

Scalarity in the domain of verbal prefixes

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Received: 14 April 2011 / Accepted: 16 January 2012 / Published online: 3 April 2013
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Abstract This paper puts forward a formal analysis of the semantics of Russian verbal prefixes that is formulated within the framework of degree semantics. Prefixes are analyzed as degree modifiers. The paper demonstrates how this analysis captures the properties of *pere-*, one of the most complex and challenging verbal prefixes in Russian. It is proposed that spatial, temporal, excessive, comparative, and iterative uses of this prefix can all be unified under a scalar approach. The distinctions observed between these uses are largely restricted to the types of scale and comparative standard that are involved in the semantics of the verbal phrase.

Keywords Degree semantics · Scalarity · Verbal prefixes · Slavic · Standard of comparison

1 Introduction

The notion of scales and degrees has been employed in the linguistics literature in order to capture semantico-pragmatic properties of a broad range of linguistic items, including gradable adjectives and adverbs, prepositions, degree modifiers, and verbs. Degree semantics has proved quite efficient in capturing the truth conditions of sentences that contain certain types of expression, such as gradable adjectives. In this sense, we can think of scales as a convenient tool that allows us to represent the semantics of various classes of linguistic expressions in a satisfactory way. But the usefulness of scales extends further than that. A consideration of linguistic phenomena from the scalar perspective brings to our attention novel aspects of these phenomena. New questions arise, comparisons along novel parameters are drawn, and, as a result, a deeper understanding of the semantic nature of the phenomena is obtained. These

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