(A)symmetry and spray-load alternation in Russian

This paper proposes a unified analysis of spray-load alternation in Russian based on the assumption that in both constructions in (1) the complement of the verb is a small clause (SC). It is argued that the basic difference between (1a) and (1b) is that the SC in (1a) is asymmetrical, while that in (1b) is symmetrical, along the lines of Moro 2000. More specifically, the asymmetrical SC is projected from a low applicative head (Appl), as shown in (2a), whereas the symmetrical one results from Merge of a DP with a PP, as shown in (2b). Conceptually, the latter possibility should not be excluded from a system where Merge applies freely and potentially can combine everything. The goal is to show the empirical benefits of the opposition in (2) with regard to the asymmetries observed between complex-predicate (instrumental) and locative (prepositional) constructions, (1a) and (1b) respectively.

The paper focuses on the asymmetries observed with respect to (a) relative scope, (b) depictive secondary predication, (c) dative insertion and (d) verbal prefixation. As shown in (3), complex-predicate construction is subject to a well-known “frozen scope” phenomenon (see Bruening 2001). Alternatively, the inverse scope is available in (3b). In (4a), a depictive is not allowed to modify the post-verbal accusative (coindexed phrases are underlined). In (4b), on the other hand, depictive modification of the post-verbal accusative is unproblematic. (5) shows that a possessive dative cannot be inserted in between the accusative and instrumental DPs, while insertion is possible between the accusative and the prepositional phrases. As seen in (6), both constructions allow a benefactive dative. Finally, (7) shows that instrumental alternant is much more restricted with regard to verbal prefixation, which is not the case with prepositional alternant (res- in the glosses means ‘resultative’).

Taken separately, the data in (3)-(7) may lead to contradictory conclusions. For example Bruening (2001), accounting for “frozen scope” effects in terms of Superiority, argues that the Goal argument (accusative) c-commands the Theme argument (instrumental). On the other hand, Hale and Keyser (2002), analyzing depictive modification in double object constructions, conclude the opposite: the Goal argument is unable to control the secondary predicate in (4a) because of its low base generation position. Moreover, if we assume with Marantz (1993) that the Goal argument in (1a) is introduced by an applicative head above the main verb, we need to find an extra position for benefactive (high) dative in (6a). A question then arises: Is it possible to merge one applicative with another? Similarly, if we posit a low applicative structure for both (1a) and (1b), extending Pylkkänen’s (2002) analysis of double objects, the possessive (low) dative in (5b) is unexpected.

In the literature, the symmetrical nature of prepositional constructions, such as (1b), has been recognized rather implicitly. According to Bruening (2001), the inverse scope in (3b) is derived from moving the PP over the preceding accusative DP, which is possible only if DP and PP stay in a mutual c-command relation in the base. Under the present proposal, PP (or DP) moves in order to destroy structural symmetry (following Moro 2000). As for depictive modification in (4) and possessive dative insertion in (5), the ungrammaticality of the (a) examples is due to the impossibility of inserting a phrase inside ApplP. The head of the asymmetrical SC in (2a) needs to saturate all of its θ-roles and it is semantically too complex for predicate modification (Pylkkänen 2002). In (2b), secondary predicate can be adjoined to PP (P is already saturated), which makes it available for control by DP kirpiči in a sentence like (4b). It is also argued that the possessive dative in (5b) is merged in [Spec, PP], given the EPP property of P. No question arises for high-applied dative in (6), since the only opaque domain for dative insertion is the SC below the verb. The contrast in (7) is straightforward if we assume that za- is in fact an independent predicate, Appl or resultative head, generated below the verbal root, following a syntactic view of verbal prefixation (see, for example, Svenonius 2004). In the case of the locative construction in (7b), verbal prefixes can be considered as extended projections of the symmetrical SC in (2b).

The proposed analysis leaves us with the working hypothesis that the symmetry-asymmetry opposition in (2) is applicable to any ditransitive alternation in any language (if a language has such alternations at all). If (2) appears to be a general pattern for ditransitive alternations, symmetrical structures have an important place in the computational system of the language faculty.
(A)symmetry and spray-load alternation in Russian

(1) a. Oni zagruzili [sc vagon kirpičami]. b. Oni zagruzili [sc kirpiči v vagon].
they loaded [sc wagon.ACC bricks.INSTR] they loaded [sc bricks.ACC in wagon.ACC]
‘They loaded the wagon with bricks.’ ‘They loaded the bricks onto the wagon.’

(2) a. SC (= ApplP) b. SC

DP Appl’
vagon Appl DP
kirpičami

(3) a. Oni zagruzili [odin vagon] [každym kirpičom]. they loaded [one wagon].ACC [each brick].INSTR
‘They loaded one wagon with each brick.’
b. Oni zagruzili [odin kirpič] v [každyj vagon]. they loaded [one brick].ACC in [each wagon].ACC
‘They loaded one brick onto each wagon.’

(4) a. *Oni zagruzili wagon kirpičami svrym.
they loaded wagon.SG.ACC brick.PL.INSTR damp.SG.INSTR
[Intended reading: ‘They loaded the wagon with the bricks and the wagon was damp.’]
b. Oni zagruzili kirpiči v vagon svrymi.
they loaded brick.PL.ACC in wagon.SG.ACC damp.PL.INSTR
‘They loaded the bricks onto wagon and the bricks were damp.’

(5) a. Oni zagruzili wagon (*Ivanu) kirpičami.
they loaded wagon.ACC (*Ivan.DAT) bricks.INSTR
‘They loaded the wagon with bricks (belonging to Ivan).’
b. Oni zagruzili kirpiči (Ivanu) v vagon.
they loaded bricks.ACC (Ivan.DAT) in wagon.acc
‘They loaded the bricks onto the wagon (belonging to Ivan).’

(6) a. Oni zagruzili (Ivanu) vagon kirpičami.
they loaded (Ivan.DAT) wagon.ACC bricks.INSTR
‘They loaded the wagon with bricks (for Ivan).’
b. Oni zagruzili (Ivanu) kirpiči v vagon.
they loaded (Ivan.DAT) bricks.ACC in wagon.ACC
‘They loaded the bricks onto the wagon (for Ivan).’

(7) a. Oni {za- / *po- / *raz-} gruzili vagon kirpičami.
they {RES- / *on- / *un-} loaded wagon.ACC bricks.INSTR
‘They {loaded (completely) / *loaded on / *unloaded} the wagon with bricks.’
b. Oni {za- / po- / raz-} gruzili kirpiči v vagon.
they {RES- / on- / un-} loaded bricks.ACC in wagon.ACC

References