New Approaches to Russian Syntax

Groningen, June 2, 2010

Dependency in Universal Grammar

PROGRAM

09:30 Coffee at the Academy Building ground floor lounge

Academiegebouw, Zernikezaal

10:00	Opening by Jan-Wouter Zwart
10:05 - 10:45	**Aysa Arylova (University of Groningen)**
	Three types of predicative possessives in Russian
10:45 - 11:25	**Peter Biskup (University of Leipzig)**
	Decomposing prepositional case
11:25	short break
11:30 - 12:10	**Evgenia Markovskaya (UCL/University of Groningen)**
	Derivational analysis of gender in Russian
12:10	lunch break
13:40 - 14:20	**Radek Šimík (University of Groningen)**
	Free relatives at the syntax-semantics interface
14:20 -15:00	**Inna Tolskaya (University of Tromsø)**
	Russian prefixes with motion verbs: Conceptual Structure vs. syntax
15:00	afternoon break
15:20 - 16:00	**Natalia Slioussar (Utrecht University)**
	Information Structure in Russian: a call for relational notions
16:00 - 16:40	**Elena Titov (UCL)**
	Encoding focus, topic and contrast in Russian
16:40	closing

Three types of predicative possessives in Russian

Aysa Arylova

In this talk I will discuss the three types of predicative possessives in Russian, given in (1):

(1) *'I had a car.'*

a. U menja byl-a mašin-a.
at I.GEN be.PST-F.SG car.F-NOM.SG

b. Ja ime-l mašin-u.
I.NOM have-PST:M.SG car.F-ACC.SG

c. U menja ime-l-a-sj mašin-a.
at I.GEN have-PST-F.SG-REFL car.F-NOM.SG

(1a) is the *be*-possessive: the possessor is expressed by a prepositional *u*-phrase, and the possessum – by a Nominative DP, the verb *byt'* 'be' agrees with the possessum. (1b) illustrates the "transitive" possessive: the possessor is expressed by a Nominative DP and imposes agreement on the verb *imet'* 'have', the possessum is expressed by an Accusastive DP. (1c) is sometimes referred to as the "anti-causative" possessive: the verb *imet'sja* carries the reflexive suffix *-sja* and agrees with the Nominative possessum, whereas the possessor is expressed by an *u*-PP.

The three constructions overlap in their distribution, but there are also differences to be observed. I will address the various lexical and syntactic differences (and commonalities) between the possessive constructions in (1) and search for a principled account of the above, discussing existing analyses of the possessives, such as Chvany (1975), Bailyn (2004), Dyakonova (2007).

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Decomposing Prepositional Case

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In this paper, I am concerned with derivation of prepositional cases. I argue that the prepositional case is determined by semantic properties of particular heads of the decomposed preposition. From the syntactic point of view, the prepositional case is a result of the operation Agree between the prepositional T-head and the prepositional complement. The prepositional complement can be overt as well as covert. From the phonological point of view, the prepositional case results from application of proposed case rules. The appropriate case marker then is spelled out on the closest overt element in the prepositional phrase.

Gender as a structural feature: a case study of deverbal nominals in Russian

Evgenia Markovskaya
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This paper presents novel evidence showing that the gender selection in Russian deverbal nominals (DNs) is not a lexical feature on nominalizing suffixes, as is commonly assumed in the literature, but instead should be analyzed as a structural feature.

Data. Data from my sample of Russian eventive DNs derived by a zero suffix or *-k-* suffix indicates that there exists a relation between the argument structure of DNs and the gender selection. The majority of transitive simplex DNs in the sample are feminine (95%), whereas the majority of unergative unprefixed DNs are masculine (89%). The examples of transitive and unergative eventive DNs are given in (1) and (2) correspondingly.

(1)	a.	dač-a	pokazan-ii	b.	žar-k-a	grib-ov
		give-FEM	testimony-GEN.PL		fry-NMZ-FEM	mushroom- GEN.PL
		'giving testimony'			'frying mushrooms'	
(2)	a.	taneć	(*vals-a)	b.	pin-o-k	(*golov-y)
		danse.MASC	waltz-GEN		kick-TV-NMZ.MASC	head-GEN

Prefixed DNs show a different pattern: while unergative prefixed DNs tend to be masculine (83%), transitive prefixed DNs are equally distributed across the feminine and masculine class.

