



Two types of verb fronting in Russian

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QUESTION

- Russian has two types of verb fronting with doubling (VF): when the fronted verb is an infinitive (uninflected verb fronting, UVF), and when it is fully inflected (inflected verb fronting, IVF):
- (1) a. Pit' (- to) on p'ët, no v meru.
 drink_{IPFV.INF} TOP he drink_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} but in measure
 'Drink he does, but moderately.'
- b. P'ët *(- to) on p'ët, no v meru.
 drink_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} TOP he drink_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} but in measure
 'As for the fact that he drinks, that's indeed true, but he does so moderately.'
- What are the meaning differences b/n UVF and IVF, and how does the syntax/semantics mapping work in the two cases?
 - Literature on Russian VF: Abels (2001) doesn't discuss IVF, Aboh and Dyakonova (2009) don't discuss the semantic differences.

PROPOSAL

- In UVF the fronted constituent is anaphoric to a predicate, and in IVF — to a speech act of assertion.
- Syntactically, thus, the two constituents differ in size: the largest AspP in UVF vs. ActP in IVF. The morphology follows from that.

DIFFERENCE 1: CONTEXTS

- For UVF a predicative antecedent is enough; it can also be used in response to unbiased, information-seeking polar questions. IVF can only be used to confirm an antecedent assertion (and possibly in response to biased, confirmation-seeking questions):
- (2) A: Rasskaži mne pro Ivana. On p'ët?
 tell me about Ivan he drinks
 'Tell me about Ivan. Does he drink?'
 B: (1a): ✓ / (1b): #
- (3) A: My ne možem vzjat' Ivana na rabotu. On ved' p'ët!
 we NEG can take Ivan on work he EMP drinks
 'We cannot hire Ivan. [I am reminding you that] he drinks!'
 B: (i) Pit' / # p'ju- to i ja p'ju,
 drink_{IPFV.INF} / drink_{IPFV.PRS.1SG} TOP and I drink_{IPFV.PRS.1SG}
 čto s togo?
 what from that
 'As for drinking, I do that, too, so what?'
 (ii) Pit' / p'ët- to on p'ët, no
 drink_{IPFV.INF} / drink_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} TOP he drink_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} but
 delo znaet.
 trade knows
 'As for the fact that he drinks, that's indeed true, but he knows the trade.'

DIFFERENCE 2: NEGATION

- When there's negation on the lower copy of the verb, the higher copy can't contain negation in UVF, but must contain one in IVF:
- (4) a. Pit' / * p'ët- to on ne p'ët,
 drink_{IPFV.INF} / drink_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} TOP he NEG drink_{IPFV.PRS.3SG}
 no rabotnik vsë ravno ploxoĵ.
 but worker still bad
 'Drink he doesn't, but he's still a bad worker.'
- b. Ne *pit' / p'ët- to on ne
 NEG drink_{IPFV.INF} / drink_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} TOP he NEG
 p'ët, no rabotnik vsë ravno ploxoĵ.
 drink_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} but worker still bad
 'As for the fact that he doesn't drink, that's indeed true, but he's still a bad worker.'

DIFFERENCE 3: FOCUS

- In UVF the focused constituent lower in the clause doesn't have to be the lower occurrence of the verb, but in IVF it does:
- (5) A: A vy kak spali...?
 and you how slept
 'And how did you sleep?'
- B: Spat' / * spal- to ja spal HOROŠO...
 sleep_{IPFV.INF} / sleep_{PAST.M.SG} TOP I sleep_{PAST.M.SG} well
 'As for sleeping, I slept WELL...' [corpus example]

SEMANTICS OF UVF AND IVF (INFORMAL)

- VF constructions are Contrastive Topic + Focus (CT+F) constructions, in the sense of Büring 2003, evoking a pair-list question.
- Possible pair-list questions for UVF:
 - What predicate returns what truth value when fed a certain continuation? E.g., with Ivan as the agent and the existential closure over events applied, $\lambda e. \text{drink}(e) \rightarrow T$, $\lambda e. \text{smoke}(e) \rightarrow F$...
 - What predicate modified by what modifier returns T when fed a certain continuation? E.g., $\lambda e. \text{sleep}(e) \rightarrow$ $\lambda e. \text{well}(e)$, $\lambda e. \text{wake-up}(e) \rightarrow \lambda e. \text{with-effort}(e)$...
- IVF can only confirm that the antecedent speech act was justified, but then the contrastive continuation indicates that the truth of the asserted proposition is somehow irrelevant/unimportant. One way of thinking about it: Which assertions are justified and which are relevant/important?

