



How Typological Exceptions Develop: **Talmy's Distinction between Topological and Euclidean Semantics Revisited**

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(Cognitive Linguistics: Empirical Approaches to Russian)

1. Topological vs. Euclidean semantics

- Topological \approx magnitude neutral
- Euclidean \approx magnitude sensitive
- English *across* (Talmy 2000:224)
 - *The bus drove across the country.*
 - *The ant crawled across my palm.*
 - Topological: not sensitive to magnitude



L. Talmy



NB! Talmy describes a *tendency*, which does not exclude exceptions

The meaning of grammatical elements “generally” has a topological rather than a Euclidean character” (Talmy 2000:25)

2. Modern Russian: a peculiar rule

- *Kogda èto slučilos’?* ‘When did it happen?’

- *V ètom godu*_{LOC} ‘in this year_{LOC}’
- *V ètu minutu*_{ACC} ‘in this minute_{ACC}’
- *V naše vremja*_{ACC} ‘in our time_{ACC}’

EXCEPTION:
“longer than a week” =
magnitude sensitive
(Euclidean)

- Rules:

- Bounded time spans longer than a week → **v + LOC**
- Elsewhere → **v + ACC**

- Questions:

- How did such a peculiar rule develop historically?
- Why time, but not space?

- Answers:

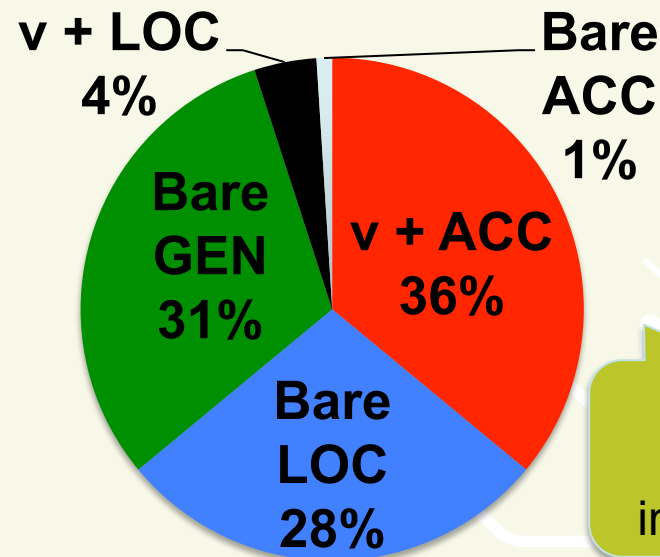
- “Unusual occurrence of quite usual processes” (Harris 2008: 76)
- Location/movement less relevant in time than in space.



A. G. Harris

3. Old Russian constructions

- Data from Hypatian Chronicle
- New information (year not mentioned earlier)
 - V + acc: *v lěto_{ACC} 6492*
- Given information (year mentioned earlier)
 - Major constructions:
 - **V + acc**: *V se že lěto_{ACC}*
 - **Bare loc**: *Tom že lětě_{LOC}*
 - **Bare gen**: *Togo že lěta_{GEN}*
 - Marginal constructions:
 - V + loc: *V tom že lětě_{LOC}*
 - Bare acc: *Se že lěto_{ACC}*
- Month: Only **bare genitive** attested

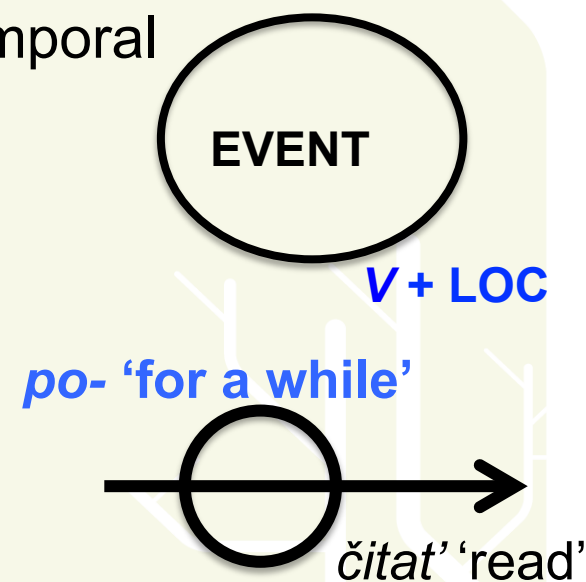


V + locative:

- Central in modern Russian, marginal in Old Russian.

