

Proposal for the workshop ‘Neglected aspects of motion-event descriptions

Beyond the Path/Manner dichotomy’

The expression of motion in Russian

We argue that the distinctions between satellite vs. verb-framed structures and between split vs. parallel systems may not be sufficient to identify the typological profile of variable systems like Russian. In particular, we focus on Manner-and-Path conflation in verb roots, which is not embraced by Talmy’s framework (2000).

I. Manner-and-Path conflation in Russian

There are two different types of Manner-and-Path conflation in Russian and both of them serve to express upward motion. First, such a conflation occurs in morphologically complex verbs (*zabrat’sja/zabirat’sja na [derevo]* ‘climb up [PF/IMP] [the tree]). Second, Manner-and-Path conflation occurs in (morphologically) simple verbs of motion that constitute a closed class of highly frequent *Verbs of Motion* (hereafter VoM).

The first type of conflation is composed of semi-opaque reflexive verbs in which roots are not ‘autonomous’ (e.g. *za-brat’sja¹ (na) [Pref:za-Root:take-oneself prep:on(to)]* ‘climb[PF] on(to)’) because they do not have the same meaning in isolation (e.g. *brat’sja* [take-oneself] ‘start a particular activity’) and within prefixed structures *za-birat’sja (na)* (‘climb-up’). Consequently, *za-brat’sja* is a verb root with a morphologically complex internal structure that comprises non autonomous roots. In terms of its semantic components, *za-brat’sja* encodes boundary crossing via the prefix *za-* (Janda 1986) but also Manner because all the verbs with the root *-birat’sja/-brat’sja* were shown to imply movement <performed with the help of limbs> as well as a certain degree of <effort> associated with motion (Dobrušina, Mellina & Paillard 2001).

The second type of Manner-and-Path conflation is represented by simplex Russian imperfective verbs (that is, morphologically simple un-prefixed verbs) that encode basic types of Manner (running, walking, climbing, etc.). These verbs constitute a closed class of highly frequent *Verbs of Motion* (hereafter VoM). This class is composed of pairs of verbs, each pair encoding the same type of Manner but two different types of directionality via stem variation (e.g. *letet’-letat’* ‘(uni-directional)fly’–‘(multidirectional)fly’; *idti-xodit’* ‘(uni-directional)walk’–‘(multidirectional) walk’). In Isačenko’s framework (1960), uni-directional verbs denote motion in one linear direction, whereas *indeterminate* VoM contain no specific indication with respect to motion orientation. Unlike uni-directional verbs, indeterminate verbs of motion denote a variety of situations including motion performed in several of directions, back-and-forth movement and repeated motion.

According to Isačenko’s (1960) framework, all prefixed verbs derived from uni-directional VoM lose the semantic component of uni-directionality initially encoded in the verb.

II. Variation of patterns in Russian

It has been shown that Slavic languages display considerable inter- and intra-typological disparity (Hasko 2009, 2010; Kopecka 2010; Filipović 2010; Schmiedtová & Sahonenko

¹ For the sake of convenience, only perfective forms of Russian verbs are cited here. Russian speakers used both perfective and imperfective forms in their descriptions of motion.

2012; Czechowska & Ewert 2011; Pavlenko & Volynsky 2015; Dimitrova-Vulchanova et al. 2012). For example, intra-typological variations of lexicalization patterns were reported for Serbo-Croatian (Filipović 2010: 263), for Polish (Kopecka 2010: 237) and Russian (Iakovleva 2012; Iakovleva & Hickmann 2012). In Iakovleva's study (2012), Russian monolingual speakers who had been instructed to describe a series of cartoons showing motion (Hendriks & Hickmann 2011), massively encoded Path outside of the verb root in three types of constructions: 1) a satellite-framed pattern, 2) a verb-framed pattern in which Path is encoded both in and outside of the verb root 3) a pattern in which the verb roots *zabrat'sja* 'climb[PF] on(to)' and prefixed verbs derived from uni-directional VoM that conflate Manner and Path, as described in (I). In the data elicited from Russian speakers, there was only one occurrence of VoM, a clear preference having been given to morphologically opaque *zabrat'sja* 'climb[PF] on(to)' (see Figure 2).