Hypothesis. The feminine gender value is selected if a DN projects an (overt or implicit) internal argument, whereas the masculine gender value is assigned whenever a DN has an unergative structure.

The evidence for the syntactic nature of the implicit internal arguments of DNs comes from the fact that implicit arguments of object control DNs can control the PRO argument of the embedded infinitival clauses (3).

(3)	a.	pros'-b-a	(k	prisutstvujušč-im$_i$)	[id-ti	k	seb-e$_i$	domoi]
		ask-NMZ-FEM	to	present-DAT	go-INF	to	self-DAT	home
		'a request (to the people present) to go to their homes'						

Analysis. Following an analysis of gender in Italian and Luganda nouns developed in Ferrari-Bridgers (2008), I propose that gender markers on Russian DNs function as nominalizing morphemes. Furthermore, adopting Chomsky's Probe-Goal framework of agreement (Chomsky 2000, 2001), I suggest that in Russian the head of the nominalizing projection *n*P, similar like *v,* may have unvalued phi-features which must be checked against the valued phi-features of an active Goal. The Goal is active for agreement if it has an unchecked Case feature. The checking of *n'*s phi-features takes place in exchange of checking the Case feature of a Goal. Thus, in case of transitive DNs, the phi-features on *n* are checked against the phi-features of the internal argument, but they remain covert, in a similar way as the checked phi-feature on *v* remain covert in languages with case marked objects and without object agreement in transitive sentences (Chomsky2000, 2001, Legate 2003, Levine & Freidin 2001). The presence of the checked phi-features on *n*P is then translated at PF as a feminine gender marker. On the other hand, in case of unergative DNs, no active nominal is available for agreement, therefore, *n* has no phi-features. In this case a default gender marker , i.e. masculine in Russian is assigned (for a discussion about masculine as a default and feminine as a marked gender value in Russian see Corbett & Frazer 1999). This analysis accounts for the pattern of gender distribution illustrated by the examples in (1-2).

Prefixed DNs. According to Svenonius (2004), the structure of lexical prefixes in Russian involves a small clause analysis, where a lexical prefix is taken to be a lexical realization of the head of the small clause - R(esult) P, responsible for the introduction of the result state sub-event. Different types of the result state correspond to different syntactic structures: if the result state

represents a change of location of an object, then the R(esult)P takes as a complement a PathP, which in its turn selects a PlaceP, as in (4). The PathP and PlaceP introduce the *figure* and *ground* arguments respectively:

(4) $[_{VP}\ V[_{R(esult)P}\ \text{PREFIX}[_{PathP}\ DP_{Figure}[_{PlaceP}\ DP_{Ground}]]]]$

If the result state is represented by a transition from one state into another, the structure does not contain PathP, and the internal DP originates in the spec of R(esult)P:

(5) $[_{VP}\ V[_{R(esult)P}\ DP\ [\text{PREFIX}\ ]]]$

I argue that the two types of prefixed structures in (4) and (5) correspond to different options of gender selection in DNs. In particular, the DNs which contain a PathP are predominantly masculine (6); whereas the DNs whose structure does not involve PathP occur mostly as feminine nouns (7).

(6)	ob-xod	dom-a	pere-vod	tekst-a
	PREF-walk.MASC	house-GEN	PREF-lead-MASC	text-GEN
	'a tour round a/the house'		'translation of a/the text'	
(7)	ob-rabot-k-a	material-a	po-kras-k-a	okon
	PREF-work-NMZ-FEM	material-GEN	PREF-paint-NMZ-FEM	window.GEN.PL
	'processing of the material'		'painting of windows'	

I assume that the head of the ResultP is a structural case assigner, which checks the Case feature of the *figure* argument. The Case feature checking involves agreement in phi-features. As was assumed above for *n*, the checked phi-features on the head of the R(esult)P also remain covert. Then the gender assignment pattern illustrated by the examples in (6-7) follows straightforward: the *figure* argument of PathP gets its Case feature checked by R(esult)P and it becomes inactive for further agreement with *n*, hence the derived DN is assigned a default gender value - masculine. On the other hand, the argument introduced by the ResultP must have its Case feature checked outside of the small clause, i.e. by *n.* As a result, the unpronounced checked phi-features on *n* surface as a feminine gender value on the derived DN.

