The quest for the prototype
A case of the Russian prefix *pri-*

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Questions

- What is the prototype of the Russian prefix *pri*-?
  - Different features of a prototype point to different submeanings of the prefix *pri*-
- What is prototype?
  - Modern cognitive linguistics faces the “the necessity to investigate the phenomenon of prototypicality more thoroughly”, since “the notion is far from straightforward” (Guilquin 2006: 180-181) and the prefix *pri*- presents a case of inconsistency among features of the prototype.
Semantic schema for prefix *pri*- is ‘approaching’
The trajector is moving towards the landmark and as a result
  - arrives at the close proximity of the landmark (*prijti k domu* ‘arrive towards the house’)
  - contacts the landmark (*pribit’ k stene* ‘nail to the wall’) or
  - arrives inside the landmark (*priexat’ v Moskvu* ‘arrive to Moscow’)

Trajector ➔ Landmark
Submeanings of the Russian prefix *pri-*

- Submeanings can be divided into four major classes (Dobrushina, Melina, Paillard 2001, Yakunina 2001, Endresen et al. 2012, Janda et al. 2013)

### What is the prototype?

**arrive**
- *idti* ‘go’
- *prijti* ‘come’

**attach**
- *delat* ‘do’
- *pridelat* ‘attach’

**attenuate**
- *glušit’* ‘deafen’
- *priglušit’* ‘muffle’

**add**
- *rasti* ‘grow’
- *prirasti* ‘increase’
The idea of the prototype seemed to be straightforward when it was introduced, but since then complications have arisen. It became clear that the notion of a prototype also forms a radial category where a prototypical prototype can be characterized by several features (cf. Geeraerts 1988, Gilquin 2006):

1) prototype is the center of gravity of a radial category
2) prototype contains the most characteristic features of the category
3) prototype is concrete
4) prototype is the most entrenched item
5) prototype is the most salient item
6) prototype is the most frequent item

Even though these features often co-occur, it is not always so
Center of gravity

- Most of the nodes in the network are connected to it.
- It is related to most items in the radial category via metaphor or metonymy.
- We produce other items from this most basic meaning.

All submeanings of the prefix *pri*- are equal in the radial category.
Characteristic features of the category and concreteness

- The submeanings ARRIVE and ATTACH are closer to the semantic schema for prefix *pri*- ‘approaching’
- The same both meanings are most concrete

ARRIVE and ATTACH show prototypical features
Entrenchment and frequency as its correlate

• “Entrenchment” refers to how available linguistic items are in memory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not entrenched</th>
<th>Entrenched</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>used rarely</td>
<td>used frequently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>require derivation</td>
<td>stored in memory prepackaged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• Schmid (2000: 39) proposes the “From-Corpus-to-Cognition Principle”: “frequency in text instantiates entrenchment in the cognitive system”

• Gilquin (2006: 168) notes that “[g]iven the vagueness surrounding the term “prototype”… it comes as no surprise that frequency in linguistic usage has regularly been used as a methodological short-cut to establish the prototype”
The prototype of the prefix *pri-* is ARRIVE
The prototype of the prefix *pri*- is ATTENUATE
Type frequency (frequent verbs and non-frequent verbs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequent verbs (&gt;100 occurrences)</th>
<th>Non-frequent verbs (&lt;100 occurrences)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ARRIVE</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTACH</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADD</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTENUATE</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The submeaning ATTENUATE is frequent among rare verbs
Frequency and productivity  
(Bybee 2007: 174)

• Forms with high token frequency
  ▪ autonomous
  ▪ more likely to be unanalyzed
  ▪ less likely to participate in schemas
  ▪ do not contribute to the productivity of the pattern.

• Forms with lower token frequency
  ▪ learned more easily if they can be related to other stored forms
  ▪ likely to be analyzed
  ▪ likely to participate in schemas
  ▪ a large number of distinct items with an affix brings the affix more into relief.

ARRIVE is used most frequently, but ATTENUATE is productive.
Cognitive salience

- The item is most “salient” representative of a category if it is the first that comes to mind.
- The item is cognitively salient if it is currently present in the working memory of a speaker.
- “Since the use of concepts that are already activated requires minimal cognitive effort, a high degree of cognitive salience correlates with ease of activation and little or no processing cost.” (Schmid 2007: 119)

Salience of a prefix: use with pro-verbs
Pro-verbs (or joker verbs Krongauz 1998)

• Pro-verbs in Russian:
  ▪ pro-verbs function as a verbal variables similarly to how pronouns function as nominal variables
  ▪ verbal roots cannot be characterized with separate meanings
  ▪ etymologically these roots are usually derived from names of animals and taboo words

• Pro-verbs combine with the prefix *pri-* , e.g. *prisobačit’*, *prikļačit’*, *prīfigačit’*, *prixrenačit’*)

• Prefixed pro-verbs indicate most salient submeaning of the prefix
Pro-verbs with prefix *pri-*

- (1) *Neskol'ko lovkiх dviženij — i podnosy prisobačeny k bortikam avtomobilej.* (RNC)
- A few deft movements - and trays are attached to the side of the cars.
- (2) *K osnovnomu prisposobleniju na podveskax prixrenačena lyža...* (RNC)
- To main adaptation a ski is attached using the suspension...
- (3) *I stal uglubljať jamki dlja stojanov, potom pomog postaviť pleten', prikljačil ego k stojanam i ušel.* (RNC)
- He began to deepen the holes for the poles, then he helped to put the fence, attached it to the poles and left.
- (4) *Kak mikrofon na laptop prifigačit'/?* (yandex.ru)
- How to attach a microphone to the laptop?

Pro-verbs with the prefix *pri*- have the submeaning ATTACH
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The prototype of the prefix *pri*- is ATTACH
Conclusion

- Different prototype features point to different elements of the Radial Category of the prefix pri-
- The meanings ARRIVE and ATTACH
  - show most characteristic features of the category and
  - are most concrete
- Native speakers of Russian employ different strategies
  - The most frequent verbs: ARRIVE
  - The least frequent verbs: ATTENUATE
  - In default setting: ATTACH
- We need to adjust our understanding of the prototype to reflect these different ideas
References


