



Morphological Intensifiers Beyond Adjectives: Evidence from productive patterns of Russian prefixation

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Semantics of intensification



- ✧ **“Increase of quantity or quality”** (Dressler & Barbaresi 1994: 416)
- ✧ Amplification of the base meaning (proposition / word)
- ✧ Can be paraphrased as ‘very-X’, ‘more-X’, ‘extremely-X’

Labov 1984: Intensity



“At the heart of social and emotional expression is the linguistic feature of intensity. It is a difficult feature to describe precisely. Intensity by **its very nature is not precise**: first, because it is **gradient** feature, and second, because it is most often **dependent on other linguistic structures**.“

Types of Intensifiers



- ◎ **Lexical intensifiers** of propositional semantics:
 - ◎ English: adverbs *very*, *absolutely*, *really* (Lorenz 2002: 148)
 - intensive use of quantifiers: *all*, *never*, *ever*, *always* (Labov 1984: 48)
- ◎ **Emphatic use of pronouns**: German *selbst*, Russian *sam*
 - ◎ English: *The President himself will give the opening speech* (König 2001: 749)
- ◎ **Expressive phonology (pitch, length)**
 - ◎ Russian: *m-m-merzkij* 'filthy'; *ma-a-alen'kij* 'small' (Berkov 1996: 116)
- ◎ **Reduplication**
 - ◎ Afrikaans: *amper* 'nearly' > *amper amper* 'very nearly' (Bauer 2001: 25)
- ◎ **Morphological intensifiers**
 - ◎ Italian: augmentative suffix *-one*, elative suffix *-issimo* (Dressler & Barbaresi 1994)

This talk

What is intensifiable?

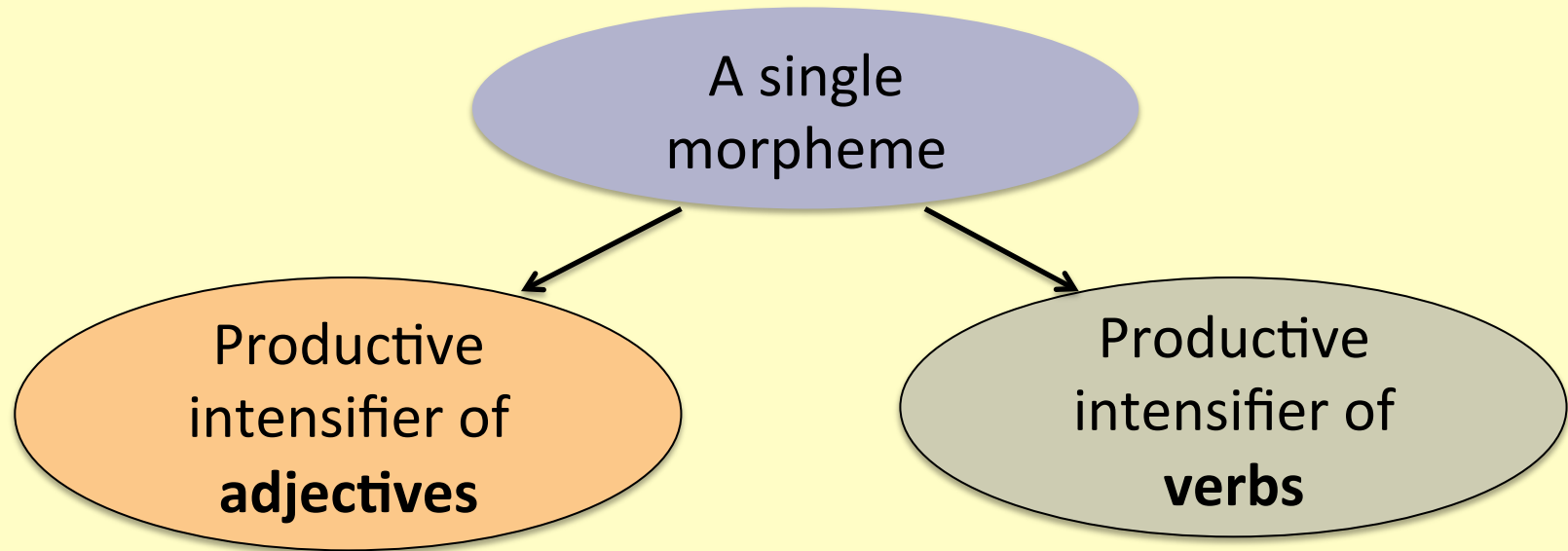
Can intensifiers be found beyond the adjectival
(and broader: nominal) domain?

In particular,
how does intensification work in verbs?

