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What Swedish Prepositional Constructions Reveal about Russian Converb Meaning

a Corpus-Based Study

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Academic dissertation

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the meanings and uses of Russian converbs, with particular focus on resultant state meanings and teleological relations between converbs and matrix predicates. The study adopts a contrastive, corpus-based approach, using Swedish prepositional constructions as search cues to identify corresponding meanings expressed by converbs in Russian. The analysis is grounded in Boguslavskij's (1977) distinction between 'manner adverbials', which are interpreted within the temporal domain of the matrix predicate, and 'temporal adverbials', which introduce a temporal domain for the matrix. This distinction is compared, where relevant, with Klein's (1994) notion of 'topic time'. The first part of the thesis examines converbs expressing 'resultant states'. It is shown that these usages function as 'depictives' in the sense of Schultze-Berndt and Himmelmann (2005), patterning with predicatively used comitatives and participles and denoting temporary properties with continuous relevance to the subject. These constructions are analysed as manner-type adverbials: the converb does not introduce its own temporal domain but is interpreted using the time of the matrix predicate. Such readings are favoured by intransitive configurations and by constructions that establish reference to the subject's body, including inalienable body parts and functionally equivalent items. The second part of the thesis analyses converbs involved in a teleological division of labour between means and end ('instrumental action' and 'purpose'). It is argued that these relations fall within the domain of 'complementary coincidence' (Růžička 1980). Instrumental converb constructions are shown to vary with respect to temporal interpretation: some behave like manner adverbials, specifying the method by which an action is carried out, while others pattern more closely with temporal adverbials by providing a correlate for an evaluative or interpretative judgment expressed by the matrix predicate. The interpretation as either 'means' (method/effective factor) or 'end' (purpose/consequence) depends on the relative method-neutrality of either the converb or the matrix predicate. This also accounts for the observed convertibility between 'means' and 'end' interpretations in translation. Overall, the thesis provides new corpus-based evidence for previously underdescribed converb constructions in Russian and proposes constructional generalisations that integrate semantic, temporal, and teleological dimensions of converb meaning.

Keywords: Russian, Swedish, converbs, gerunds, adverbial participles, verbal adverbs, grammatical semantics, purpose, means, teleology, complementary coincidence, corpus linguistics, contrastive linguistics, adverbials, relational meanings

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