) and for the air, *vzletat’* ‘fly up’; *idti* is used much more rarely in such cases as exemplified in (40)-(41):

(40) *Mi nabljudali, kak černaja podvodnaja lodka to [pogružalas’/ *šla ko dnu]. to now dived went[walked] to bottom.DAT now vsplyvala nad vodoj.*
    surfaced above water.IMPR
‘We watched a black submarine dive and surface again and again.’

(41) *Likovaniju ljudej ne bylo konca – v vozduxF
exultation.DAT people.GEN NEG was end.GEN in air.ACC
[vzletali/leteli/ *šli] šljapy, vozdušnye
flew.up flew went[walked] hats.NOM air.NOM
šary i daže bašmaki.
balloons.NOM and even shoes.NOM
‘People’s exultation seemed endless – hats, balloons, even shoes were thrown into the air (lit. ‘flew up/*went’).’

Finally, it should be noted that, apart from the prototypical moving objects (like people, animals, transport means, heavenly bodies etc.), the verb *idti can also apply to operator-controlled motion of instruments: thus, needles ‘go’ to and fro, scythes ‘go’ to the right and to the left, hammers ‘go’ down, etc. A competing verb is in this case dvigat’sja ‘move’, already discussed above. However, dvigat’sja conveys the idea of spontaneous motion, though this semantic component is usually not made mention of in dictionaries. It explains why dvigat’sja is more easily applied to animate subjects or devices moving on their own in such contexts as (42)-(44).

(42) *Krupnye stada životnyx dvižutsja na
big.NOM flocks.NOM animals.GEN move[are in motion] on
vostok.
est.ACC
‘Big herds of animals are moving eastward.’

(43) Poezd dvižetsja so skorost’ju 50 km
train.NOM moves[is in motion] with speed.INST 50.GEN km.GEN
v čas.
in hour.ACC
‘The train moves at a speed of 50 km per hour.’
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(44) *Turbina* dvižetsja blagodarja òlektričeskomu
turbine.NOM moves[is in motion] due.to electric.DAT
toku.
current.DAT
‘The turbine moves because of the electric current.’

Notice that *dvigat’sja* indicates a motion without any clear goal or trajectory, precisely because it emphasizes spontaneity. For the same reason, *dvigat’sja* is highly appropriate for situations when inanimate objects are represented as (becoming) animated as in (45)-(46).

(45) Smotri! Idet sneg, i vse vokrug
look goes[walks] snow.NOM and everything.NOM around
kak budto dvižetsja.
as if moves[is in motion]
‘Look! It’s snowing, and it seems as if everything around is moving.’

(46) Mne kažetsja, čto vse predmety v komnate – ,
I.DAT seems that all.NOM objects.NOM in room.LOC
stol zerkalo, kresla – vdrug stali
table.NOM mirror.NOM armchairs.NOM suddenly started
dvigat’sja i sejčas zagovorjat.
move[be in motion] and now start.speak
‘It seems to me that all the things in the room – the table, the mirror, the armchairs – have suddenly started moving and are about to speak.’

This type of motion is opposed to goal-oriented movement, and in this regard *dvigat’sja* can be said to form an opposition to the generalized *idti* as in (47):

(47) a. Poezd dvižetsja [i’idet], nesmotrja na
train.NOM moves[is in motion] goes[walks] despite on
defjstvie sily trenija.
action.ACC force.GEN friction.GEN
‘The train moves [*goes] in spite of friction.’


train.NOM goes[walks] moves[is in motion] in London.ACC

‘The train is going [*moving] to London.’

