Activity, Action, Act

James Gallant

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This article proposes a classification of the Russian verb in terms of three features, [activity], [action] and [act]. The presence of these features, which reflect different views of the process depicted by the verb, can be justified morphologically, in that they are represented as stem differences in certain classes of Russian verbs. They can also be justified semantically, in that their presence can be seen to account for a rather consistent difference in the way prefixed verbs are interpreted. We will first look at verbs which can be described as depicting activities, actions and acts, and then examine their behavior when prefixed.

The three features which I propose can most generally be defined as describing the degree to which the process depicted by the verb can be said to be determined. I will be using the term determination in a somewhat broader sense than is customary in Slavic linguistics, using it to refer to a variety of internal and external limitations on the process denoted by the verb.

Russian verbs may be described as being nondetermined or determined. Nondetermined verbs are those which denote what I shall call activities. An [activity] verb is one which presents the most general view of the process, representing it as a general state of affairs, a kind of behavior, a characteristic or (in the case of motion verbs) as random or nondirectional movement. Nondetermined [activity] verbs are opposed to determined verbs, verbs which denote what I shall call actions and acts. While [activity] verbs depict the process as a general state, [action] and [act] verbs present a more limited and specific view. [Action] verbs depict not a general or characteristic state but rather a coherent process. [Act] verbs present the activity in terms of a single constituent gesture.

These distinctions are summarized in (I):

I. NONDETERMINED (General View)  DETERMINED (Specific View)

[activity]  [action]  [act]
random process  coherent process  gesture

To see how some processes may be stylized as [activities], [actions] or [acts], consider the three sets of sentences in (II):

II. ACTIVITIES:

1) my ran'še xodili v teatr  'we used to go to the theater'
   we formerly went to theater
2) deti valjalis' v grjazi
   children rolled in mud
3) on kidal kamni v vodu
   he threw stones into water
4) on drožal ot xoloda
   he shivered from cold
5) ona prekrasno tancovala
   she splendidly danced
6) on pisal stat'i
   he wrote articles
7) oni ne čitali gazet
   they not read newspapers
8) deti kričali na ulice
   children shouted in street

ACTIONS:
1a) my šli v teatr
    we went to theater
2a) on valilsja na postel'
    he rolled onto bed
3a) on kidal kamni v vodu
    he threw stones into water
4a) Ø
5a) Ø
6a) on pisal stat'ju stat'i
    he wrote article articles
7a) oni ne čitali gazetu gazety
    they not read newspaper newspapers
8a) on kričal, čtoby my šli napravo
    he shouted that we go to right

'he was throwing stones into the water'
'he was shivering in the cold'
'she was a splendid dancer'
'he used to write articles'
'they didn't read any newspapers'
'children were shouting in the street'

'we were on our way to the theater'
'he fell into bed'
'he was throwing a stone into the water'
'he was writing the article articles'
'they weren't reading the newspaper newspapers'
'he shouted for us to turn right'
The verbs in sentences (4) and (5) denote kinds of motion which cannot be represented as coherent [actions], i.e., cannot denote motion proceeding from place to place. To an English speaker this restriction is perfectly understandable in the case of drozhat' 'shiver, tremble', but odd in the case of tancevat' 'dance'. In Russian, one cannot say something like *oni peretancevali yerez ploshadku ('they danced across the floor'), because the Russian verb tancevat' denotes a kind of activity
rather than a means of locomotion. In English one can say *they danced across the floor* and out onto the veranda, because the English verb *dance*, unlike Russian *танцевать*, is optionally specifiable in terms of the feature [directional], the specification of which opens up the possibility of further specification in terms of adverbs and prepositional phrases manifesting specific kinds of direction. Since the Russian verb *танцевать* denotes exclusively an [activity] it cannot be specified for directionality. A result of this is that with prefixes, such as *перетанцевать*, it cannot have a directional sense. The notion of spanning a plane depicted in *перетанцевать* 'dance across' cannot be given a spatial interpretation, but rather only a limitational or quantificational one. The verb *перетанцевать*, literally 'dance across', can have only the meaning of distribution (*перетанцевать все танцы* 'dance all the dances [one after another]') or of exceeding someone else (*мы перетанцевали всех* 'we out-danced everyone else'). We see in this brief example how the view of the process denoted by the verb determines its semantics in a consistent fashion.