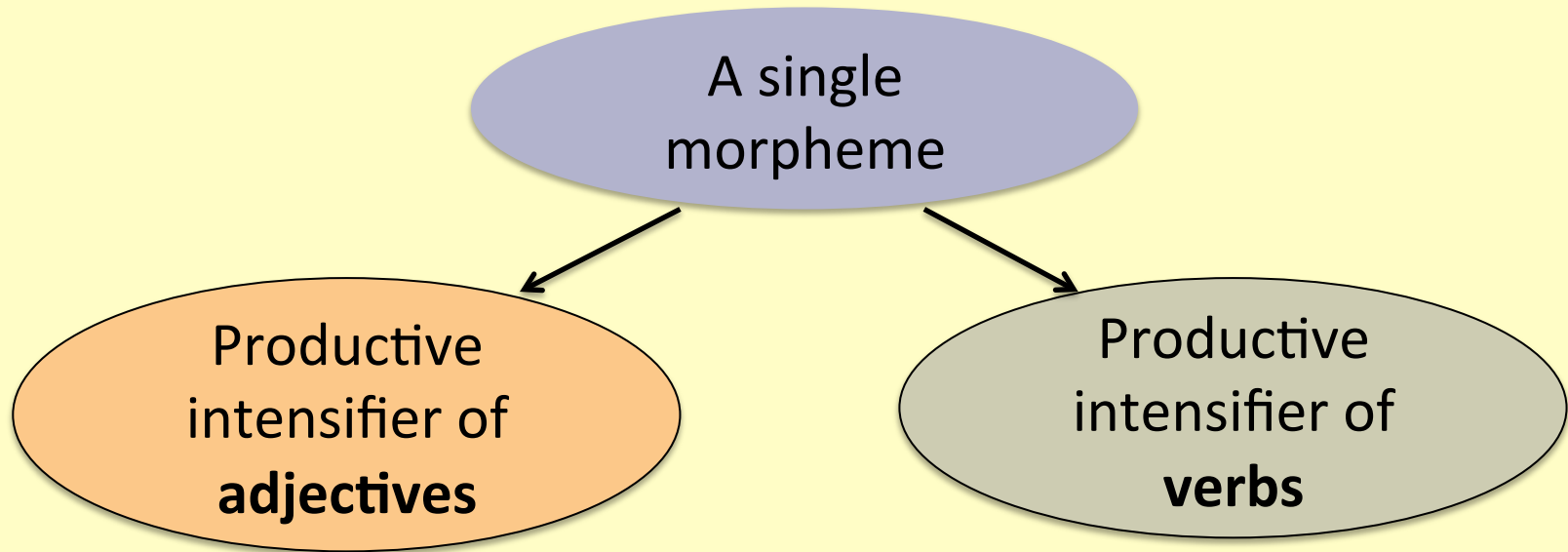
Case study: Russian

A single
morpheme

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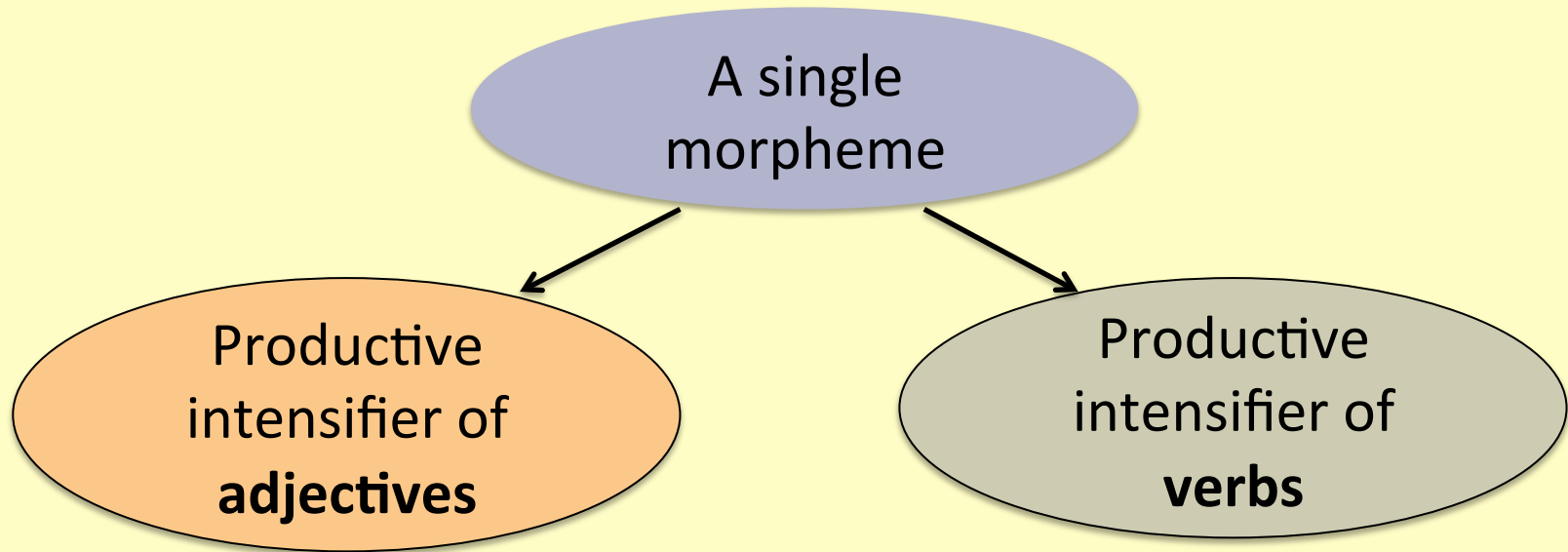