The distinction between deliberate and spontaneous motion is relevant when *dvigat’sja* and generalized *idti* apply to the names of tools or instruments. In this context, *dvigat’sja* describes, as expected, an independent, autonomous movement, while the use of *idti* is related to the fact that the movement of the object is directed or controlled by an operator. Thus, a screw nut (*gajka*) is said to ‘go well’ (*xorošo idet*), if it is being manipulated by somebody, whereas a windmill’s fan (*kryl’ja vetrjanoj mel’nicy*) moves, so to say, independently, and thus the form *dvižutsja* must be chosen to describe its behavior. Similarly, water can ‘go’ or ‘flow’ from a tap, e.g., *voda idet/tečet iz krana*, but it only ‘flows’ if it is in a river: *reka tečet [*idet]*, lit. ‘the river flows [*goes]*’, because the movement of a river is thought of as free and uncontrolled.

3. Special cases: derived and metaphorical uses

In this section I show that the semantic components which are peculiar to Russian *idti* can also account for some derived and metaphorical uses (in the sense of Radden 1988), where *idti* applies to stationary objects and introduces a purpose-oriented situation, as in (48)-(49):

(48) *Na òto idet glina/ dva metra*  
  on this.ACC goes[walks] clay.NOM two.NOM meters.GEN  
  tkani.  
  fabric.GEN

‘For this you need clay/two meters of fabric.’

(49) *Stat’ja idet v sbornik.*  
  Article.NOM goes[walks] in anthology.ACC

‘The paper has been accepted for publication in an anthology.’
Both in (48) and (49), idti emphasizes a certain use the object is intended for (its “destination”). In contexts of this type, the “destination” can be considered a natural counterpart for the goal (= point of destination) which occurs in the contexts of motion containing generalized idti. In a sense, functional situations like those exemplified by (48)-(49) represent a subclass of abstract, or “virtual” motion (Langacker 1987 and 1999; cf. also “fictive motion” discussed in Talmy 1996), namely goal-oriented motion.

Another type of abstract motion described by the generalized idti is “deictic” motion. First of all, these are cases where idti applies to elongated objects. Such contexts implicitly index eye movements during observation, when the observer’s eyes follow an object lengthways up to its end, witness (50)-(52).

(50) = (12) Èta lestnica idet na pervyj
   this.NOM staircase.NOM goes[walks] on first.ACC
   òtaž.
   floor.ACC
   ‘The staircase leads to the first floor.’

(51) Most idet na tot bereg.
   bridge.NOM goes[walks] on that.ACC bank.ACC
   ‘The bridge leads to the other bank of the river.’

(52) Peščera/ šaxta/ nora idet na bol’šuju
   cave.NOM shaft.NOM burrow.NOM goes[walks] on great.ACC glubinu.
   depth.ACC
   ‘The cave/shaft/burrow reaches a great depth.’

Significantly, such contexts admit variation: some examples allow classifying verbs, while others strictly prefer idti. The point is that idti is possible only when the form of the object is fixed, and this semantic restriction is reminiscent of the requirement generalized idti has for its basic uses – that the trajectory has to be predictable. The only difference is, in fact, that in the “deictic” contexts the trajectory involved is that of eye movements. Accordingly, if the form of the object is not fixed or predictable, a classifying verb has to be chosen, and idti is not possible. Some typical cases are shown in Table 1.
Impossible in the context of *idi* |
| Possible in the context of *idi* |
| **reak** *‘river’* | **kanal** *‘channel’* |
| **verevka** *‘rope’, **cep** *‘chain’* | **požarnaja lestnica** *‘fire escape’*

Table 1. The choice of verb in “deictic” contexts

Pairs of sentences in (53) and (54) illustrate this choice.

   along fortress.GEN wall GEN flows goes [walks] river.NOM
   ‘The river flows [*goes] along the rampart.’

   along fortress.GEN wall GEN goes [walks] flows river.NOM
   ‘The canal goes [*flows] along the rampart.’

(54) a. *Po stene idet vniz požarnaja lestnica.*
   along wall DAT goes [walks] down fire NOM ladder NOM
   lit, ‘A fire escape is going down the wall.’

   b. *Po stene idet vniz verevka.*
   along wall DAT goes [walks] down rope NOM
   *‘A rope is going down the wall.’