The first pattern is prevalent with ACROSS-motion, the second with downward motion and the third with upward motion (see Figure 1). In other words, a satellite-framed pattern is systematically used in the expression of motion along a horizontal plane (at least with ACROSS-motion) but much less systematically along a vertical plane. These data show that Russian can be viewed as a split system in which there is "one characteristic pattern for one type of Motion situation and other patterns for different types" (Talmy in press).

However, Russian speakers do not express upward motion² via one single pattern of Manner-and-Path conflation (hereafter MP). As shown in Figures 1 and 2, upward motion was expressed via a range of relatively frequent patterns. Although the MP conflation occurs in more than half of the descriptions of upward motion, Russian native speakers also encode Manner (M) in 35% of descriptions and Path (P) in 9% of descriptions.

As mentioned in Section I, Manner only is expressed in morphologically transparent prefixed verbs derived from VoM. Of 23 Manner verb roots used in Russian native data, a clear preference was given to the verb *za-lezt'*_[PF] (*na derevo*) 'climb on(to) the tree', that represents 20 occurrences. Last but not least, Russian speakers express Path in the verb *podn'atsja* 'ascend'.

Given that up-events show two relatively frequent types of verbs (Manner-and-Path vs. Manner), Russian may be additionally characterized as a parallel system of conflation, in addition a split system. To our knowledge, Talmy (2000) does not consider languages that combine features of both a split and a parallel system.

Conclusion

Our findings support the idea that the typological profile of Russian should be further evaluated. Descriptions of motion elicited from monolingual Russian speakers in Iakovleva (2012) and Iakovleva & Hickmann (2012) are in line with Croft et al.'s (2010), Beaver et al.'s (2010) and Matsumoto's (2011) suggestion that it may be more useful to show that languages provide more or less variable options instead of classifying whole linguistic systems.

² We agree with Pavlenko & Volynsky (2015: 35) that it is unclear what frequencies are necessary to "shape" characteristic (predominant) patterns.

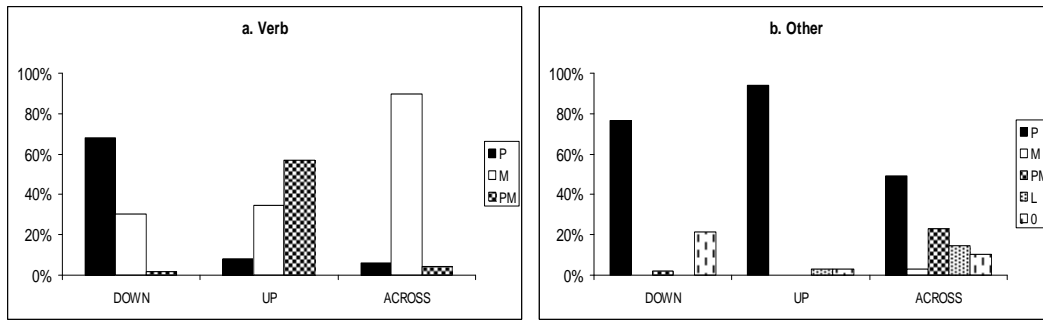


Figure 1. Semantic information expressed by native Russian monolingual speakers. ‘Other’ represents linguistic devices outside of the verb root, ‘L’ - simple Location, ‘O’ – no device used.

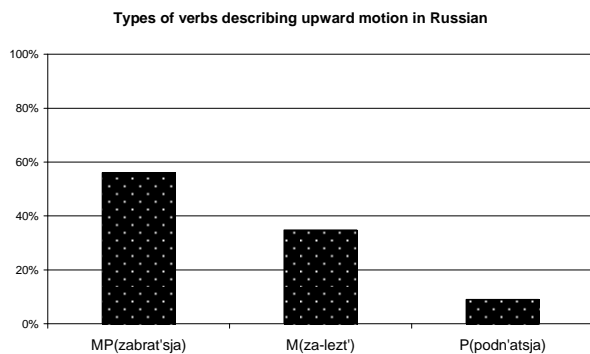


Figure 2. Predominant verbs in descriptions of upward motion.

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