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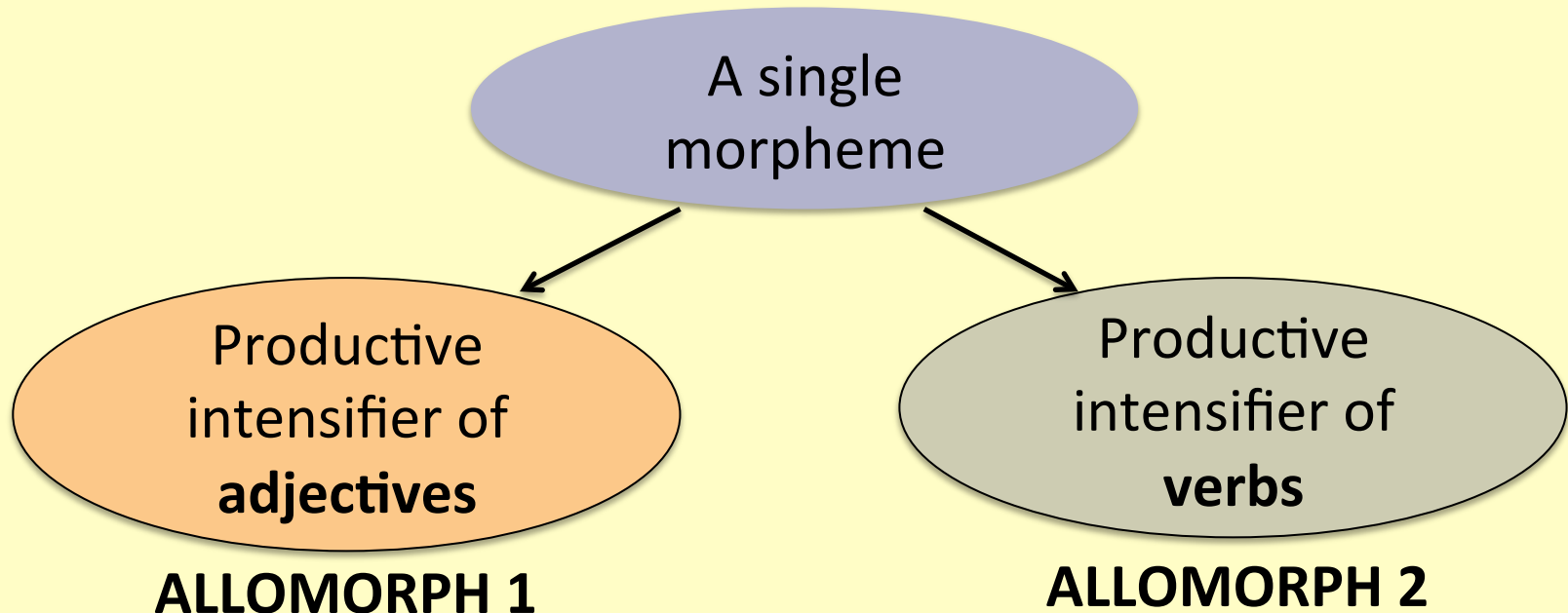
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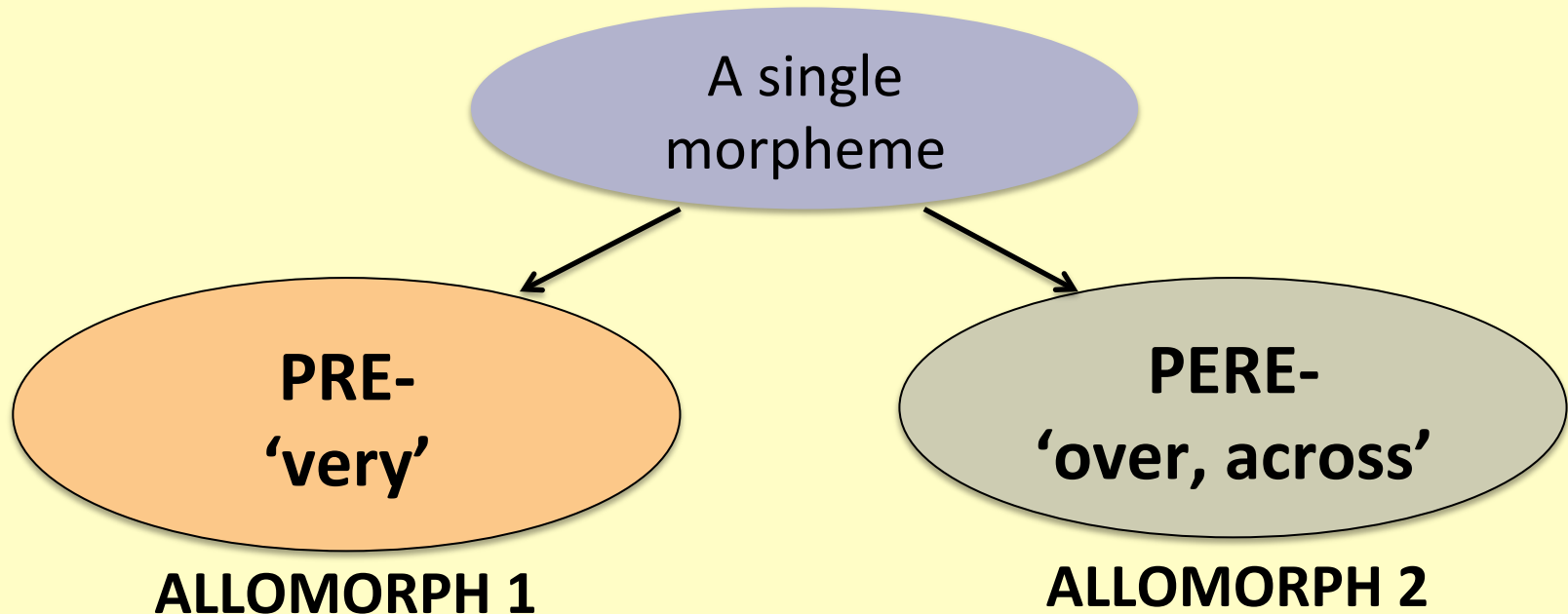
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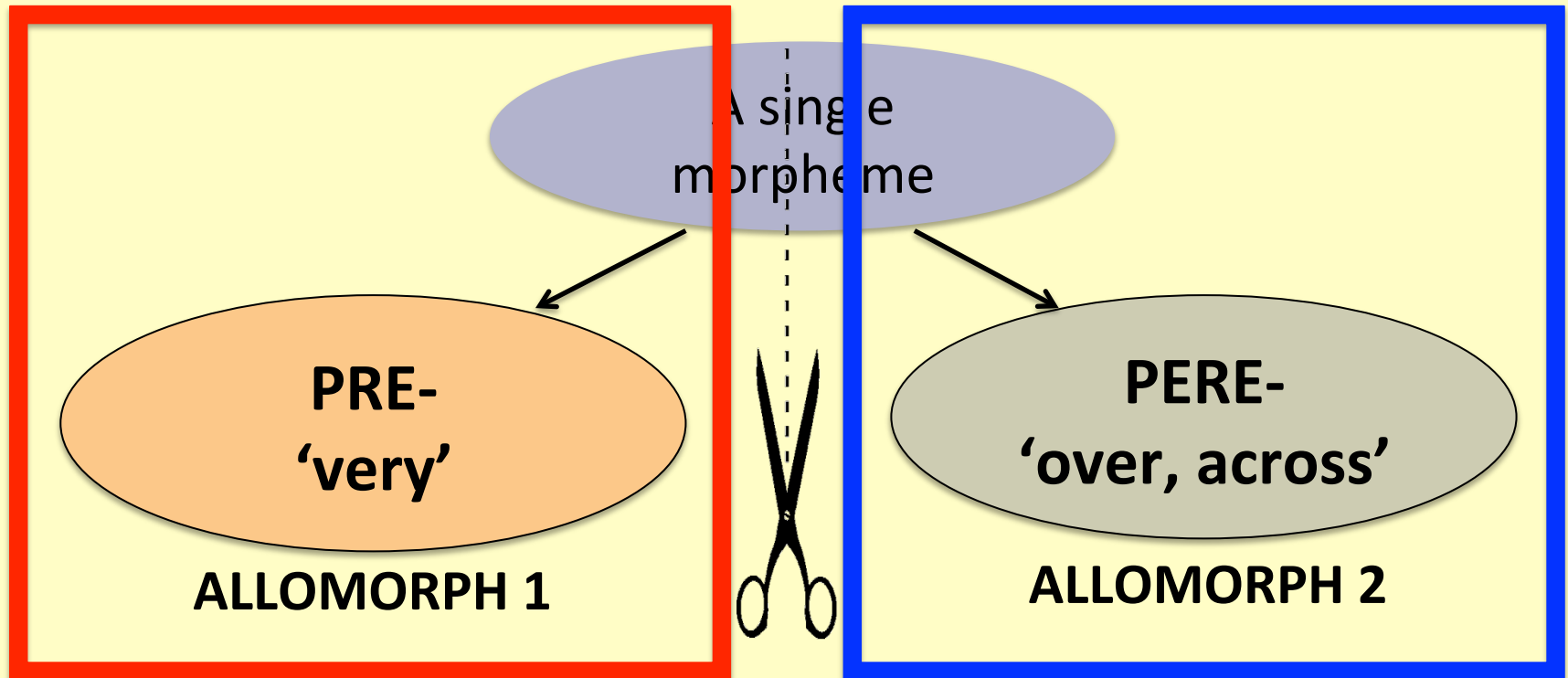
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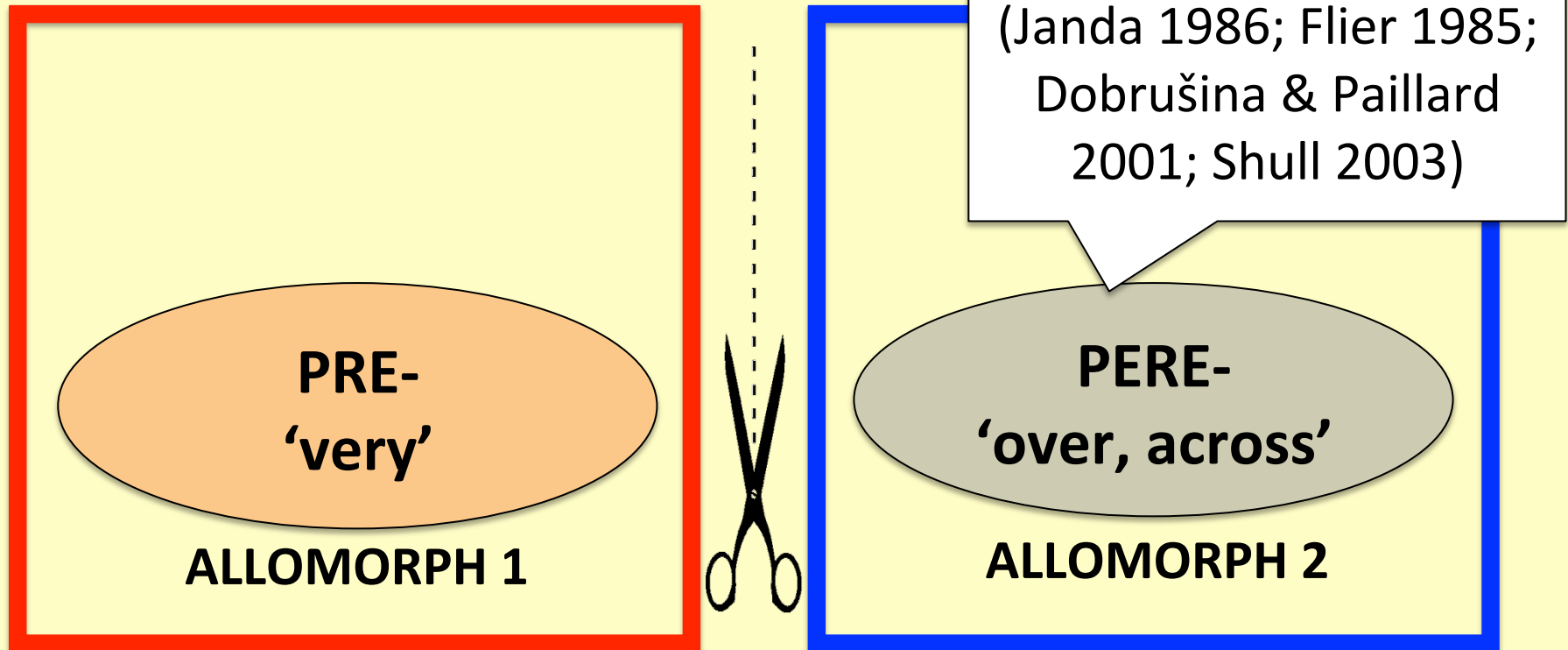
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Case study: Russian