The similar effect of an observer following an elongated object occurs with chains of objects, which easily combine with *idi*, suggesting that they are conceptualized as having a fixed form in (55)-(56); the same holds for “covering” surfaces in (57) and figuratively in (58).

(55) *Stolby idut vdol’ dorogi.*
   posts NOM go [walks] along road GEN
   ‘There are posts along the road (lit., ‘posts go along the road’).’

(56) *Rjad kresel idet do steny.*
   row NOM armchairs GEN goes [walks] to wall GEN
‘A row of seats goes up to the wall.’

(57) *Pautina* *idet* *po* *vsemu* *potolku.*
spider.web.NOM goes[walks] along all.DAT ceiling.DAT
‘There is a spider web all over the ceiling.’

(58) *Uzor* *idet* *po* *vsemu* *podolu.*
design.NOM goes[walks] along all.DAT hem.DAT
‘The design runs all along the hem.’

Generalized *idti* as an abstract motion verb is preferred in some very specific pragmatic contexts for stationary objects. Thus, in the situation of reading or counting, when characters or signs follow each other, the Russians can say that they ‘go one after another’ (*idut drug za drugom*), meaning that the observer (e.g., the reader) perceives them in order, one by one as in (59).

(59) *Posle* *A* *idet* *B,* *potom* *idet* *zapjataja* ...
after A goes[walks] B then goes comma.NOM
‘After A comes B, then comes a comma …’

Another pragmatic situation typical for *idti* is giving directions. In this case, the speaker imagines a chain of landmarks forming a sequence; accordingly, the speaker wants the addressee to follow this sequence step by step, as if they were both following the same path, as seen in (60) (= (13) above).

(60) *Tam budet škola,* *a* *potom* *idet* *naš*
there will.be school.NOM but then goes[walks] our.NOM
dom.
house.NOM
‘There’ll be a school (first), and then comes our house.’

The same holds for “layered” objects: describing the layers one by one, the speaker “moves” from the top down in (61)-(62):
(61) *Snačala idet testo, potom varen’e, potom.*

first goes[dough] then jam then boiled cream

‘The dough comes first, then some jam, and after that some custard.’

(62) *Snačala idet pesok, vtoroj sloj–*  

first goes[sand] second layer 

clay and only after goes[walks] water

‘Sand comes first, the second layer is clay, and only after that comes water.’

It is well known that the visual domain often serves as a model for the auditory one (cf. Geeraerts 1986: 660-661, among others, where the problem of “loud colors” is discussed in great detail). Therefore, *idti* is expected to occur in the situations of auditory perception as well, such as listening to music, and the like. In fact, the only acceptable auditory contexts for *idti* are those where the listener deals with distinct sequences of sounds, as in (63).

(63) *Ty slyšiš’? Snačala byl baraban, teper’ idet*  

you hear first was drum now goes[sand] flute but further enter violins

‘Do you hear? First there was the drum, now the flute is playing (lit., ‘is going’), and then the violins start ... ’

Contexts like *snačala idet stuk/šum...* (lit. ‘there goes a rattle/noise first ...’) would seem strange and hardly appropriate.

On the other hand, any period of time or series of events pragmatically conceptualized as a coherent sequence can easily provide a context suitable for *idti*, as in (64)-(65).
(64)  Snačala idet obed, potom užin.
    first goes lunch.NOM then supper.NOM
    ‘First, there is lunch, then supper.’

(65)  Snačala u nas idet anglijskij, potom
    first by we.NOM goes[walks] English.NOM then
    matematika, a potom poslednij urok.
    math.NOM but then last.NOM lesson.NOM
    ‘We have first English, then Math, and then the last lesson.’

4. Semantics of Russian *idti* and the problem of goal-bias

Summing up the semantic analysis of *idti*, we can recognize that it is used to express not only a particular manner of motion, but also a special type of non-arbitrary motion determined by a definite goal or itinerary. Naturally, in generalized contexts the frequency of goal of the movement is very high as compared to the corresponding classifying verbs. It can be seen even from the examples given in the previous sections: nearly all of them overtly express the goal.

