

How strongly are morphologically related words connected: evidence from Russian verbs

Saturday, June 24, 2017 10:50 AM (1h 55m)

It was shown that access to the base word depends on the properties of its derivatives, most notably on the morphological family size (e.g. Moscoso del Prado Martin 2004). Evidently, this effect is due to the fact that derivationally related words are connected in the mental lexicon. We explore the role of different factors in the relative strength of such connections.

In Russian, verbs can be derived from other verbs by prefixation (*tolkat*^а 'to push' - *zatolkat*^а 'to push into, to push too much (in a crowd)') and by suffixation (*tolkat*^ь - *tolknuť*^ь 'to push once'). Prefixed verbs tend to preserve all inflectional properties of the base verb except for its aspect, but their semantics is often only partly predictable. Suffixation always changes the verb's inflectional class, but allows for a much lesser semantic variability than prefixation. We looked at the suffixes *-va-* used for secondary imperfectivization and *-nu-* deriving semelfactives.

To explore whether suffixed or prefixed verbs have a stronger connection to their base verb in the mental lexicon, we conducted a masked priming lexical decision experiment with three conditions: a suffixed prime, a prefixed prime and an orthographically and semantically unrelated prime (control). We had 39 stimulus sets (three primes and a target verb), 13 pairs of unrelated primes and targets to counterbalance the number of morphologically related ones and 52 pairs with nonce verb targets (in half of them, primes were orthographically similar to targets). 47 native speakers took part in the study.

We found that suffixed primes produced significantly shorter response latencies compared to the control condition than prefixed primes did (RM ANOVA by subjects and by items was used). Thus, regular and predictable semantic correspondences are more important than shared morphological features (the forms of prefixed and base verbs literally coincide except for the prefix).

Primary authors: CHUPRINA, Anastasia (School of linguistics, HSE, Moscow); SLIOUSSAR, Natalia (School of linguistics, HSE, Moscow)

Presenters: CHUPRINA, Anastasia (School of linguistics, HSE, Moscow); SLIOUSSAR, Natalia (School of linguistics, HSE, Moscow)

Session Classification: Poster 2 (with coffee)

Track Classification: Freely Contributed Paper