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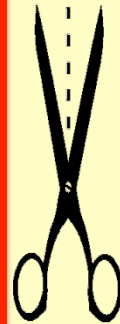
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Neglected due to misconception of its unclear semantics (Isačenko 1960)

PRE-
'very'

ALLOMORPH 1



Well described (Janda 1986; Flier 1985; Dobrušina & Paillard 2001; Shull 2003)

PERE-
'over, across'

ALLOMORPH 2

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It has

The only contrastive analysis: Soudakoff 1975 argues for **distinct morphemes** (limited data, focus on contrastive uses)

are

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Two crucial criteria:

- identical meaning
- complementary distribution

(Matthews 1974; Haspelmath 2002; Booij 2005; Bauer 2001)

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can be strikingly different:

pere-terpet 'PERE-suffer, tolerate
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pre-terpet 'PRE-suffer, tolerate
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Distribution

- not governed by any active phonological rule
- not complementary (90 base verbs can attach both prefixes), overlap!

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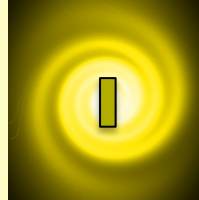
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Allomorphy from the perspective of cognitive linguistics

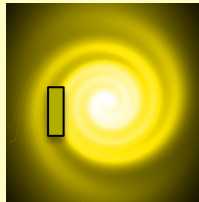


The core clear cases of allomorphy -



➤ prototypical rather than the only possible

Deviations -



➤ recognized as allomorphy or non-allomorphy according to **statistical measurements**



Optimization via:

- large corpora
- experimental data
- quantitative methods

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Both prefixes are highly polysemous;
Share a single radial network of meanings, the prototype, the function if intensifier

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Meaning

Both prefixes are highly polysemous;
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Distribution

These prefixes are specialized for different morphological domains;
There is tendency and overlap

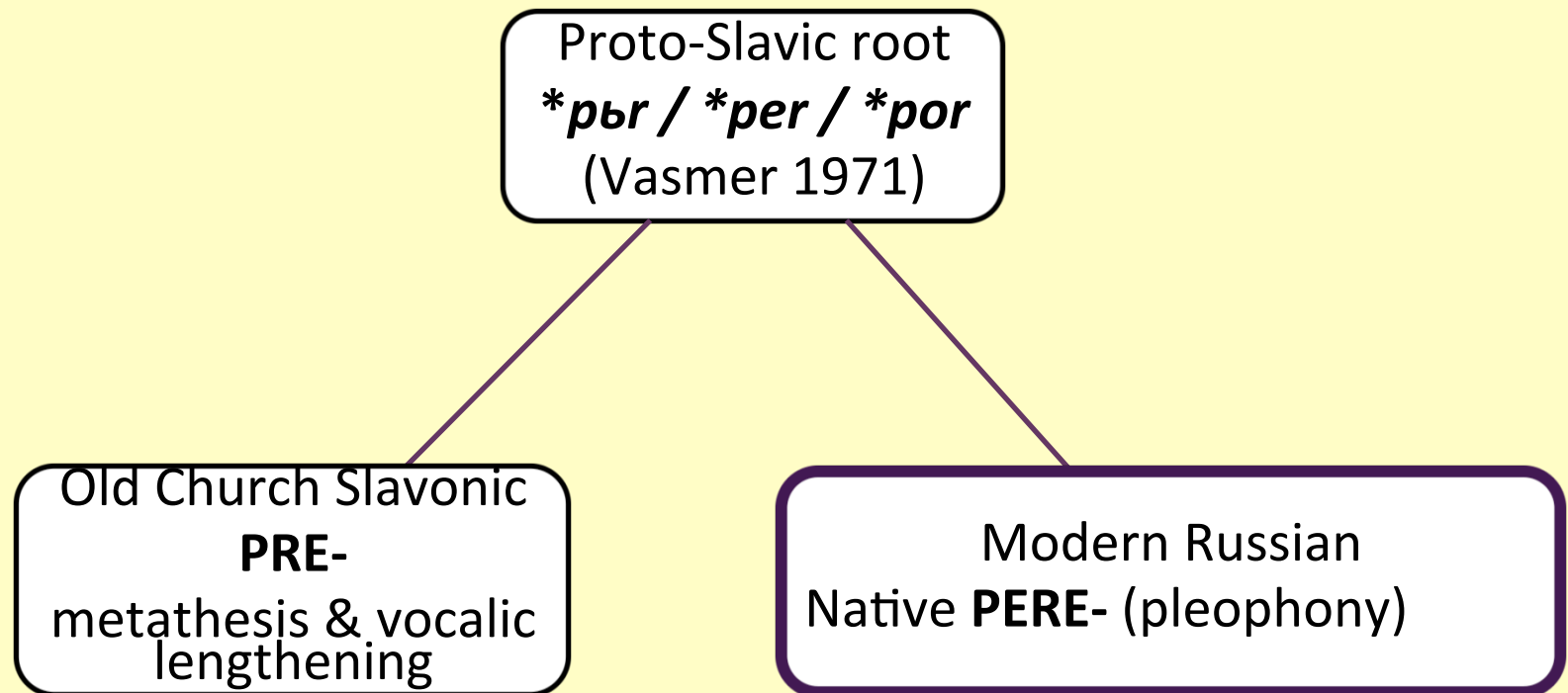
PRE- ‘very’ and PERE- ‘over, across’

Speakers do associate PRE- and PERE- with each other (certain orthographic rules deliberately instruct to check if PRE- can be replaced with PERE-)