This could be considered a realization of the so-called *goal-over-source-principle*, or *goal-bias*. It is well known that there is an asymmetry between Source and Goal roles in the situation of movement: the Goal is cognitively more important than the Source, and this fact is reflected in natural language structures (Verspoor et al. 1999: 98). Bourdin 1997 has shown that goal-bias is typologically universal: in particular, the expression of the Goal tends to be morphologically simpler than that of the Source. As concerns the cognitive interpretation of this linguistic fact, it is clear that the Goal is the main direction and, as a rule, it constitutes the rheme of the utterance (Ferm 1990: 55 ff.). Moreover, using information about the Goal, one can reconstruct the whole situation of motion (Ikegami 1987: 135, Ungerer & Schmidt 1996: 225). In fact, if a moving object changes one location (Source) for another (Goal), it means that the latter is the reason for the movement itself. So, in most situations information about the Goal is perceived as new and cognitively important, and consequently it has to be overtly expressed in the text.

The problem with the goal-bias principle is that, when applied to all possible verbs of motion in all natural languages, it yields different results: for example, within one and
the same language different verbs of motion show surprisingly different frequencies of Goal expressed in the corpus. Thus, as demonstrated in our previous work (Majsak, Rakhilina 1999), Russian \textit{idti} expresses the Goal nearly three times more frequently than \textit{plyt’} (‘swim/sail/float’) and five times more frequently than \textit{skakat’} (‘gallop/hop’). The distribution is the following: the Goal is expressed in 22% of the contexts for \textit{idti} \cite{rakhilina1999}, in 8.2% of the contexts for \textit{plyt’} and in 4.3% of the contexts for \textit{skakat’}, though each of these words displays the general effect of goal-bias: in the examined corpus the Source is expressed much more rarely than the Goal (2.6% for \textit{idti}, 0% for both \textit{plyt’} and \textit{skakat’}).

My point is that the difference in the behavior of verbs of motion is based on and could be explained by their individual semantic properties, which influence the way the goal-bias principle is realized in each case. This claim presupposes an in-depth semantic analysis of verbal lexemes. However different these cases may be, at least for Russian \textit{idti} one can state that the effect of goal-bias is strongly supported by the generalized uses already containing the idea of a goal in their semantic structure\cite{rakhilina1990}.

\section{The place of \textit{idti} in Fillmore’s classification}

Theoretically, the situation with Russian \textit{idti} is not trivial. According to the well-known classification of verbs of motion proposed in Fillmore 1966, 1975, and 1983, the main distinction is between Goal-oriented verbs (like English \textit{come}) and Source-oriented verbs (like English \textit{go}). If one asks “When are you coming”, the answer “In the morning” will correspond to the moment of arrival (= achieving the Goal). On the other hand, the same sentence used as an answer to a question like “When are you leaving?” will correspond to the moment of departure (= leaving the Source). If we try to apply this classification to Russian, we can state that Russian clearly opposes the prefixed verbs \textit{prijti} (‘come’) and \textit{ujti} (‘go’), while the basic non-prefixed verb \textit{idti} is assigned an intermediate position. It means that a question like \textit{Kogda ty ideš’}? is most likely interpreted as ‘When are you walking <and not running>?’ (cf. Rakhilina 1990: 91-99). At the same time, it is not an accident that the standard translation for Russian \textit{idti} into English is ‘go’, and not ‘come’ or ‘walk’: questions containing the Goal refer to the starting point of the movement and mean ‘When are you leaving?’, like in \textit{Kogda ty ideš’ domoj}?: ‘When are you going home?’ Hence Russian \textit{idti} should be considered to be a neutral verb with a slight tendency toward Source-orientation.
The “temporal” test gives the same result for the generalized uses in (66)-(67):

\[ (66) \quad \text{Kogda poezd idet v Petersburg?} \]
\[ \text{when train.NOM goes[walks] in Petersburg.ACC} \]
\[ \text{‘When does the train leave (lit. ‘go’) for Petersburg?’} \]

\[ (67) \quad \text{Kogda poezd idet medlenno?} \]
\[ \text{when train.NOM goes[walks] slowly} \]
\[ \text{‘When does the train move (lit. ‘go’) slowly?’ = ‘What is the period of time when ...’} \]