The status of the 'nominalizing' suffix -k-. I suggest that the suffix *-k-,* which is traditionally taken to be a nominalizing suffix, in fact performs a different function. The suffix *-k-*, I propose, acts as a quantizing element, similar like the homophonous diminutive suffix *-k-*. Based on Borer's analysis of mass-count distinction in nouns (Borer 2005), I suggest that the suffix *-k-* of the DNs originates not in *n,* but as a head of a functional projection responsible for the derivation of a count interpretation for a noun. The consequences of this analysis will be discussed.

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Free relatives at the syntax-semantics interface

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What is the effect of syntactic cycles/phases on the interfaces? The minimalist T-model assumes that PF and LF are passive depositories of structures created in syntax. Syntax creates a piece of structure and then "hangs" it onto the previously created structure(s), as though they were two pieces of a chain. This seems to suggest that PF and LF cannot distinguish between pieces of structure which *do* and which do *not* correspond to syntactic phases: both PF and LF are just unbroken "chains" of structures. In this talk, I will explore a hypothesis that contradicts this strictly modular architecture of grammar. In particular, I will argue that semantic type-shifting operations, as defined by Partee (1987), only target LF objects that correspond to syntactic phases. Effectively, type-shifting, a semantic operation *par excellence*, is syntactically constrained. I will mainly concentrate on the *iota* type-shifting function, which transforms an $\langle e, t\rangle$ type object to an e type object. The empirical motivation is drawn from the syntax and semantics free relative clauses.

There are two empirical aspects of free relative clauses that have been well-known and well-described but that have so far resisted explanation.

(1) **Fact 1** Free relative clauses are construed as definite DPs.
Fact 2 The main predicate of free relatives must be finite.

The talk will be organized as follows.

1. I will argue that (1) are indeed facts, despite some apparent counterexamples.
2. I will show that Fact 2 entails Fact 1 and that this entailment follows from the more general implications (2):

   (2) For any nominal wh-clause (i.e. a wh-clause that characterizes a set of individuals) it holds that
   (i) if that wh-clause is finite, then it is construed as a definite (it denotes the maximal entity that is characterized by it), and
   (ii) if that wh-clause is non-finite, then it is construed as an indefinite (it simply characterizes a set)

3. If (2) is correct, then none of the existing theories of free relatives are even *descriptively* adequate. This is because none of the theories relate definiteness to finiteness. Both properties are stipulated separately.
4. I will show that the implications in (2) follow from two assumptions: (i) finiteness correlates with phase-hood; (ii) type-shifting only applies to expressions that correspond to syntactic phases (the main claim of the talk).

If the line of argumentation above is correct, it renders the well-accepted D/*pro*+CP analysis of free relative clauses (Harbert 1983; Suñer 1983; Caponigro 2003) obsolete. This is a desirable result, since the presence of an empty nominal category on top of the wh-clause has never received convincing support (as will be demonstrated). Instead, free relative clauses are bare CPs, possibly exhibiting a reprojection of the wh-word (Donati 2006; Ott 2009).

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Russian prefixes with motion verbs: Conceptual Structure vs. syntax

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I address the problem of widespread polysemy of Russian verbal prefixes, particularly when added to motion verbs. I argue that multiple instantiations of a single prefix share a core conceptual meaning, and receive the specific denotations as a function of its syntactic position, thereby shifting part of the computational burden from the lexicon to the syntax.

When added to a directional motion verb, prefixes behave as lexical and the meaning refers to spatial domain, but when the same prefix is added to a non-directional motion verb, it behaves as a superlexical prefix and its meaning is associated with the temporal domain. Furthermore, the prefixes in the spatial and temporal domain demonstrate an intriguing parallelism: in the spatial domain, the prefixes may refer to beginning, duration and end of the path (i.e. source, route and goal), while when applied to the temporal domain the prefixes are associated with beginning, duration and completion of the event in time.

I will argue that:

1. There is a single lexical entry for each prefix, which contains its core conceptual meaning and a set of syntactic features, which specify the kind of transition involved.

2. The syntactic structure of a motion verb contains, among others, the following terminals: duration, completion and inception above aspect phrase, and path, source and goal in the result projection inside VP.