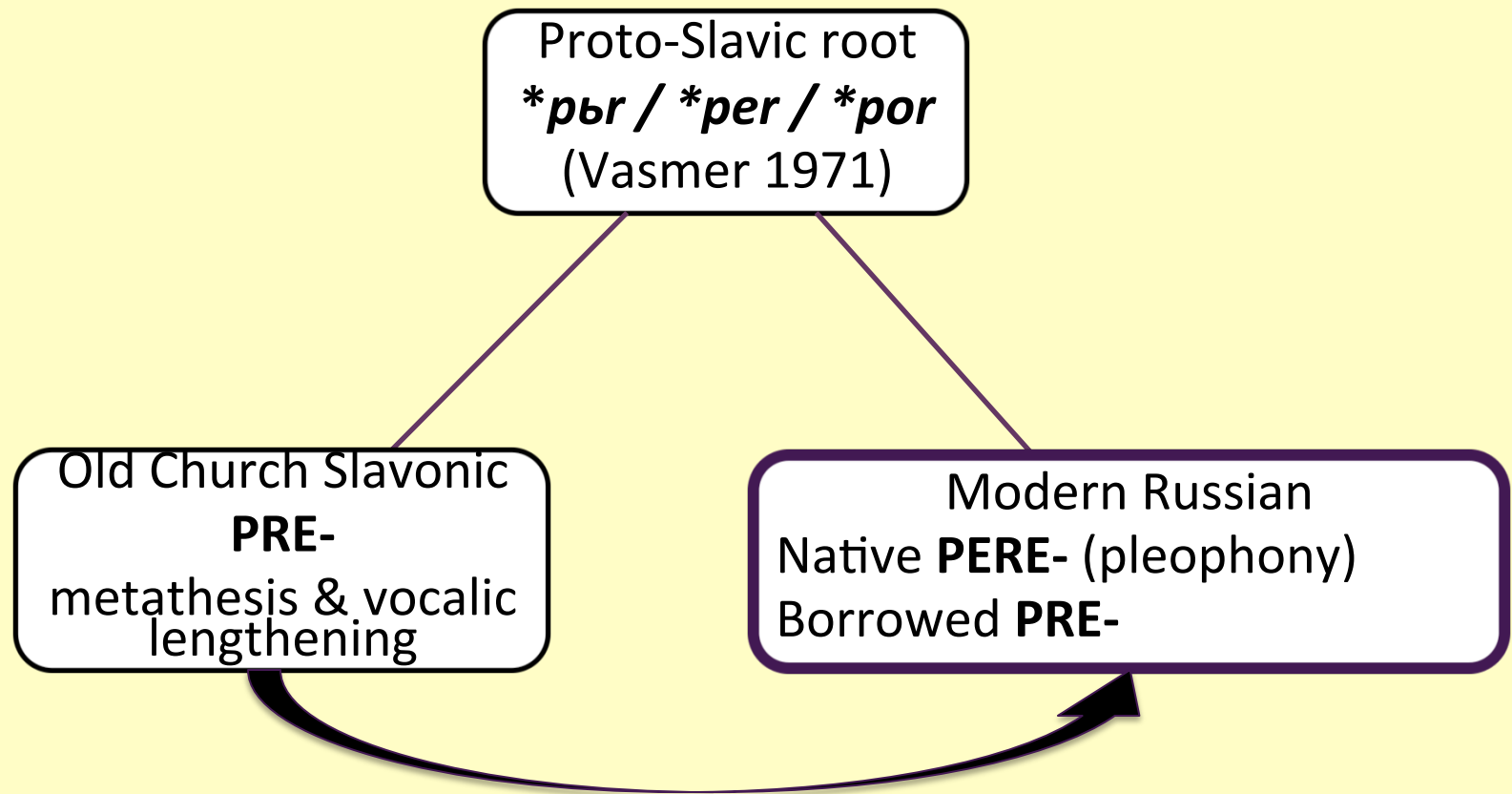
Formal similarity

Are the two prefixes historically related?

Native PERE- vs. borrowed PRE-



Native PERE- vs. borrowed PRE-



Found also as roots

sopernik 'rival'

popper'ok 'across'

rasprja
'quarrel, local war'

Proto-Slavic root
**pъr* / **per* / **por*
(Vasmer 1971)

sporit'
'argue'

prekoslovit' 'contradict'

Old Church Slavonic
PRE-
metathesis & vocalic
lengthening

perečit' 'contradict'

Modern Russian
Native **PERE-** (pleophony)
Borrowed **PRE-**

prenije 'dispute'

zapretit' 'prohibit'

vopreki 'in spite of'

The prototype: TRANSFER

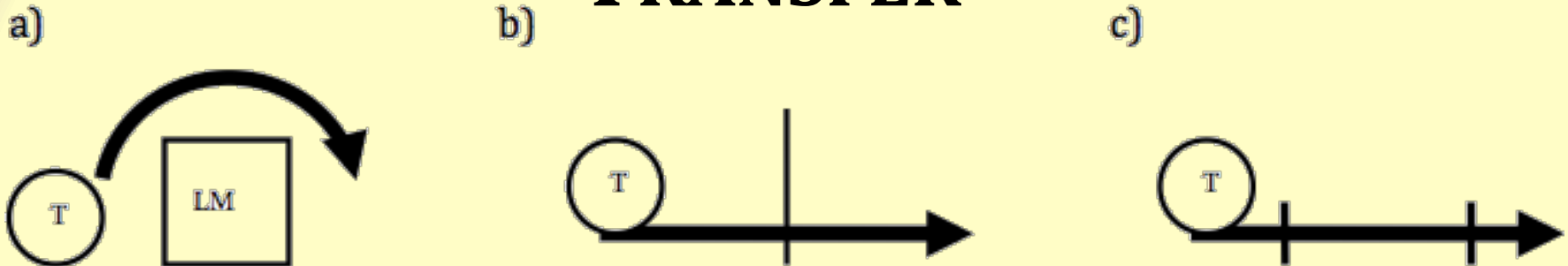


Figure 1. Variations of the image schema of the prototypical subcategory TRANSFER



OVER

perelezt' čerez zabor
'climb over a fence'



THROUGH

perenesti čerez porog
'carry across a threshold'



ACROSS

perejti ulicu
'cross the street'

The prototype: TRANSFER

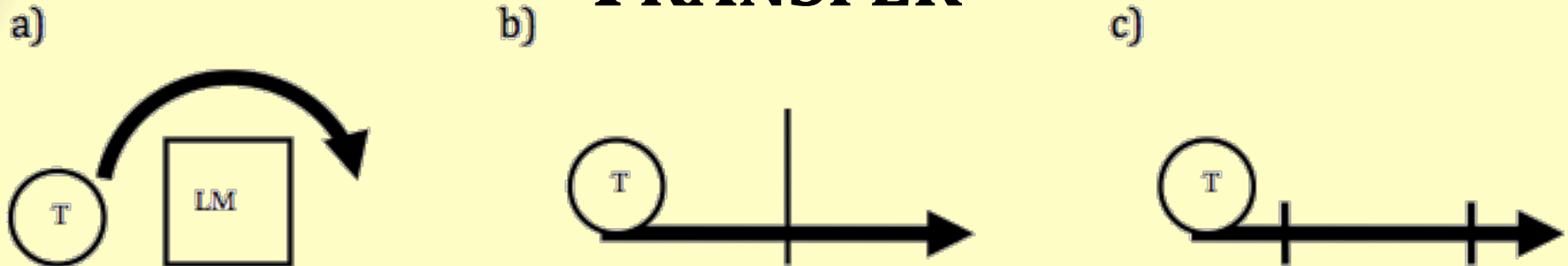


Figure 1. Variations of the image schema of the prototypical subcategory TRANSFER

PRE-

prepodnesti 'present with'
preprovodit' 'accompany'

perelezt' čerez zabor
'climb over a fence'

THROUGH

perenesti čerez porog
'carry across a threshold'

perejti ulicu
'cross the street'

TRANSFER >> Intensification

The prototypical meaning TRANSFER motivates various ways of **going beyond a metaphorical boundary** (assumed norm, another person, another activity).

Two prefixes – Two domains

Loan prefix PRE- ‘very’

Adj:

predobryj ‘very kind’ < *dobryj* ‘kind’

Adv:

premnogo ‘very much’ < *mnogo* ‘much’

Noun:

preizbytok ‘large abundance’ < *izbytok*
‘surplus’

preneprijatnost’ ‘very unpleasant event’ <
neprijatnost’ ‘unpleasant event’

Other:

spasibo-prespasibo ‘thank you-INTENS’ <
spasibo ‘thank you’

požalujsta-prepožalujsta ‘please-INTENS’ <
požalujsta ‘please’

Verbs: 107 in www.ruscorpora.ru, INTENS
in 54% cases

Native prefix PERE- ‘over’

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Native prefix PERE- ‘over’

Adj: only lexicalized from participle

Ljudi zanjaty i perezanjaty.

‘People are busy and over/very-busy.’