SELECTED REFERENCES

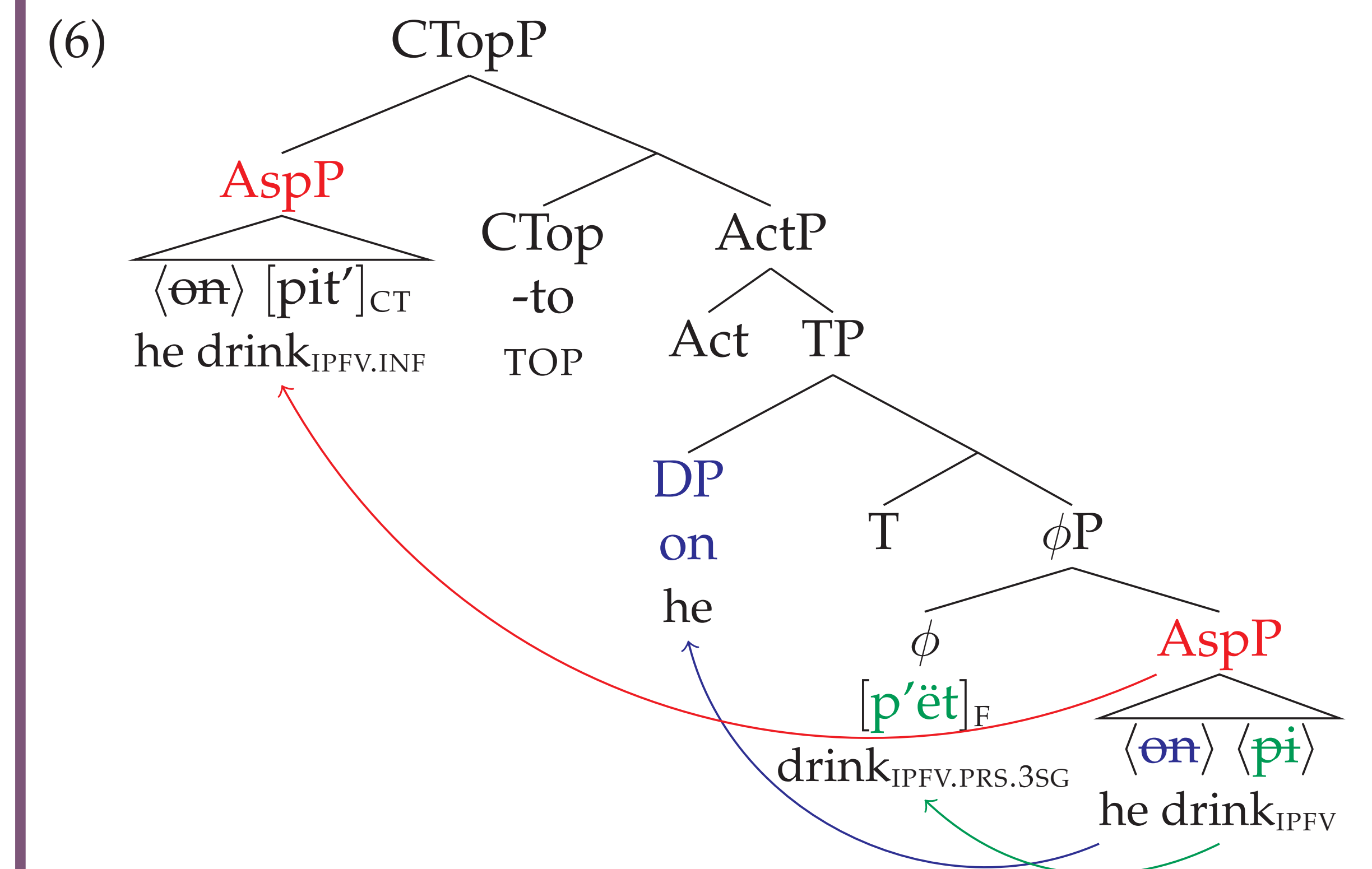
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SYNTAX OF UVF AND IVF

- Assumption: Russian verbs don't move to T (Bailyn 1995), but to some intermediate position ϕ P between the highest aspectual projection and T (or Neg when there is one).

UVF

- The largest AspP gets fronted; the verb has acquired all the aspectual, but not tense & ϕ -feature morphology.
- If the fronted AspP contains copies of the verb's arguments, they remain (unpronounced) and uninterpreted.



IVF

- The ActP (Krifka 2013; \approx PolP in Gribanova 2017) gets fronted; the verb has acquired both aspectual and tense & ϕ -feature morphology; if there is negation, it gets picked up, too.
- The complements of both Act heads get elided, like in fragment answers to polar questions. Some material from the lower ActP can optionally escape via topicalization.