The verb in sentence (4), *дрожать* 'shiver', can be viewed either as a state of complex [activity] or as one complex [act], as in sentence (4b). We shall see later that verbs such as *дрожать* 'shiver' differ consistently from those like *кидать* 'throw'. Both verbs can be stylized in terms of single constituent [acts], e.g., *он кинул 'he threw', on дрогнул 'he shivered'. But only verbs like *кидать* can be styled as coherent [actions], e.g. *он кидает 'he is making a throw'. The reason for this restriction is that while verbs like *кинуть'/*кидать* denote simple repeatable acts presentable either as a single act (кинуть 'делать' kidok [make a throw]) or as a multitude of acts (кидать 'делать' kidki [make a series of throws]), verbs like *дрожать'/*дрогнуть* denote complex behavior, whether or not it is presented as a single [act] or as general [activity]. English reflects this kind of difference in verbs such as *throw*, *jump*, *shout*, *shiver*, *tremble*: one can say *make a throw*, *take a jump*, *give a shout*; but not *give a shiver*, *give a tremble*. Verbs such as *throw*, *jump* and *shout* denote simple acts or activity composed of repeated acts. But verbs such as *shiver* and *tremble* denote complex activity which even when presented in terms of one constituent gesture (*he shivered/trembled [once]*) remains complex. The situation is precisely the same in Russian. The verbs *кинуть'/*кидать* and *бросить'/*бросат', both meaning 'throw', as well as *прыгнуть'/*прыгать* 'jump' and *крикнуть'/*кричат* 'yell', all denote simple, repeatable acts and are associated with nouns which denote one simple act (*кидок 'a throw', *бросок 'a throw', *прыжок 'a jump', *крик 'a yell'). Unlike the English verbs *shiver* and *tremble*, the inherently complex Russian verbs *дрожать'/*дрогнуть* and *-трем(тян)нуть'[съя]/*треметат'(съя) are not associated with what could be called semelfactive nouns: the nouns *дрожание* 'shivering' and *тремление* 'trembling' cannot refer to one act. This distinction between verbs denoting simple versus complex acts and activities will be crucial to an understanding of their behavior with prefixes. We shall see that verbs which can denote simple acts or coherent actions involving motion (i.e., *кинуть'/*кидать*, *бросить'/*бросат', *прыгнуть'/*прыгать*), like their English counterparts *toss*, *throw* and *jump*, are directional with prefixes (or verbal adverbs in English); but verbs which denote only complex acts and complex activities involving motion (i.e., *дрожать'/*дрогнуть*, *-трем[тян]нуть'[съя]/*треметат'[съя]), like their English counterparts
shiver and tremble, cannot be directional. Here again we see that the semantics of the verbal base determines the manner in which the predicate can be elaborated. (For further discussion, see Gallant [1979] and Isačenko [1960].)

The verbs in sentences (6) and (6a) are identical, but here too one senses a difference in meaning. Sentence (6) characterizes its subject in terms of a general [activity]: on pisal stat’i (with stress on the object) means 'he wrote articles, he was an article writer'. Sentence (6a), on the other hand, presents a coherent [action]. With a plural object, the sentence on pisal stat’i (with stress on the subject) means 'he (was the one who) wrote the articles'. English expresses the difference by omitting or supplying a definite article. The general, generic [activity] verb pisat’ ('be a writer of') cannot be used with a singular subject, unless it can stand for a mass concept, e.g., on pišet prozu 'he writes prose'. English has somewhat more freedom to create mass nouns (e.g., one can say he drives truck, but not *he drives car), but neither English nor Russian can form such sentences as *on pišet roman, *on pišet stat’u *he writes novel, *he writes article'. The more specific [action] verb (6a) pisat’ 'be in the process of writing' can, however, be used with a singular object or a definite plural object. The Russian verb pisat’ can in slang be viewed as a single [act], cf. pisnut' 'drop a line': pisni mme iz Kiev 'drop me a line from Kiev'.