Participle:

stiranyj-perestiranyj ‘washed many times’ <
stiranyj ‘washed’

zastroennyj-perezastroennyj ‘overbuilt’ <
zastroennyj ‘built’

Verbs: 1,729 in www.ruscorpora.ru, INTENS
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Loan prefix PRE- ‘very’

Adj:

Intensifier of a quality: VERY

- Non-verbal domain: adj. and adv.
- Verbal morphological properties are less relevant

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Native prefix PERE- ‘over’

Adj. only lexicalized from participle

Intensifier of activity: OVERDO, REDO, DISTRIBUTE, SUPERIORITY, THOROUGH

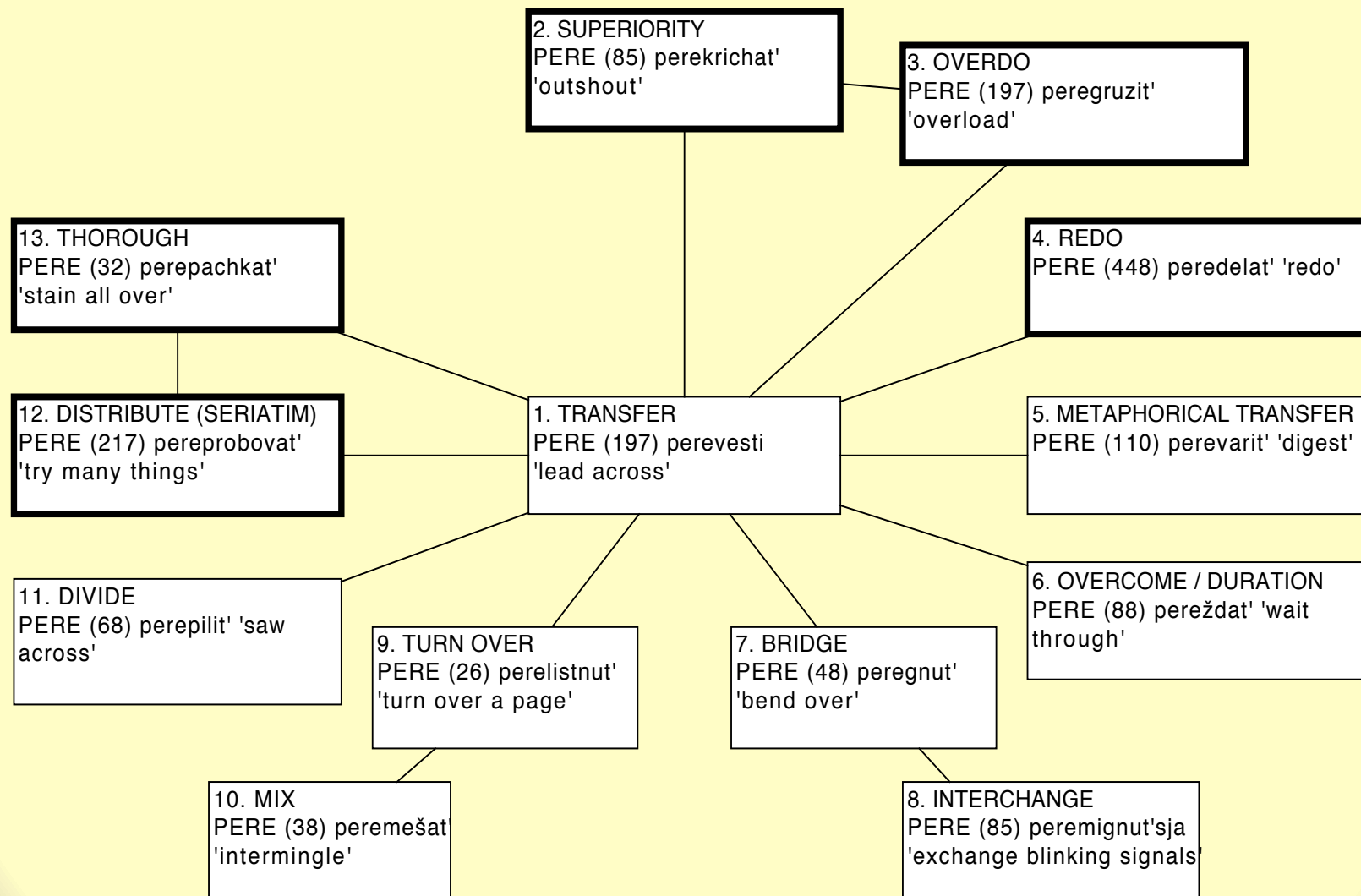
- Verbal domain
- Stronger impact on verbal morphological properties

Verbs: 1,729 in www.ruscorpora.ru, INTENS in 60% cases

Data

- All verbs prefixed in PRE- and PERE- attested in the Russian National Corpus (www.ruscorpora.ru):
- 1,836 verbs include
 - 107 verbs prefixed in PRE-,
 - 1,729 verbs prefixed in PERE-
- Policy:
 - Reflexives have separate entries
 - Perfective and imperfective verbs are given separate entries
 - Submeanings as separate entries:
 - e.g. *perevarit* 'PERE-cook'
 - 1. 'cook/boil again' (REDO)
 - 2. 'overcook' (OVERDO)
 - 3. 'digest' (METAPHORICAL TRANSFER)
- Manually assigned a simplex base and tagged for semantic groups

PERE-: Intensifier of verbal activity



Intensification applied to verbal domain

| Submeaning | Verb | Examples |
|-------------|---|---|
| REDO | ‘repeat an activity to achieve a better result’ | <i>peredelat</i> ‘redo’ < <i>delat</i> ‘do’ 448 verbs |
| DISTRIBUTE | ‘apply an activity to a number of objects’ | <i>pereprobovat</i> ‘try many things’ < <i>probovat</i> ‘try’ 217 verbs |
| THOROUGH | ‘thoroughly affect with an activity the whole object’ | <i>perepačkat</i> ‘stain all over’ < <i>pačkat</i> ‘stain’ 32 verbs |
| SUPERIORITY | ‘perform an activity better than someone else’ | <i>perekričat</i> ‘outshout’ < <i>kričat</i> ‘shout’ 85 verbs |
| OVERDO | ‘perform an activity more than a norm suggests’ | <i>peregruzit</i> ‘overload’ < <i>gruzit</i> ‘load’ 197 verbs |

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Intensifier function in
979 verbs = 60 % of all verbs with PERE-

Intensification applied to verbal domain

| Submeaning | Verb | Examples |
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| REDO | 'a | <i>delat</i> 'do' |
| DISTRIBUTE | 'a | 'any things' < verbs |
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| OVERDO | 'perform an activity more than a norm suggests' | <i>peregruzit</i> 'overload' < <i>gruzit</i> 'load' <i>preuveličit</i> 'exaggerate' < <i>uveličit</i> 'enlarge' |
| VERY | | <i>preumnožit</i> 'increase' < <i>umnožit</i> 'multiply', <i>preuspet</i> 'succeed in' < <i>uspet</i> 'manage' 14 verbs |

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Intensification applied to verbal domain