This test clearly shows that the generalized contexts must be classified as neutral or Source-oriented as well. (It should be noted that in many cases the “temporal test” is not applicable to the generalized uses of \textit{idti}. For example the questions of this type about stationary objects are impossible, so that one cannot say: *\textit{Kogda idet užin/lestenica vniz/kačeli...?}, lit. ‘When does the dinner/stairs/swing go?’.)

However, as amply demonstrated above, the generalized uses of \textit{idti} (unlike those requiring classifying verbs) emphasize the idea of “purpose” or “destination”, and therefore they should be Goal-oriented. Could this really be the case?

In the remainder of the article I continue the discussion of the semantic behavior of \textit{idti} in relation to its goal-bias properties. My main concerns are with deictic interpretations of the so-called “isolated” contexts and with the semantic relationship between Russian ‘go’ (\textit{idti}) and ‘come’ (\textit{prijti}).

6. \textit{idti} in the “isolated contexts”: ‘come’ vs. ‘go’

In what follows our attention is restricted to contexts which could be called “isolated”, i.e. sentences with motion verbs where neither the Source nor the Goal are overtly expressed, so that the only participant present in the sentence is the moving subject. The most surprising fact is that when generalized \textit{idti} appears in isolated contexts, it denotes a motion \textit{towards} the Goal (which turns out to be the implicit location of the speaker), but never as a motion from the Source, and therefore should be translated, for example, into English as \textit{come} and not as \textit{go}, as contexts like (68) clearly show.
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(68) *Oj! Moj tramvaj idet!*

    oh  my.NOM tram.NOM goes[walks]
    ‘Oh! My tram is coming!’ [≠ *‘is leaving’]*

This fact cannot be explained within the traditional lexicographic account, but it can be interpreted as a “trace” of goal-bias properties of the generalized *idti* just discussed.

Let us consider some other examples of isolated contexts with *idti*, where the same effect is illustrated by derived and metaphorical uses.

(69) *Dym idet <ot očaga>.*

    smoke.NOM goes[walks] from fireplace.GEN
    ‘There is smoke coming from the fireplace.’

(70) *Teplo/ zapax idet.*

    heat.NOM smell.NOM goes[walks]
    ‘Heat/smell is coming.’

Compare also (71), representing the standard formula used when a court of law begins session.

(71) *Vstat’! Sud idet!*

    get.up court.NOM goes[walks]
    ‘All rise! Court is in session!’

Further examples of *idti* denoting an “approaching” to the speaker are:

(72) *Dožd’/ sneg/ grad idet.*

    rain.NOM snow.NOM hail.NOM goes[walks]
    ‘It is raining/snowing/hailing.’

(73) *Voda [ne] idet <iz krana>.*

    water.NOM NEG goes[walks] from tap.GEN
    ‘Water is [not] running <from the tap>.’
Similarly, nouns are used in the contexts of *idti* with the meaning ‘is approaching; will come soon’ such as *vesna* ‘spring’, *zima* ‘winter’, *xolodá* ‘cold’, *smert’ ‘death’, *tif* ‘typhus’ [and other epidemics], and many others. Slightly more idiomatic (but still entirely in the above logic) are sentences like (76)-(78).

(76) *Son ne idet.*

sleep.NOM NEG goes[walks]  ‘I cannot fall asleep.’

(77) *Procenty idut.*

interests.NOM go[walk]  ‘Interest is accruing.’