4. Middle Russian: Syntax and semantics

- Syntax: synthetic → analytic
 - PP ousts NP in adverbials
 - Bare genitive and bare locative lose ground
- Semantics: conceptualization of time
 - Emergence of location in metaphorical temporal “container”
 - **V + Loc** = stative location
 - Emergence of atelic perfective verbs
 - Telic perfectives = natural culmination
 - *Pročitat’ knigu* ‘read the whole book’
 - Atelic perfectives = NO culmination
 - *Počitat’* ‘read for a while’



Atelic perfectives (e.g. *po-*) and **V + Loc** are similar:

- Conceptualization: Event located in metaphorical container
- Emerge at the same time: Middle Russian

5. Middle Russian: Lexicon

- *Sekunda* ‘second’
 - *Minuta* ‘minute’
 - *Utro* ‘morning’
 - *Den* ‘day’
 - *Nedelja* ‘week’ – *Na* ‘on’ + **loc**
 - *Mesjac* ‘month’
 - *God* ‘year’
 - *Stoletie* ‘century’
- V + acc**
- V + loc**
- Why did **v + loc** prefer long time spans?
 - They are better “containers”
 - Why did **v + loc**’s expansion stop at *nedelja* ‘week’?
 - Holidays take **na** ‘on’
 - Old Russian: *nedelja* = Sunday
 - Middle Russian:
 - *Nedelja*: Sunday → week
 - Metonymy: part → whole
 - Keeps **na + loc**



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Result of metonymic shift:

Nedelja ‘week’ becomes a natural “buffer zone” that stops **v + loc**’s expansion.

6. The Middle Russian “Conspiracy”

A. Syntax:

- Synthetic → analytic (NP → PP)

B. Semantics:

- Emergence of location in metaphorical temporal container
 - **V + loc**
 - Atelic perfectives

C. Lexicon:

- Metonymy – *nedelja*: Sunday → week



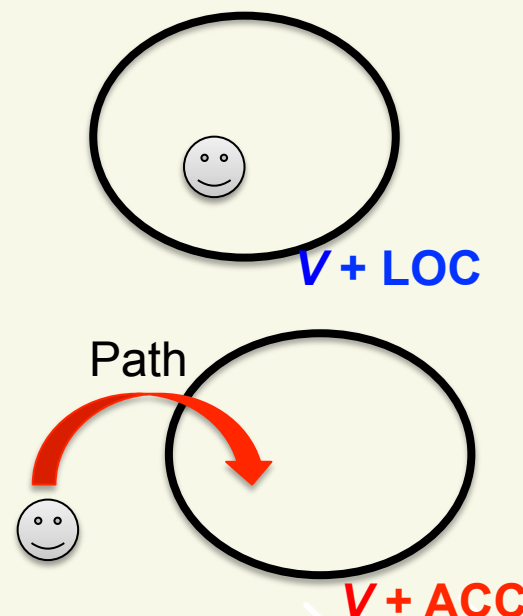
- Three factors “conspire” to create the Euclidean **v + loc** rule.
- “Unusual occurrence of quite usual processes” (Harris 2008: 76) creates typologically atypical rules.

7. Why time, not space?

- Space:
- Location inside container → **v + LOC**
 - **V karmane** 'in the pocket'
- Movement into container → **v + ACC**
 - **V karman** 'into the pocket'

	Space:	Time:
v + LOC	Location	Long time span
v + ACC	Movement	Short time span

- Time:
- Metaphor: not all structure transfers from space to time
- Location/movement less relevant than in space
- Loc/acc freed up to capture long/short distinction



Space-time asymmetry: Time ≠ mirror image of space

8. Wrapping up

1. Closed class items tend to have topological (magnitude neutral) semantics
2. Russian temporal adverbials offer an exception:
 - **V + Loc** for time spans longer than a week
3. Developed diachronically through conspiracy of independent factors in Middle Russian:
 - Syntax: Synthetic → analytic
 - Semantics: Location in metaphorical temporal container
 - Lexicon: *Nedelja* from 'Sunday' to 'week'
4. Time:
 - Movement is less relevant in time than in space
 - Acc/Loc freed up to mark short/long time spans

