

Résumés de Thèses/Dissertation Abstracts

On Subjects and Predicates in Russian

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The present dissertation discusses relevant linguistic theories in connection with subject positions and predication relations, and presents some issues that have not, in my view, been addressed in the linguistic literature so far. I offer a new approach to sentential structure in light of the most recent developments within the framework of Chomsky's Minimalist Program (Chomsky, 1993, 1995, 2001a, 2001b). The aim of this dissertation is to integrate the cognitively based lexical semantics approach and the formal analyses with relation to philosophy and logic of language. This study employs case theory and predication theory in a way of relating semantic components to formal syntactic descriptions. Russian data and data from other languages (Ukrainian and Bulgarian, Romance languages, English, and Hebrew) are analyzed to bring out the nature of the categories each language possesses.

To answer the question of how semantically empty elements are interpreted by the conceptual system, special attention is paid to null categories in Russian (*pro* of impersonal sentences, *pro* of existential sentences). Two subject positions on the verb's argument grid are examined, and the conclusion is drawn concerning the existing parallelism of lexical (micro-) and syntactic (macro-) models. The 'indirect', or 'null', subject position is considered more general and encompassing in both cases (Soschen 2000, 2002 a).

Subjectless sentences are not uncommon in Russian. Whether verbs appear in a sentence with or without their subjects varies considerably across languages; yet, subjects are always represented by a set of properties that can be defined from the point of view of their semantic

roles. In the first Chapter of this dissertation I analyze Russian verbs that appear in impersonal constructions, with an emphasis on the 'Adversity impersonal' structure of the kind *Lodku uneslo volnoj* (the boat was carried away by the tide).

Next, I argue for the existence of two subject positions in Russian VPs of resultative types, which parallels and is a direct extension of Chomsky's (1995) idea concerning a double subject position. To support my view, I introduce a new definition of direct and indirect agents, and explore the way of treating them from the point of view of their participation in the event as primary and secondary causers. In Russian Adversity-impersonal sentences, out of the two subject positions, the position of *pro* is that of the indirect agent (causer of event). Russian impersonal verbs with Accusative and Dative logical subjects are regarded as having a covert *pro* on their argument grid as well. *Pro* is also an expression of the exclusion function, in that no other element may appear in its position.

The differences in formation of related personal, impersonal, and unaccusative structures of verbs with the same core meaning can be explained depending on the manner in which semantic structures are projected into syntax. It also implies that Nominative, Instrumental, Dative, and Accusative Case can be predicted in certain semantic configurations. A detailed analysis of resultative structures thus helps establish a connection between semantic properties and the syntactic realization of Case.

In order to proceed to the analysis of two subject positions in a sentence (Chapter II), I show that Agr has content in certain languages by arguing for the existence of the marker of Agr in modern Russian (N(ull)-Pron(oun)). N-Pron in Russian in general corresponds to the pronominal copula (Pron) in Hebrew. The presence vs. absence of N-Pron in Russian and Pron in Hebrew is in agreement with the semantic individual vs. stage-level distinction of adjectival predicates, which are reanalyzed in

this thesis as the meanings of unsaturated functions that may require a particular ('relativizing') argument. Predicates appear as linked to two functional heads Agr and T, which in their turn are associated with the features Generic and Specific.

According to the results of this investigation, the latter (macro-) model associates semantic generic/ non-generic distinction of sentences with two functional heads Tense and Agreement in English, Russian, Hebrew, and Spanish. The notion of genericity now includes a personal level, e.g. when a certain property holds in all (or most) situations possible for an individual (Soschen 1999). The study employs predication theory to relate semantic components to formal syntactic descriptions; as an example, certain adjectival predicates that do not participate in generic formation are represented as unsaturated functions of states.

As a conclusion, this Chapter offers a unifying analysis of sentences with copular elements and two types of predicates that appear alongside these copulas in Russian, Hebrew, and Spanish. The roles of Pron in Hebrew, N-Pron in Russian, and *SER/ ESTAR* in Spanish are thus made explicit.

Chapter III deals with the formation of Small Clauses (SC) in Russian and English as a continuation of a longstanding discussion concerning the syntax and semantics of SCs. Following Chomsky 2000, 2001a, 2001 b, predication is viewed as an operation of Merge on two syntactic elements, which supports the idea of a direct connection between certain syntactic representations (e.g. small clauses) and the initial stages of language acquisition (Soschen 2002 b, 2003).

This Chapter explores the ways predication relations are established within NPs modified by adjectives; the issue that has not, to my knowledge, been addressed before. Predication relations are re-examined as the set of ordered functions where not only their number but their direction is of importance, as they apply both on the sentence level and

within modified NPs. The research closely relates the issue of syntactic predication to a cognitive approach to lexical units as sets of categorial features, in order to enhance our understanding of categorization and the way words are combined in lexical units. In addition, this part of the research draws a parallel between Focus in NPs and the way predication is established within SCs.

Lexical structures of transitive vs. intransitive verbs and their arguments are investigated as a way of exploring the minimal links of predication. According to the results of this research, these models, analyzed as 'layered' in the sense that they can be projected into syntax by parts, exhibit cross-linguistic consistency. The conclusion is that lexical arguments must be assessed from the point of view of their place in the hierarchy of events/ states.

To continue the analysis of the semantic component of transitive verbs, Chapter IV offers a comparative survey of Russian SJA-inflected verbs and Romance verbs with reflexive clitics. A detailed analysis of the properties of the 'result' layer leads one to the issue of reflexivity. The analysis of reflexive structures in Slavic and Romance languages (Rivero 2001, 2002 a, 2002 b) is followed to establish a link between the syntactic properties of reflexive verbs and the cognitive notion of our access to ourselves (following Chierchia 1989).

The role of SJA-inflection is similar to that of reflexive cliticization. I will suggest a new approach to reflexive verbs, which is aimed at reconciling two major theories (the 'unaccusativity' and the 'reflexive reduction' analyses). The semantic difference between SJA-suffixed verbs and verbs with reflexive objects is established by applying Chierchia's *De Se* and *De Re* treatment of verbs with reflexive objects. In connection with SJA-suffixation of Russian verbs and their subsequent lack of transitivity, middle formation and passive formation are reanalyzed from the point of view of their sub-event structure. To establish the semantic context in

which resultative structures might apply I discuss cognate objects, and show which of them are to be considered true objects.

Chapter V concludes this thesis with the extended summary of some major points of the preceding argumentation. To promote the discussion of expletive elements in Russian started in Chapter I, I postulate the existence of *pro* (*expl*) in existential sentences. The Definiteness Restriction (DR) effects show that the expletive has a categorial feature 'specific' both in English and in Russian. I assume that in Russian, in contrast with English, the EPP feature can be checked not only by NPs, but also by PPs, in which case DR effects are absent. The Chapter also addresses the issue of agreement, and presents some ideas concerning Genericity (GF) and Specificity (SF) feature-checking. I assume that Genericity is associated with Agr and Specificity with T positions. GF-checking of Agr and SF-checking of Tense accounts for the individual- and stage-level distinction of predicates.

It is tentatively suggested that the sentential structure with two subject positions in Russian is in fact the projection of a verbal lexical (micro-) structure. Lexical arguments are assessed from the point of view of their ability to either cause an event/ state or to undergo a change caused by the event (as in Chapters I and III). Thus, no additional semantic role labeling is needed, and the distinction between true arguments and other (optional) arguments is made clear.

The aim of this research is to contribute to our knowledge and perception of natural language universals, and to stimulate further work towards the development of interdisciplinary approach to the study of language.

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