3. Lexical prefixes, when applied to directional motion verbs, modify path; the same prefixes, in their superlexical function, when applied to non-directional motion verbs, modify time. The denotation of a path or time reading for one and the same prefix results from the core conceptual meaning mapped onto the syntactic position.

Information Structure in Russian: a call for relational notions

In this talk, I will present some of the research that I did for my PhD thesis (Slioussar 2007) and in subsequent years, arguing that it is necessary and advantageous to introduce relational notions in the Information Structure (IS) field (such as *more / less accessible* instead of *given / new*).

Corpus studies (e.g. Sirotinina 1965) show that the neutral word order is 'IO DO' in Russian. The inverse 'DO IO' order was traditionally associated with DO giveness and narrow focus. Among generative studies, this was extensively discussed in (Junghanns & Zybatow 1995). However, in (1b) and (2b) both the IO and the DO are new and part of focus. In (1b), the IO is interpreted as additionally emphasized as a result of reordering. In (2b), the DO is perceived as more accessible (by virtue of being more predictable). In (3), the whole sentence is in focus, but the subject is interpreted as more salient.

(1) a. *Nikogda by ne podumal, čto moj načal'nik ljubit životnyx.*
'I would never imagine that my boss likes animals.'

b. *No segodnja* | *o n* | *otdal* | *buterbrod* | *golodnoj sobake!*
but today | he | gave away | sandwich.ACC | [hungry dog].DAT

(2) a. A: *Čto ty delaeš'?*
'What are you doing?'

b. B: *Pišu* | *pis'mo* | *mame.*
write.1PERS.SG | letter.ACC | mom.DAT

(3) *Redkij slučaj v gubernii:* | *čeloveka* | *ukusil a* | *bešenaja lisa.*
(a rare case in the province) | man.ACC | bit | [rabid fox].NOM

These examples present an argument against feature-based IS theories (like Rizzi 1997) and for configurational approaches (like Reinhart 1995, 2006), thus bearing on the most important ongoing debate in the IS field. While discussing these and similar cases, I will focus on some interesting criticisms raised by Elena Titov (2008) who will also be present in the workshop. I will outline an IS model based on these observations and will argue that the necessary syntactic configurations are best derived with edge features introduced in Chomsky (2008). Finally, if time allows, I will demonstrate how relational notions can solve some persistent IS-related problems in Russian and other languages.

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ENCODING FOCUS, TOPIC AND CONTRAST IN RUSSIAN

Elena Titov (UCL)

Abstract: In my talk I will look at two information-structural phenomena, contrastive focus (CF) and contrastive topic (CT), as in (1) and (2) below. These are traditionally analysed as separate notions because they occur in sentences with distinct interpretation and are marked with distinct intonational contours. Thus, a sentence containing CF conveys the interpretation of counter-assertion to a proposition in the context, with CF carrying falling intonation (see (1)). A sentence with a contrastive topic, on the other hand, triggers the interpretation of a set of sets of propositions (Büring 1997), and the intonation assigned to CT has a (fall)-rise contour (see (2)).

Based on the identical syntactic behaviour of CF and CT in languages like Russian, as well as on their association with identical interpretative features, I will argue that CF and CT should be analyzed as one and the same information-structural notion, with the difference between sentences containing CF, on the one hand, and CT, on the other, reduced to the distinct nature of an additional non-presupposed element obligatorily present in the sentence. In sentences with CF, as in (1), this additional element is a contrastive verum focus (i.e. focus on the truth-value of the utterance). In sentences with CT, as in (2), it can be any non-presupposed non-contrastive element.

(1) a. [Ivan čitaet knigi.]CONTEXT — Russian
Ivan reads books

Net, Ivan [gaz**E**ty]CF čitaet (a ne knigi)
no Ivan newspapers.ACC reads (and not books)
'Ivan reads newspapers (but no books).'

b. [John reads books.]CONTEXT — English

John reads [newspapers]CF, (not books).

(2) a. [Kto čitaet knigi?]CONTEXT — Russian
Who reads books?

[Gazety]CT čitaet [Iv**A**n]FOC (a nasčët knig ja ne znaju.)
newspapers.ACC reads Ivan (and about books I not know)
'Ivan reads newspapers (but I don't know about books.)'

b. [Who reads books?]CONTEXT — English

[John]FOC reads [CT newspapers]CT, (but I'm not sure who reads books).