(78) *Karta idet.*

card.NOM goes[walks]  lit. ‘The card goes’ = ‘somebody is lucky with cards, because the <right> cards are coming to him’.

Thus, we can assert that in the so-called “isolated” contexts (where neither Source nor Goal are overtly expressed), the generalized *idti* appears to be a synonym of the prefixed *prijti* (‘come’).

It is true that this formulation simplifies the real situation in a way: actually, the shift of meaning of this kind becomes possible only in deictic sentences restricted to the present tense, which are both non-anaphoric and non-imperative. These restrictions are, however, quite natural. Let us consider several examples.
The anaphoric sentences presuppose that at least one of the roles (either the Goal or the Source) has already been fixed by the previous context, as in (79), where the Goal is clearly understood as ‘into the fire’. So, anaphoric contexts are, strictly speaking, not isolated.

(79) V ogon’? Nu čto ž! Idi! Ideš’? (Okudžava) in fire.ACC well what.NOM EMPH go[walk] go[walk] ‘Into the fire? Well! Go! Are you going?’ (sc. ‘are you going there = into the fire?’)

Second, it is difficult to imagine imperatives applied to the generalized idti: prototypically, imperatives are associated with animate addressees, while typical subjects of the generalized idti are inanimate. Notice that imperative constructions with the non-generalized idti, describing a movement of a person are interpreted as a movement from the speaker, so that Idi! = ‘go <away/somewhere, from the speaker’s place>’. Examples such as (80)-(81) refer to the starting point as the place where both the speaker and the addressee are located.

(80) Idi v buločnuju. go[walk] in baker’s.ACC ‘Go to the baker’s.’

(81) Idi otsjuda! Go[walk] from here ‘Go away <from here>!’

This is similar to the imperatives from the Source-oriented verbs of motion, like uxodi ‘go away’ or otojdi ‘go aside <from me>’. Hence it is semantically opposed to the imperatives formed from prijti (‘come’): prixodi means ‘come here’ (implying movement towards the speaker). The latter interpretation is impossible for idti. As for the present tense, it is known as the most “deictic”, therefore present can easily support the isolated deictic contexts. Nevertheless, in many cases the isolated contexts with idti in the past favor the Goal-oriented interpretation as well. Thus, šel zapax (lit.,
‘the smell was going’) is interpreted in the same way as idet zapax (lit., ‘the smell is going’), meaning ‘it was/is approaching’.

There is one more pseudo-isolated context which should be definitely excluded from the further discussion: that of negative constructions like (82). The point is that in such case the Goal is fixed as being in the scope of a quantifier: it means that the object moves “nowhere”. Notice that negation is the only possible context for these constructions as in (83). Hence, the place for the Goal is fixed (just as in the case of anaphoric contexts), and these constructions cannot be considered isolated either.

(82) Bočka zastrjala v dverjaj i ne šla/ ne
door.NOM got.stuck in door.LOC and NEG went[walked] NEG
idet dal’še.
go[walk] further
‘The barrel got stuck in the door and would not go/will not go any further.’

Anyway, taking into account these constraints, we can argue that there are cases when the generalized idti tends to be a typical Goal-oriented verb of motion like Russian prefixed verb prijti ‘come’.

It is worth mentioning that in Russian, the relation of idti to prijti is also non-trivial: prijti lacks the actual present, so that it is impossible to say something like *smotri, on prixodit domoj ‘look, he is coming home’ (Maslov 1948, Apresjan 1988). One could suppose that systemic factors force Russian idti into an empty lexical slot, and uses become possible such as smotri, on idet domoj, lit. ‘look, he is going (= coming) home’.