The verb in sentence (7) makes a categorical statement ('they were not newspaper readers'). The object is in the genitive after the negated verb just because the verb denotes a general or generic [activity]. The verb in (7a), presents a coherent [action] performed on specific singular or plural objects. The specificity of the object is determined to a large degree by the specificity of the verb, and it is this specificity which allows it to stand in the accusative after the negated verb, cf. Timberlake (1975).

The verb in sentence (8) presents the activity of making sounds, The verb in (8a), however, presents a more specific notion, the production of an utterance. The verb in (8b) views the activity in terms of a unitary event, a single, simple [act].

2. We have seen that the distinction between general [activity] and specific [action] and [act] is reflected in the morphology of several of these verbs. These morphological distinctions have been extensively dis­cussed in Russian linguistics under two separate rubrics. The distinction between [activity] and [action] expressed in the morphology of a small group of verbs denoting kinds of locomotion has been discussed as a distinction of determinacy. These pairs of imperfective verbs have been described as expressing a difference in directionality: the determined imperfective (e.g., idti) is unidirectional, insisting on a view of the action as proceeding in one direction, while the nondetermined imperfective (e.g., xodit’) does not insist on a unidirectional interpretation, cf. Isacenko (1960) for discussion and references. This definition seems somewhat too precise, because the feature [unidirectional] can account for only the literal meanings of the verbs, cf. Gallant (1979). I would rather view the distinction in terms of the features [activity] and
[action] and say that forms like *idti* tend to be unidirectional just because they denote coherent movement.

The other morphological distinction that we have noted is that of semelfactivity, one-time action, overtly expressed in what I have called [act] verbs. This distinction is not usually discussed together with that of determinacy, because of the fact that semelfactive/nonsemelfactive pairs differ in aspect: semelfactives are perfective. I think, however, that one can unite the two traditional concepts of determinacy and semelfactivity and also include those verbs which in Russian do not express these distinctions morphologically. An attempt at such an integral view is represented in the following chart (III).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>III. NONDETERMINED</th>
<th>DETERMINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>[ACTIVITY]</strong></td>
<td><strong>[ACTION]</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. 1) <em>xodit'</em></td>
<td><em>idti</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>walk, go</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) <em>ezdit'</em></td>
<td><em>exat'</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ride, go</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. 3) <em>valjat'(sja)</em></td>
<td><em>valit'(sja)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>roll around</td>
<td>tip over, fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) <em>vorocat'</em></td>
<td><em>vorotit'</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>move around, turn over</td>
<td>turn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. 5) <em>kidat'</em></td>
<td><em>kidat'</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>throw</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) <em>prygat'</em></td>
<td><em>prygat'</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jump, hop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. 7) <em>brosat'</em></td>
<td><em>brosat'</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>throw</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) <em>skakat'</em></td>
<td><em>skakat'</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jump, gallop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section I lists pairs of imperfective verbs which display the distinction between [activity] and [action]. In (IA) I have listed two of the fourteen pairs usually discussed in terms of the category of determinacy, defined as a distinction in unidirectionality. If one treats forms such as *idti* as denoting coherent processes which may or may not involve locomotion through space, then it is possible to account for most of their figurative meanings as well. For example, the verb *idti*, like English *run*, depicts not only motion through space, but a variety of abstract coherent processes. One of its usages describes the functioning of mechanisms, e.g. *časy idut* 'the clock is running'. In those figurative phrases where the nondetermined [activity] verb *xodit* can also be used, it refers not to the actual coherent process but rather to the general ability of the mechanism to function at all, e.g., *časy xodjat* 'the clock works'. These distinctions are illustrated in the sentence *časy ne ispončeny, xodjat, a teper* ne *idut, ne zavedeny* 'the clock isn't broken, it works; but it isn't running now, it isn't wound'.

