Metaphors for Time in Russian

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This talk has two parts:

**Part 1:**
- Physical objects in space > events in time
- Aspect in Russian

**Part 2:**
- Overlapping meanings > illusion of emptiness
- RAZ- ‘apart’
Main Idea of Part 1

- Physical matter provides the source domain for the metaphor that motivates aspect in Russian

  PERFECTIVE IS A DISCRETE SOLID OBJECT vs. IMPERFECTIVE IS A FLUID SUBSTANCE
Russian Aspect:

- All verbs (and all forms of all verbs) are either
  - Perfective --or--
  - Imperfective
- Russian aspect has a complex and seemingly incoherent array of uses
The Two Types of Matter

- **Discrete Solid Object:**
  - Chair
  - Apple

- **Fluid substance:**
  - Sand
  - Water
A. Edges

- Perfective:
  - Has edges
    1)  

- Imperfective
  - Has no edges
    2)  

X
B. Shape

- **Perfective**
  - Can have various shapes 3), 4), 5)

- **Imperfective**
  - Has no shape but can spread 6), 7), 8), 9)

[Image of various shapes]
C. Integrity

- **Perfective:**
  - A unique occurrence 10)

- **Imperfective:**
  - Continuous processes and repetitions 11), 12)
D. Countability

- Perfective:
  - Quantified 13), 14)

- Imperfective:
  - Not inherently quantified, can fill 15), 16), 17)
E. Streamability

- **Perfective:**
  - Gestalt 18)

- **Imperfective:**
  - Gradual accumulation 19), determined motion verbs
F. Penetrability

- Perfective:
- Imperfective:
  Internal descriptions 20)
G. Conversions

- **Perfective:**
  - -ну-
  - singularization, packaging (23)

- **Imperfective:**
  - pulverization & piling of repetition 21), 22)
H. Compatibility

- Perfective: Sequencing and future 24), 25), 26)
- Imperfective: Simultaneity and present 27), 28), 29), 30)
Perfective embedded in imperfective:
Interuption of ongoing action 31)
I. Dynamicity

- Perfective: moves story along 32)
- Imperfective slows story down 32)
J. Salience

- Perfective: obvious, foregrounded events 32)
- Imperfective: backgrounded events 32), 33)
K. Contiguity

- Combination of perfective edges with imperfective masses 34), 35), 36)
L. Stability

- Perfective: satisfying stability (37), (38), (39)
- Imperfective: nothing to grab onto (40), (41)
M. Texture

- Perfective: forceful (42)
- Imperfective: Generalized (43) and polite
N. Implied conversions

- Perfective: Trying and succeeding
- Imperfective: Previous result no longer there
Main idea of Part 2

- Prefixes are used to convert Imperfective $\rightarrow$ Perfective
- In some uses, prefixes are considered to have meaning, in others they are considered “empty”
- In “empty” uses, meanings of prefix and verb overlap, creating illusion of emptiness
Why purely perfectivizing prefixes aren’t empty (1)

- Assume:
  - Only purpose of prefixes is to mark perfective aspect
- How many prefixes are needed?
  - Reasonable answer: ONE
- Russian has 19 relevant prefixes (Krongauz 1998)

The number of prefixes suggests that they are not pure markers of aspect.
Why purely perfectivizing prefixes aren’t empty (2)

- Assume
  - Prefixes are pure aspectual markers

- Prediction
  - Even distribution of prefixes across base verbs they combine with

The UNeven distribution suggests that the prefixes do different jobs.
Why purely perfectivizing prefixes aren’t empty (3)

- Assume
  - Prefixes are pure aspectual markers

- Prediction
  - Prefixes are assigned to borrowings in random fashion

- But
  - Native speakers know which prefixes to use with borrowings

The consistent assignment of prefixes to borrowings suggests that prefixes are not semantically empty.
Structure of the argument

1. Explore meaning of raz- in verbs where its meaning is UNcontroversial:
   - Specialized perfectives
   - Complex act perfectives
2. Compare with the use of raz- in verbs where its meaning is considered “empty”:
   - Natural perfectives
3. The same meaning attested in (1) and (2).
4. Raz- has the same meaning in all types of perfectives.
5. There is no semantically empty raz- in Russian.
Prototype for *raz-*

“APART”:

- Outward movement in various directions from a point

- The general schema is instantiated in a variety of subcategories

- Prototype = “PHYSICAL APART”
  - Physical object divided in pieces

To explode is *RAZorvat’sja*
Specialized and complex act perfectives

1. PHYSICAL APART
2. CRUSH
3. SPREAD (metaphor)
4. SPREAD
5. SOFTEN, DISSOLVE
6. SWELL
7. EXCITE (metaphor)
8. EXCITE
9. UN-, DIS-
10. UN-, DIS-

rastoptat’ ‘trample’
raspilit’ ‘saw’
rastvorit’ ‘dissolve’
raskalit’ ‘make red-hot’
razreklamirovat’ ‘publicize all over’
razvolnovat’ sja ‘become upset’
razdurovat’ sja ‘become upset’
razdut’ ‘inflate’
razdut’ ‘inflate’
razdosadovat’ ‘annoy’
razgruzit’ ‘unload’
razvolnovat’ sja ‘become upset’
raspolzasovat’ ‘roll out’
Natural perfectives

1. PHYSICAL APART
2. CRUSH
3. SPREAD
4. SPREAD (metaphor)
5. SOFTEN, DISSOLVE
6. SWELL
7. EXCITE
8. EXCITE (metaphor)
9. UN-, DIS-
10. UN-, DIS- (metaphor)
11. INGRESS.
1. PHYSICAL APART
2. CRUSH
3. SPREAD (metaphor)
4. SPREAD
5. SOFTEN, DISSOLVE
6. SWELL
7. EXCITE
8. EXCITE (metaphor)
9. UN-, DIS-
10. UN-, DIS- (metaphor)
11. INGRESS.

Natural perfectives

Only in specialized perfectives

Only in complex acts
Overlap and the illusion of emptiness

Specialized perfectives & complex acts:
- Prefix and verb have different meanings
- The meaning of the prefix stands out

Natural perfectives:
- Prefix and verb have overlapping meanings
- The meaning of the prefix is “invisible”
- An illusion of semantic emptiness is created
Take-home messages

- We use physical experiences of space to construct concepts of time
- Metaphors for time and events can be complex
- Overlapping meanings can create an illusion of emptiness