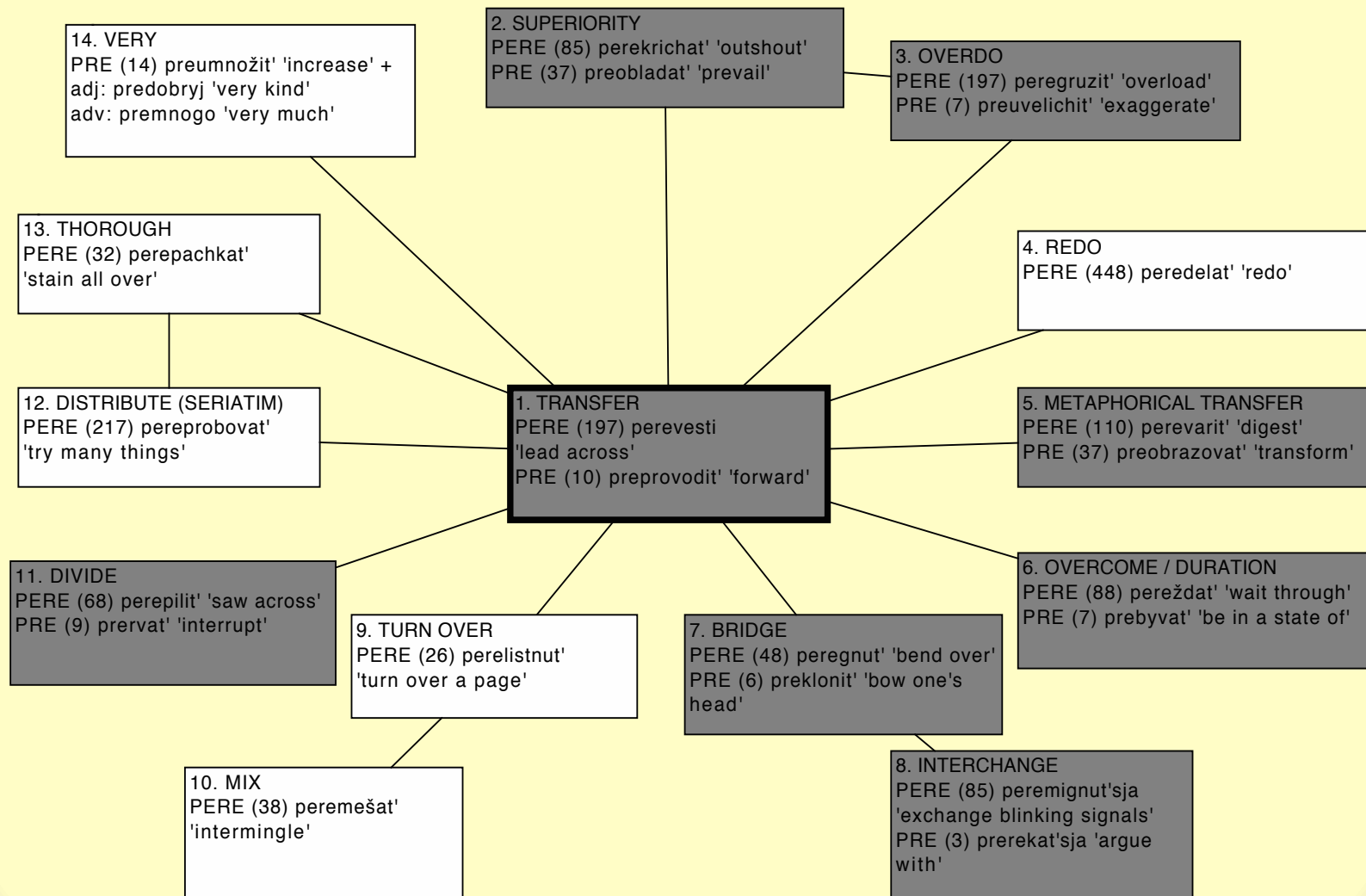
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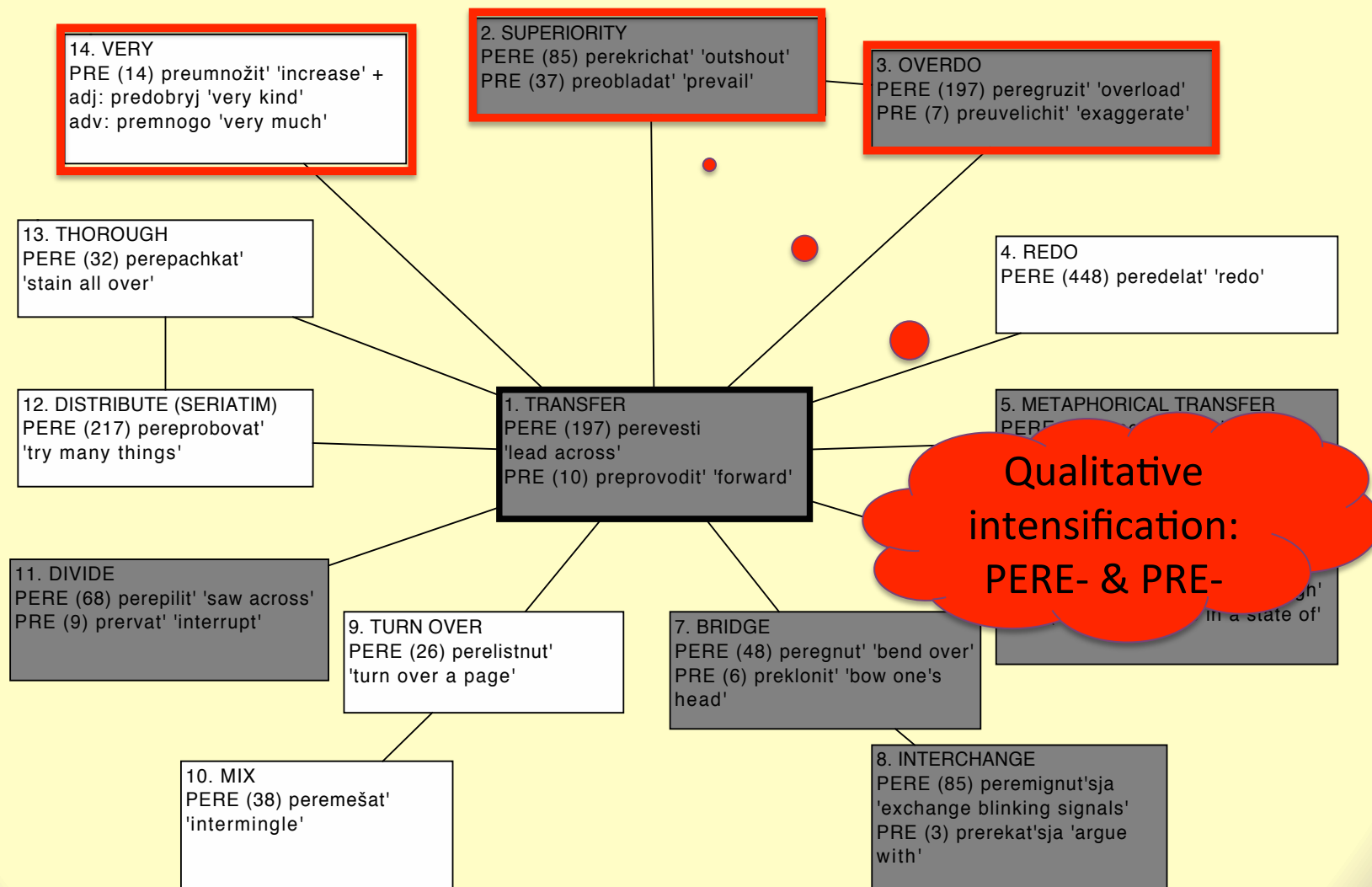
**Intensifier function in
58 verbs = 54 % of all verbs with PRE-**

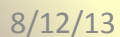
Semantic overlap of PERE- and PRE-

(Radial Category Profiling methodology, cf. Nessel et al. 2001)