The verbs in (IB) are two of about a dozen pairs of imperfective verbs which could be added to the traditional group of verbs of motion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NONDETERMINED</th>
<th>DETERMINED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[ACTIVITY]</td>
<td>[ACTION]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[ACT]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. 9) bolbat'</td>
<td>ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stir, shake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) drošat'</td>
<td>ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shiver, shake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. 11) tančevat'</td>
<td>ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) guljat'</td>
<td>ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stroll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. 13) pisat'</td>
<td>pisat'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) čitat'</td>
<td>(-čest')</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) kričat'</td>
<td>kričat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shout</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Like the verbs of motion, these verbs display the distinction of general or random motion versus coherent, hence often unidirectional movement. In these verbs, however, the distinction of determinacy is the basis rather than the sum of their semantic difference. They are semantically much more differentiated than the verbs in (IA).

Section II contains perfective semelfunctives and imperfective non-semelfactives. Isačenko (1960) has shown that verbs like brosit' which are correlated with semelfactive nouns can be treated as semelfactives, even though they are not marked through suffixation as being so. The forms boltat' and drożat' denote inherently complex activity and therefore cannot be used as [action] verbs. They are also, as we shall see never directional with prefixes.

Section III lists two [activity] verbs which cannot be used to refer to coherent, directional movement.

Section IV lists three verbs in which the distinction between [activity] and [action] is not usually expressed. One verb, čitat', has a variant, -čest', a bound stem in the modern language. We shall see that prefixal derivatives with this form are more restricted in meaning than those with the stem čitat'.

3. Before we examine the behavior of these 15 verbs with various prefixes, I would like to sketch very briefly a theory of verbal prefixation which is elaborated in some detail in my book (Gallant [1979]). I would propose the idea that prefixes manifest the selection of variable semantic features of the verbal base. What this means is that prefixes do not add meaning to the verb but rather reveal the selection on the part of the speaker of certain of its semantic possibilities. We have seen, for example, in the case of the verb tancevat' 'dance' that one cannot add any one of the so-called directional prefixes of Russian to give it a directional meaning. This means that the semantics of the verbal base governs the selection and interpretation of the prefix, and not vice-versa.

I would conceive verbal prefixation as a device for representing the process denoted by the verb in relationship to an abstract conceptual system depictable in geometric terms as a framework consisting of two primary axes, a [horizontal] and a [vertical], plus derivative [plane]s and [volume]s. This conceptual framework constitutes an integral system of limits, describable in terms of semantic features -- limits which in combination with other features of the verbal base are interpretable as spatial, temporal or quantificational surfaces, limits or thresholds. This cognitive geometry is depicted in (IV).
IV. THE PREFIXAL FRAME

< COMPARATIVE →

\[\text{CONVENTIONAL}\]

\[\text{NATURAL}\]

\[\text{transgression}\]

\[\text{imposition}\]

\[\text{rapprochement}\]

\[\text{withdrawal}\]

\[\text{spanning}\]

\[\text{across}\]

\[\text{through}\]

\[\text{under}\]

\[\text{away}\]

\[\text{along}\]

\[\text{around}\]

\[\text{into}\]

\[\text{out}\]

\[\text{beyond}\]

\[\text{off}\]
Prefixes can be represented as a combination of two kinds of features: frame features, such as [horizontal], [vertical], [volume], [plane], and interior [domain] (the shaded figures), describe that part of the framework which the process is viewed in relation to; relational features, such as [transgression], [spanning], [imposition], [withdrawal] and [rapprochement], state the relationship of the process to the framework of surfaces and limits.

The cardinal axes of the prefixal frame, the [horizontal] and [vertical] are semantically distinct. It is important to note that these axes do not represent literal surfaces extending left/right and up/down. Rather, they represent kinds of surfaces, or limits, or thresholds. The [horizontal] seems to represent a natural limit: prefixes which state relationships to it tend to be evaluative in connotation. The [vertical], on the other hand, seems to represent a conventional limit: prefixes which involve the [vertical] have more to do with comparative concepts such as the extent or degree of the action and its distribution among its participants.

