Prefixes and T-Features

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In this paper, I argue that prefixes and prepositions are identical elements. More specifically, if a homophonous preposition and verbal prefix appear in the same sentence, they are two spelled-out copies of one element. There are several reasons for this claim. Firstly, it is a wellknown fact that verbal prefixes and prepositions in Indo-European languages have the same source. See Russian and Czech (1)-(4) with fourteen randomly chosen prefixes. Almost all prefixes have a prepositional counterpart. Secondly, lexicosemantic properties of prefixes and prepositions are also very similar, compare (5a) and (5b). Thirdly, prefixes can be combined with a homophonous preposition (6). And finally, there is a semantic parallelism in behavior of prefixes and prepositions (P-elements) in sentences. The first parallelism concerns localization. Localization regarding Ps as prepositions: The Figure argument is located with respect to the Ground argument. Localization regarding Ps as prefixes: Reference time is located with respect to event time. The second parallelism concerns definiteness. Definiteness regarding Ps as prefixes: There is a presupposition of a definite reference point on the event path (see Ramchand 2004). Definiteness regarding Ps as prepositions: PPs (and arguments with a non-structural case) are islands for extraction because there is a relation between nonstructural cases and definiteness (presuppositionality); see e.g. Starke (2001). Given these facts, I will argue - building on Pesetsky and Torrego (2006) - that prefixes and prepositions (P-elements) bear a valued Tense-feature and that semantic effects of P-elements with Tensefeatures depend on their syntactic position in a sentence.

Examples

Russian:

- (1) prefixes: do-, iz-, na-, nad-, ot-, pere-, po-, pod-, pri-, pro-, s-, v-, vy-, za-
- (2) prepositions: do, iz, na, nad, ot, po, pod, pri, pro, s, v, za

Czech:

- (3) prefixes: do-, z-, na-, nad-, od-, pře-, po-, pod-, při-, pro-, s-, v-, vy-, za-
- (4) prepositions: do, z, na, nad, od, přes, po, pod, při, pro, s, v, za
- (5) a. za-jít b. za domem behind-go behind house-instr 'to get behind x through going' 'to be behind the house'
- (6) za-jít za dům behind-go behind house-acc 'to go behind the house'

References

Pesetsky, D. & Torrego, E. (2006), Probes, Goals and Syntactic Categories. In: Otsu, Y. (ed.), Proceedings of the Seventh annual Tokyo Conference on Psycholinguistics.

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