Another solution (based on the semantic specificity of the generalized idti described above) may be that the actual present of prijti is simply not needed, because the semantic and pragmatic factors mentioned here have contributed to the semantic shift of idti towards ‘come’ (in present tense contexts).
7. Conclusion

Some recent works (cf. Wilkins, Hill 1995, Goddard 1997) have shown that Fillmore’s classification of verbs of motion simplifies the real situation in natural languages (including English). There are many more semantic features which can oppose the verbs of motion within one and the same language as well as the systems of verbs of motion of different languages.

This paper argues that the semantics of Russian \textit{idti} ‘go’ is in many respects non-trivial. As a classifying verb (applying to people and animals), it is either neutral or Source-oriented. However, as a generalized verb which can substitute for other classifying verbs, it conveys the idea of determined, non-arbitrary motion and therefore displays properties of a Goal-oriented verb. At the same time, it remains a “weak” Goal-oriented verb, because it can still pass the “temporal test” for Source-oriented verbs. However, the goal-bias tendency proper to generalized \textit{idti} forces this verb towards “strong” goal-oriented interpretations – at least in the deictic contexts, where neither the Source nor the Goal are overtly expressed.

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i As Talmy (2000) would have it, Russian makes use of special “lexicalization patterns”, labeled as “motion + manner conflation” and “motion + figure conflation”.

ii For the purposes of the present article, peremë‰ãat’ja is represented as ‘move[be transporeted]’ and 

dvigat’ja as ‘move[be in motion]’ in morpheme-by-morpheme glosses of linguistic examples.

iii Viberg (1996) discusses a similar problem of different verbal substitutes for English go and Swedish gå.
iv Cf. the well-known semantic description of this meaning given in Apresjan (1974: 108): ‘to move from Y to Z using both feet in turn, so that permanent contact with the surface is maintained’.

v Throughout the article, *idti* is glossed as ‘go[walk]’ and *exat’* as ‘go[ride]’ in morpheme-by-morpheme glosses of linguistic examples.

vi These contexts often call for the notion of “abstract motion”; for more detail, see below, section 3.

vii A sentence like (13) may be uttered, for example, when explaining to someone how to get somewhere.

viii The property I refer to as “goal-orientation is closely related to the path image schema discussed in the contributions by Israeli, Janda and Nesset to this volume.

ix *Kuda glaza gljadjat* (lit., ‘where the eyes are looking’) is a Russian idiom describing an aimless motion (roughly corresponding to English *following one’s nose*).

x To avoid possible confusion, it should be stressed that the semantic opposition just discussed between non-arbitrary *exat’* and goal-oriented *idti* is not to be identified with a well-known opposition of the type *idti ~ xodit’* and *exat’ ~ ezdit’, which relates to iterativity (more specifically, motion in various directions) or habituality and is expressed by grammatical means in most Slavic languages. In Russian, both *idti* and *exat’* have this iterative/habitual counterpart.

xi ·la is a past suppletive form of 3 SG FEM from *idti*.

xii The notion of observer as a deictic component in the semantics of Russian constructions containing oblongs like ‘path’ or ‘road’ was discussed at length in Apresjan (1980: 60-61; cf. also Rakhilina 2000: 160 and 239-240). The same effects have been repeatedly noted for the notorious English *over*-constructions of the type *to live over the bridge* (see Langacker 1987, Brugman & Lakoff 1988).

xiii Notice that similar calculations done for other languages will yield different results. Thus, according to Stefanowitsch, Rohde (1999), in English the Goal is expressed in 77% of cases, i.e., three times more than in Russian. This is due to the fact that Russian has special verbal prefixes to express goal-oriented motion, while English *go* covers the goal-oriented domain alone.

xiv On the other hand, the very existence of this specific meaning could, in turn, be considered a consequence of the goal-bias principle.

 xv As in the case for tools and instruments, this construction presupposes a human operator. This might suggest a translation of *ne idet* as ‘is not able to be moved/rolled’. Levin & Rappoport (1992) introduce a
special feature DEC (=direct external cause) to describe a similar effect of the meaning shift in some English verbs; however, according to their data, the English go, unlike Russian idti, is never characterized as +DEC.