In this brief paper I will deal with only four prefixes: vz-, which manifests the speaker's view of the process as figuratively transgressing a horizontal; za-, which views the process as transgressing a different kind of limit, i.e., the vertical; pere-, which presents a view of the process as spanning a plane; and pro-, which denotes spanning a plane whose interior domain is significant. The features given for the prefixes pere- and pro- are adapted from Flier (1975).

4. Verbs from chart (III) are illustrated with the prefix vz- in chart (V):
V.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VZ-</th>
<th>[+ horizontal ]</th>
<th>[+ transgression]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ONSET (turbulent activity)</td>
<td>UP (action/motion)</td>
<td>UP (act/motion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABRUPT ONSET (turbulent action)</td>
<td>ABRUPT GESTURE (turbulent act)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) vznejiti  
go up
2) vs"exat'  
go up
3) vza.valit'  
pile on, heap blame
4) vavorotit'  
turn up
5)  
6)  
7)  
8)  
9) vzialtat'  
stir up (cause to be in motion)
10)  
15) vskricat' ot boli  
shout with pain
15) vskricat' oto  
shout something
15) vskriknut'  
give a shout
The most striking feature of \( vz- \) is that it occurs with very few verbs. As we have seen, \( vz- \) depicts a view of the process as transgressing the marked axis of the limitational framework. The semantics of those verbal bases which contain the \( vz- \) features is limited by and large to those verbs which denote various kinds of eruptive disturbances, e.g., those denoting kinds of surface disorders ('plowing': \( vspazat' \), 'cutting': \( vrezat' \), 'swelling': \( vspuxnut' \), 'disarrangement': \( vstormošit' \)) and states of physical and mental agitation (\( vsvolnovat'sja \)). When [action] and [act] verbs denoting motion are further specified for the \( vz- \) features, they denote motion in a marked direction, i.e., 'up', the direction contrary to gravity. \( vz- \) does not combine with [activity] verbs denoting motion unless they are already marked for particular turbulence, e.g. (9) \( vzbol'tat'(sja) \) 'agitate'. Note that the [act] verbs listed in (9) and (10) are not directional with \( vz- \): these are precisely the verbs which cannot denote a simple [act] or a coherent [action]. The verbs listed in (15) represent sounds or utterances and therefore cannot be directional when prefixed. An indication of the fact that the semantics of the verbal base determines the prefixes with which it can combine can be seen in the interesting fact that the prefix \( vz- \) occurs in only those verbs of 'sound' which denote sounds produced by animate beings and among those only loud or expressive sounds, e.g., \( vzrebet' \) 'roar', \( varydat' \) 'sob'. With these [activity] verbs, it denotes the threshold of activity, a sudden or abrupt onset.

Verbs with the prefix \( za- \) are listed in chart (VI):
ONSET
(activity)

EXTREME DEGREE
(patient)

ONSET
(activity)

EXTREME DEGREE
(patient)

1) 

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{zazodit'} \\
&\text{begin walking} \\
&\text{zazodit'sja} \\
&\text{walk too much}
\end{align*}
\]

2) 

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{za"ezdit'} \\
&\text{begin driving} \\
&\text{za"ezdi't' lošad'} \\
&\text{drive a horse to exhaustion} \\
&\text{za"ezdi't'sja} \\
&\text{drive too much}
\end{align*}
\]

3) 

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{povar zavaljal testo} \\
&\text{the chef began rolling} \\
&\text{the dough} \\
&\text{zavaljal'sja v postelj} \\
&\text{do poludnja} \\
&\text{lie around in bed till noon}
\end{align*}
\]

6) 

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{zaprygat'} \\
&\text{begin jumping}
\end{align*}
\]

8) 

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{losad' zaskakala galopom} \\
&\text{the horse began to gallop}
\end{align*}
\]

10) 

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{zadrošat'} \\
&\text{begin shivering, shaking}
\end{align*}
\]

11) 

