Lexical-Functional Grammar Account of Verbal Prefixes in Surzhyk

Slavic verbal prefixes are traditionally divided into lexical and superlexical (Ramchand, 2004; Smith & Rappaport, 1997, Svenonius, 2004):

(1) …**s**-lozhytj akt na menia **(lexical)**
Together-put.Inf indictment on me.Acc
'To put together indictment against me' (Surzhyk)

(2) Vona dva mesiatsa **pro**-lezhala v bol'nitse **(superlexical)**
She.Nom two months durative- laid in hospital
'She was in hospital for two months' (Surzhyk)

Lexical prefixes (LPs) allow secondary imperfectives and form idiosyncratic meaning with the verb. They disallow prefix stacking and may license argument structure. Superlexical prefixes (SPs) disallow secondary imperfective but can attach to a string consisting of the LP + verb stem + secondary imperfective suffix. They allow prefix stacking. SPs do not license argument structure but add information about the progress of the event. Due to distinct syntactic behavior with respect to argument structure, several syntactic analyses have been proposed to account for distribution of verbal prefixes and their influence on the verb argument and perfectivity. In this paper I show that lexical-functional grammar (LFG) can account for verbal prefixes in a unified manner by abstaining from transformational syntax. I attempt to find a unified analysis by using a transformational framework, but the problems remain. Thus, the LFG analysis is to be preferred. I use the data from Surzhyk, a mixed Russian-Ukrainian language.

To capture differences in behavior of verbal prefixes, Ramchand (2004) proposed to decompose the event structure (3) to account for the influence of prefixes on argument structure and verb meaning:

(3) $[_{Asp}\ [_{vP}$ spec $[_{v'}\ v\ [_{VP}$ spec$[_{V'}$V $[_{RP}$ spec $[_{R'}$ R XP (PP)]]]]]]]

LPs originate in R° and move up to the verb, while SPs originate in Asp° and add to the verb by adjacency. Svenonius (2004) proposed an extended PP to capture spatial relationships characterized in terms of Figure and Ground. Thus, there are two possible places for the origin of verbal prefixes: the R° and the P°. According to Svenonius (2004), the evidence is not clear whether a prefix originates in PP and stops in R° on its way to V° or it originates in R° as postulated by Ramchand (2004). Assuming head-movement analysis, nothing stipulates left-adjunction. Thus, prefixes are assumed to left-adjoin, while suffixes right-adjoin to the verb. According to a proposed alternative analysis of phrase movement (Svenonius, 2004), all LPs originate in extended PP; the DP moves to Spec, PATH P, and the prefix moves by the remnant movement to Spec, AspP. PP as a place of origin for prefixes, however, fails to account for nonspatial resultative VPs.

One could propose a more unified syntactic analysis and abandon phrase movement in favor of head movement. It preserves the R° as the origin place for LPs. To account for left adjoining heads, no right adjoining operation in Surzhyk can be postulated following Kayne (1991). In LPs, a prefix originates in R°, moves up to V°, incorporates into the verb from the left and moves up to the *v*° to check [+ perf] feature on the Asp°, in (4) shown as (1):

(4) $[_{Asp}$ [+perf] $[_{vP}$ spec $[_{v'}\ s_i$-lozhyt$j_j\ [_{VP}$ spec$[_{V'}\ t_i$-$t_j\ [_{RP}$ akt $[_{R'}\ t_i$ PP]]]]]]]

Left adjunction for both LPs and SPs can be proposed. The advantage of postulating single left-adjunction for both types of prefixes makes the analysis more unified. However, it blurs their differences in meaning and their influence on the verb structure. In (5), illustrated in (2), the verb moves to the Spec, AspP checking [+perf] feature on its way and the SP moves up and left-adjoins to the verb, as shown below:

(5) [$_{AspP}$ pro$_j$-lezhala$_i$ [$_{Asp}$ t$_j$ [$_{vP}$ vona [$_{v'}$ t$_i$ [$_{VP}$ spec[$_{V'}$ t$_i$ $_{RP}$]]]]]]

Although adapting these approaches could potentially make the analysis of verbal prefixes more homogenous, it fails to account for secondary imperfective suffix. Since this suffix assigns [-perf] feature to the verb it attaches, it has been postulated to originate in Asp° (Ramchand, 2004). Then, the SPs must originate higher that AspP on some other aspectual head. This aspectual head would introduce new devices into an existing account which is undesirable.

I show that LFG's linked parallel structures, each containing information of a different type, can account for verbal prefixes more efficiently than transformational syntax. In this account, c(onstituent)-structure reflects phrasal and word-internal constituency including affix order and prefix stacking, while the various properties of affixes are captured at other levels: (1) changes in the valency of a verb when an LP is attached are reflected at a(rgument)-structure and linked via universal principles to grammatical functions at f(unctional)-structure; (2) the problem of verbs with perfectivizing prefixes and deperfectivizing secondary imperfective is handled at m(orphosyntactic)-structure.

The present framework can be encapsulated as the following two annotated c-structure rules for the sublexical structure of verbs:

(R1) a. V_perf → (SP*) (LP*) V_stem b. V_2impf → V_perf 2nd-impf
[shared f-structure] [shared f-structure]
[shared m-structure] [embedded m-str] [main m-str]

Thus different nodes of c-structure (top line) can correspond to a single shared f-structure (middle line), and to m-structures that are shared (bottom line in R1a) or in a hierarchical relationship (bottom line of R1b). The account then works as follows: (R1a) allows zero or more adjacent SPs followed by zero or more adjacent LPs, thus prefix stacking and ordering, while (R1b) correctly orders the 2nd-impf suffix. As for property (1), an LP in the sublexical c-structure of a verb changes its a-structure by adding a thematic role, which the universal principles of Lexical Mapping Theory (Bresnan 2001) realize as an additional grammatical function at f-structure. The problem in (2) is solved if the PERF feature of the f-structure has the same value as the PERF feature of the main m-structure. Thus a verb with a [PERF +] m-structure (from an LP added by R1a) embedded inside a matrix [PERF -] m-structure (from a 2nd-impf suffix added by R1b) will have a [PERF -] f-structure.

Perfectivity is here a feature of two different levels of structure: at f-structure is the perfectivity of the sentence, which is to be semantically interpreted, while at m-structure is the perfectivity of the various morphological forms that make up the sentence. The separation of these different types of perfectivity between two levels of structure allows for a clean characterization of the phenomenon.

The parallel levels of structure in LFG allow for the factorization of different types of grammatical information into separate, simple structures over which simple generalizations can be stated. Previous accounts of these issues, on the other hand, resort to a single structure for all types of information, resulting in complex representations and obscured, if not downright inaccurate, generalizations.

Selected References

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