

Prefixes and objecthood

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We are going to look into the behaviour of superlexical prefixes like delimitative *po-*, distributive *pere-* and cumulative *na-* in respect to how they can change the argument structure of the verb, and to compare their behaviour to that of lexical prefixes. This could be one more criterion for distinguishing between lexical and superlexical prefixes and simultaneously a tool for finding their structural relationships to the verbal stem, each other and the verbal inner argument. According to Levin (1999), verbs with simple event templates, like activities and semelfactives, have "pure constant arguments", which may be or may not be realized overtly (so-called, optional transitives), whereas those with complex event templates have "structure" arguments, one for each subevent (CAUSE and RESULT). By the previous claim (Romanova, 2003), lexical prefixes originate in RP (Result Phrase), that is, they add a subevent to the verbal template and change activities into accomplishments or achievements (1)¹. Superlexicals do not change the event structure of the verb (2,3) , and, consequently, its argument structure.

The prefix *na-* seems to be special. It does not change the object of the verb (cannot look into its event structure?) but it imposes restrictions for its selection: the object must be plural or mass genitive noun, unless there is an overt accusative NP quantifier (4). The fact opens a question of semantic interpretation of objects, particularly specific vs. non-specific reading.

The hypothesis is that a) lexical prefixes impose a specific reading on their objects; b) superlexicals are more diverse in this respect as some of them, like distributive *pere-*, seem to require a specific and quantized argument (it looks like a generic operator); cumulative *na-* selects for a non-specific object unless it has an overt determiner or quantifier; while delimitative *po-* brings about ambiguity in interpretation which can be eliminated by using a determiner (*my, this, etc.*), quantificational adverb (*already, long ago, etc.*) or scrambling. The interesting fact is that prefix-induced (non-)specificity is characteristic of (bare?) plurals or mass nouns, otherwise, independently of the aspect of a verb, count singular objects are ambiguous. Borer (2003) claims: "it is precisely the absence of ... an overt #P node that will give us the common behavior of determinerless mass nouns and bare plurals"(Book I, Ch.4, p.30). Following her and Diesing (1992) we assume that there are different ways of licensing #Ps and DPs in Russian. To get a presuppositional reading an object should a) move out of the VP overtly (in the form of Scrambling) or covertly and form a restrictive clause²; b) be in the scope of RP or some generic operator-like superlexical prefixes (*pere-*). So, RP, *pere-* and a restrictive clause must clearly assign the range to the variable $\langle e \rangle_d$, thus rendering the specific reading to the objects. For example, cumulative *na-* does not originate in RP or trigger restrictive clause formation the result being a non-specific interpretation of an object.

The following tests were used:

As proposed by Diesing (1992), a specific reading on the object correlates with scrambling, prohibition on extraction from a specific NP, lack of WCO effects and possibility of ACD. The opposite holds for a non-specific interpretation. The objects of verbs with lexical prefixes and

¹ Some perfective verbs are already accomplishments or achievements in spite of having no prefixes. Here we are speaking of the changed event structure by prefixation.

² In certain cases quantized objects are more preferable in a pre-verbal position, which is an indication that a QR in Russian can also be overt(5)

distributive *pere-* resist extractions from object NPs (6a-b) and allow ACD (7a) displaying the properties of specific NPs, whereas *na-* prefixed verbs yield a grammatical sentence in case of extraction (6c) and do not favor ACD (7b) due to a non-specific interpretation of the object.

1. a) *Pjotr pel* (pesnju). Peter sing^I-past.sg.masc. song.sg.ACC. "Peter was singing (a song)."
b) *Pjotr do-pel* *(pesnju). Peter up-sing^P-past.sg.masc.song.sg.ACC "Peter (has) reached the end of the song".
2. a) *Pjotr pel* (pesnju). Peter sing^I-past.sg.masc. song.sg.ACC "Peter was singing (a song)."
b) *Pjotr po-pel* (pesnju) i ušel. Peter DEL-sing^P-past.sg.masc. song.sg.ACC and leave^P-past.sg.masc. "Peter sang (a song) for a while and left."
c) *Pjotr za-pel* (pesnju). Peter INS-sing^P-past.sg.masc. song.sg.ACC. "Peter started singing (a song)".
3. a) *Tanja govorila* čepuxu. Tanja say^I-past.sg.fem. nonsense.sg.ACC. "Tanja was saying nonsense."
b) *Tanja na-govorila* čepuxi. Tanja CUM-say^P-past.sg.fem. nonsense.GEN "Tanja (has) said a lot of nonsense".
4. a) *Victor na-nosil* vody ?za čas/*čas. Victor CUM-carry^P-past.sg.masc. water.GEN. in hour/ hour. "Victor fetched some water ?in an hour/ *for an hour."
b) *Victor na-nosil* tonnu vody za čas/*čas. Victor CUM-carry^P-past.sg.masc. tonn.sg.ACC water.GEN. in hour/ hour. "Victor delivered a tonn of water in an hour/ *for an hour."
5. a) *My stoljko* gribov včera na-brali (?stoljko gribov). we so-many mushroom-pl.GEN. yesterday CUM-pick^P-past.pl. (so-many mushroom-pl.GEN.) "We picked so many mushrooms yesterday"
6. a) ?* *O čem ona pere-smotrela* filjmy? about what she DIST-see^P-past.sg.fem movie-pl.ACC. "What did she see the movies about?"
b) ? *O čem* Julija do-čitala knigi? about what Yulia up-read^P-past.sg.fem. book-pl.ACC. "What did Yulia read the book about?"
c) *O čem ona na-čitalasj* knig? about what she CUM-read^P-past.sg.fem. book-pl.GEN. "What did she read books about?"
7. a) *Boris do-čital* knigi, čto i ja. Boris up-read^P-past.sg.masc. book that and I. "Boris read the book (up to the end) that I did."
b) * *Boris na-nosil* vody, čto i ja. Boris CUM-fetch-past.sg.masc. water.GEN. that and I. *"Boris fetched the water that I did."

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