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{zatancevat'} \\
&\text{begin dancing} \\
&\text{zatancevat'sja do utra} \\
&\text{dance till dawn}
\end{align*}
\]

13) 

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{on opjet' zapisal} \\
&\text{he's started writing again} \\
&\text{zapisat' svoi myсли v tetradi} \\
&\text{write one's thoughts in a notebook}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{zapisat' vsju stranicu karakuljami} \\
&\text{cover a whole page with scribbles}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{ja zapisalsja, šeja bolit} \\
&\text{I've been writing too long, my neck hurts}
\end{align*}
\]
Za-, which represents transgression of the unmarked axis, occurs with an enormous number of Russian verbs and specifies them essentially as to the degree of action. With verbs denoting coherent or noncomplex movement, the prefix is read directionally to mean 'beyond' or 'behind'. This interpretation is dependent upon an understanding of the limit denoted by the prefix to refer to the [goal] of the movement. If it is felt to refer to the [path], then the movement is interpreted as transgressing the path or prior direction: forms such as zafti can be interpreted as meaning 'stop by'. With some [action] verbs, such as those illustrated in (3) and (13), the prefixed form is interpretable as denoting the idea of covering (with verbs denoting movement, e.g., zalit' 'roll over') or the idea of fixation (with verbs such as pisat' 'write' which already convey the notion of composition). With these verbs the process is interpreted as being applied to the [patient].

With [activity] verbs, on the other hand, za- is interpreted differently. With nonreflexive intransitive verbs, i.e., with verbs which are not limited by the overt expression of a [patient], the limit expressed by za- is interpreted as the threshold of activity, and the verb is felt to be inchoative. If the verb is transitive, e.g., (3) zalaljal testo 'began rolling dough', the prefixed form can be interpreted as inchoative only if the object is felt to be an internal one, as it is in such generic usages as valjat' testo 'roll dough, engage in dough rolling'. Otherwise, with [activity] verbs involving expressed patients (either as a direct object or with the reflexive particle -sja), the limit expressed by za- is felt to apply to the patient, and the verb is interpreted as activity affecting the patient to an extreme degree, e.g., (2) za'esdit' lošad' 'drive a horse to exhaustion', za'esdit'sja 'become absorbed in the activity of riding or driving to such a degree that one doesn't notice the time or that one finally becomes exhausted'. Whether the extreme degree of involvement is pleasurable or painful depends on how the sentence is further elaborated.

Unlike the prefixes vz- and za-, which refer to the transgression of a limit, the prefixes pere- and pro- refer to the spanning of a plane. Pere- 'across' is unspecified for the notion of interior [domain]; it means just 'get to the other side'. Pro- 'through', on the other hand, is specified for [domain] and focuses on what, so to speak, one must go through to reach the other side. These two prefixes are nicely contrasted in the famous Russian proverb žizn' prozit' ne pože переjti: 'to get through life is not as easy as crossing a field'.

Verbs with the prefix pere- are illustrated in chart (VII):
VII.

REPETITION
(activity, patient)

EXCESS DEGREE
(activity, patient)

1) moʒno mne perexodit'?
may I take the move over
again?

2) esženo-pereesženo k nemu
sa den'gami
everyone comes (repeatedly)
to him for money

3) perevorotit' vse vešči
v sunduke
turn everything over
in the trunk (disarrange)

4) perebrosat' vse kamni v vodu
throw all the stones into
the water (one after
another)

5) perebolat' rastvor
shake up the solution thoroughly

6) peretancevat' ešče raz vaļ's
dance the waltz over again

7) peretancevat' vse tancu
dance all the dances

8) peretancevat' vse
outdance everyone else

9) pereexaž pože
he drove across the field

10) on pereesxal pole
he drove across the field

11) on pereesxal sobaku
he drove over a dog

12) perevorožat' vse vešči
v sunduke
turn everything over
in the trunk (disarrange)

13) perebrosat' vse kamni v vodu
throw all the stones into
the water (one after
another)

14) on perečital vse knigi
he has read through all
the books in our library

15) on perekičal vsex drugix
he outshouted all the others
With verbs denoting coherent or noncomplex motion the prefix is read directionally, and the verb means 'movement across'. The [plane] spanned can be taken to refer either to the [path] of the movement, e.g., (2) on pereexal pole 'he drove across the field', or to the [patient] subjected to the movement, e.g., (2) on pereexal sobaku 'he drove across (ran over) a dog'. With [action] verbs not denoting movement, e.g., (14) perešitat', perešest', the [plane] spanned can refer to the action itself, and the prefixed verb can denote repetition.

