

Cognitive Prototypicality of Slavic Reflexive Constructions

Semantics of Russian reflexive verbs is diverse (Isačenko 1960, Vinogradov 1972, Gerritsen 1990, Israeli 1997, and Ahn 2006, etc.), but change in the participant structure of a sentence is known as so-called the invariant meaning of the reflexive construction. For example, Isačenko's "intransitivization" or Kemmer's "low elaboration of an event" describes semantic characteristics very well, but Slavic, especially Russian seems to have something more to the meanings above. A typical reflexive construction *On moetsja* 'He is washing (himself)' is motivated from the corresponding transitive verb *myt'* 'wash' which usually has two separate participants as an agent and a patient of washing. The corresponding SJA verb *myt'sja* 'wash oneself' refers to one participant with two semantic roles. However, some SJA sentences do not change the participant structure. SJA verb *rabotat'sja* 'work' is made from the corresponding already-intransitive verb *rabotat'* 'work'. SJA sentence *Segodnja mne ne rabotalos'* 'I did not feel like working today' is semantically distinct from *Segodnja ja ne rabotal* 'I did not work today'. These two sentences can designate the same situation, but the first SJA sentence means that the dative subject does not have a full control over the action of working, i.e. a unknown or contextual cause of not working is entailed in the SJA sentence, while the non-SJA sentence does not have this kind of implication. Kemmer's low elaboration of an event (1993) does not fit in this case, because SJA sentence provides more information than the corresponding non-SJA sentence. The semantic network of Russian SJA shows that the function of SJA is related to change of the focus in a sentence (Ahn 2006). Janko-Trinickaja defines the general meaning of SJA as emphasis on the independence of an event of a verb from the participants of the event (Janko-Trinickaja 1962: 245-6). Change in the participant structure and low elaboration of event are just characteristics of SJA sentences, and speaker chooses SJA sentence over the semantically corresponding non-SJA sentence to signal focus change. The focus change is a prototype of the semantic network of Russian SJA, and the diversely represented peripheral meanings are observed in the network.

Other Slavic languages also have similar reflexive clitics, for example, Czech SE (*se, si*), Bulgarian SE, Polish SIĘ, etc. Czech and Bulgarian have both accusative and dative forms. Russian SJA does not have formal distinction, but shows similar uses. Similarities and differences among those clitics can be systematically categorized in a semantic network, and it is possible to give proper explanations for network connections and relations among members. Using authentic data from corpora can verify the prototype of Slavic reflexive clitics and explain the semantic network. Cognitive prototypicality of Slavic reflexive clitics is the main subject of the current research.

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