[Activity] verbs prefixed with pere- can denote a repetition of the activity or a repetition of the patient of the activity (e.g., [11]), if the patient is not felt to be external to the activity. Otherwise, with patiential verbs the sense of the prefix is that of degree. It can have a distributive meaning, e.g., (7) or the second sentence in (11), and be interpreted as activity affecting all the patients one after the other in series. Or it can denote exceeding the normal degree of activity, e.g., (12) 'the boy walked, strolled too long', or exceeding others in the performance of the activity, e.g., (15) 'outshout'.

Verbs with the prefix pro- are illustrated in chart (VIII):
VIII.

DURATION
(activity)

EXHAUSTION
(activity, patient)

1) vse utro proxodil po lesu
   he spent the whole morning walking around in the forest

5) vse utro prokidal sneg e kryši
   he spent the whole morning shoveling snow off the roof

9) proboltaj krasku xorosēn'ko,
   rovnee vykrasiš'
   shake up the paint really well and it'll go on more smoothly

14) ona pročitala vsju noć'
    she read all night long

15) rebenok prokričal vsju noć'
    the child cried all night long
    dali emu prokričat'sja
    they let him cry himself out

PRO-
[+ plane ]
[+ domain ]
[+ spanning]

THROUGH
(path, measure)

PAST
(path)

PAST
(action)

MISS, MISTAKE
(goal, patient)

on prošel čerez dvor
he went through the court

on prošel dva šaga
he took two steps

on prošel mimo nix
he went past them

dožd' prošel
the rain was over

on zagovorilešja i prošel povorot dorogi
he got talking too much and missed the turn

on prokinul kamen' među sue'ev
he threw the stone between the branches
For the prefix pro- the interior domain of the plane which the process spans is marked. With [action] and [act] verbs, then, the normal interpretation of the prefix is 'through'. Other interpretations are possible, depending on what features of the predicate the prefixal features are associated with. If focus is on the [path] of the movement, the verb is interpreted as depicting motion past an object. If that object is felt to be the natural [goal] of the movement, then the connotation is one of missing the object, e.g. the last sentence under (1) 'he missed the turn'. If focus is on the process itself, as in don'd prossel 'the rain passed', then the connotation can be that of termination.

In verbs which do not denote motion the process is felt, as it were, to span the patient, e.g., (14) 'she read his letter through', (15) 'the rooster uttered a cry, revealing himself'. The sentence on progovorileja is particularly interesting: it presents the action of uttering something as exceeding the intentions of the utterer.

[Activity] verbs prefixed in pro- express a thoroughness of degree. They have a perdurative sense when accompanied by expressions of [measure], e.g., (1) 'he walked the whole morning through': the activity is presented as spanning the length of time. Or they have an exhaustive sense, as in (15) 'they let the child cry himself out', i.e., perform the activity until it (the activity) is exhausted.

5. **Summary.** Our discussion of three features representing views of verbal processes has shown that the two traditional grammatical categories of determinacy and semelfactivity can be combined under one rubric. And the examination of the behavior of these three kinds of verbs under prefixation has given some evidence that it may be possible to describe morphemes in terms of consistent features rather than positing separate lexical items to correspond to different usages of the same forms.

**NOTES**

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2) The unprefixed trepetnut' is attested in L. A. Bykova, Nesootnositel'nuye glagoly nesoversennogo vida v sovremennom russkom jazyke, Trudi filologichnogo fakul'tetu XDU, tom 6, Xarkiv, 1958 (cited in Isačenko [1960:260]).
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