Semantic overlap of PERE- and PRE-





Summing up

PRE- 'very'

- Loan prefix
- Productive in adjectival domain
- Intensifier of quality
- Qualitative intensification

PERE- 'over'

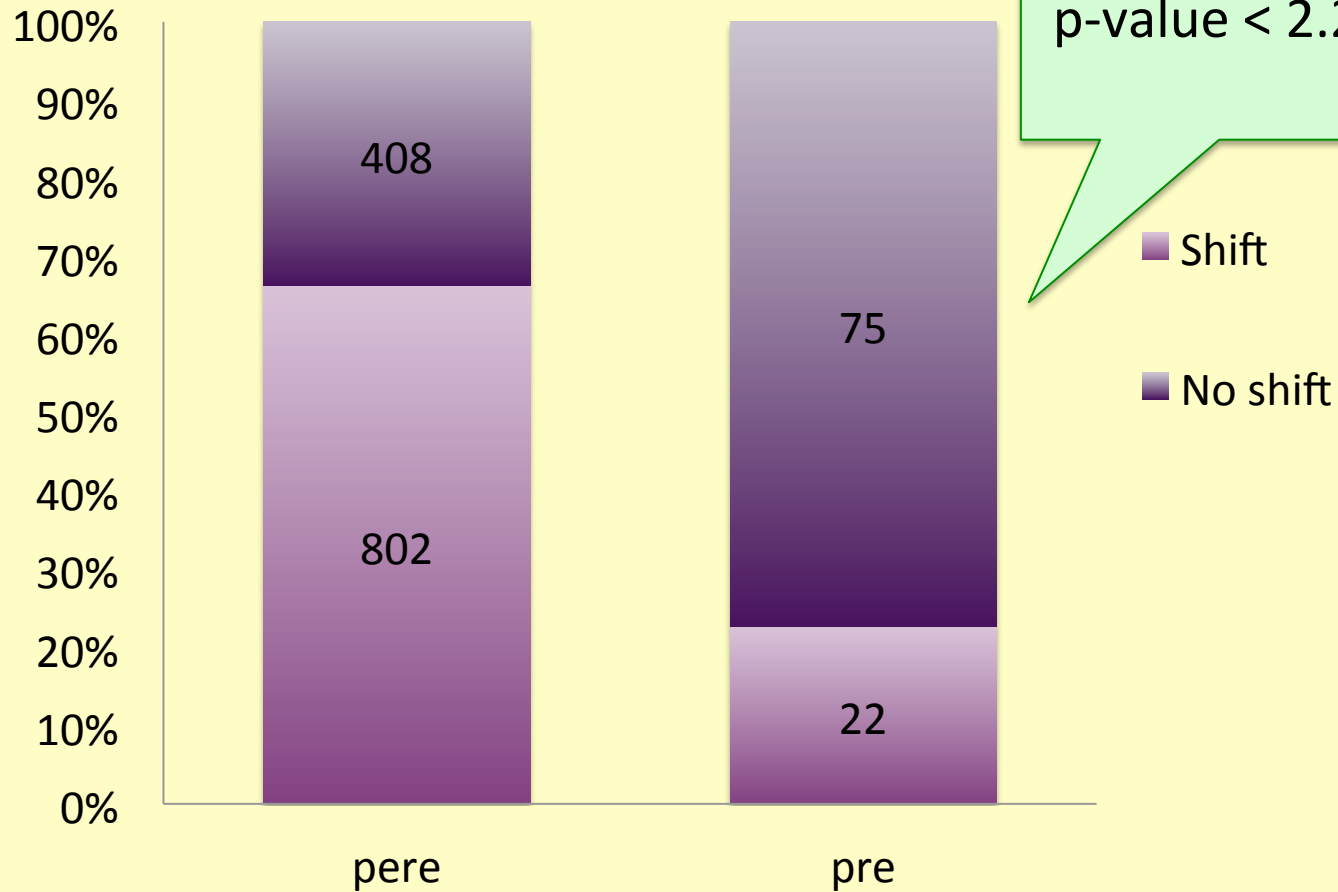
- Native prefix
- Productive in verbal domain
- Intensifier of activity
- Quantitative and qualitative intensification

Non-prototypical allomorphs of a single morpheme;

Morphological conditioning;

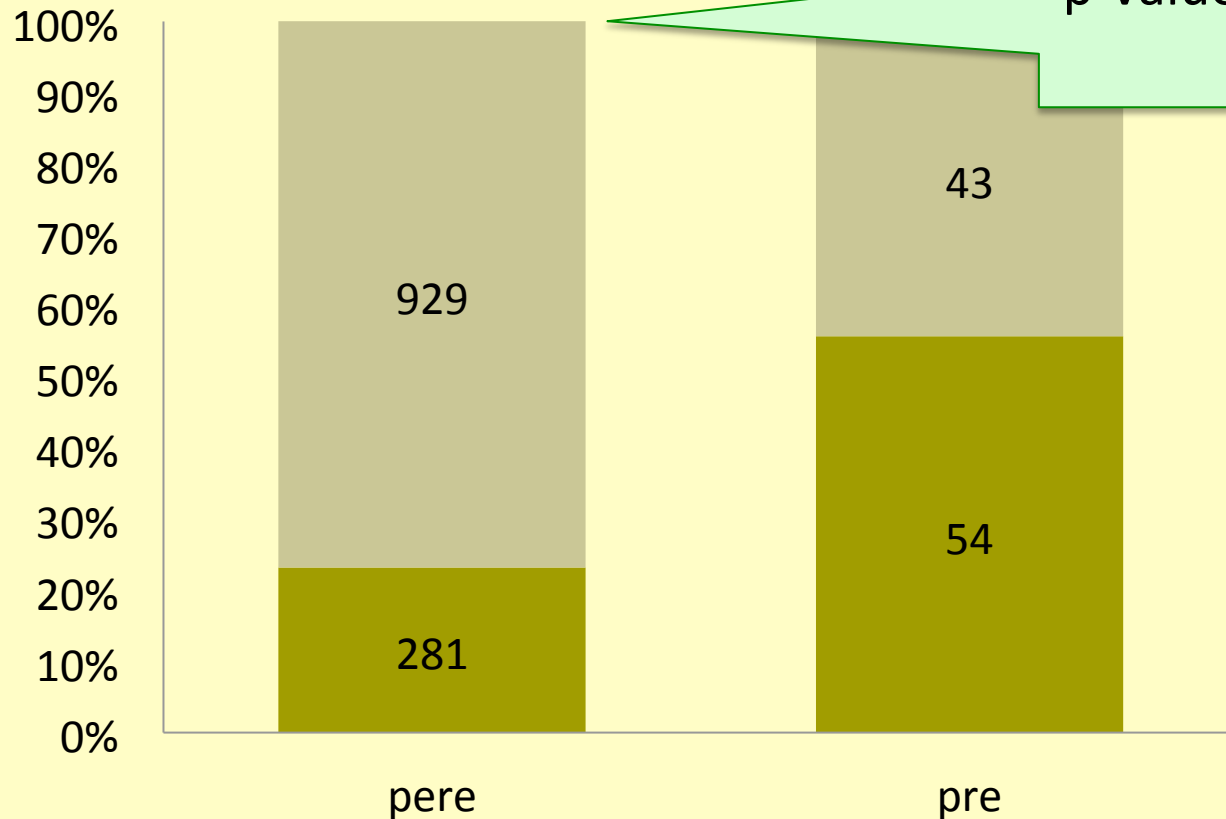
Semantic and distributional overlap

Aspect shift



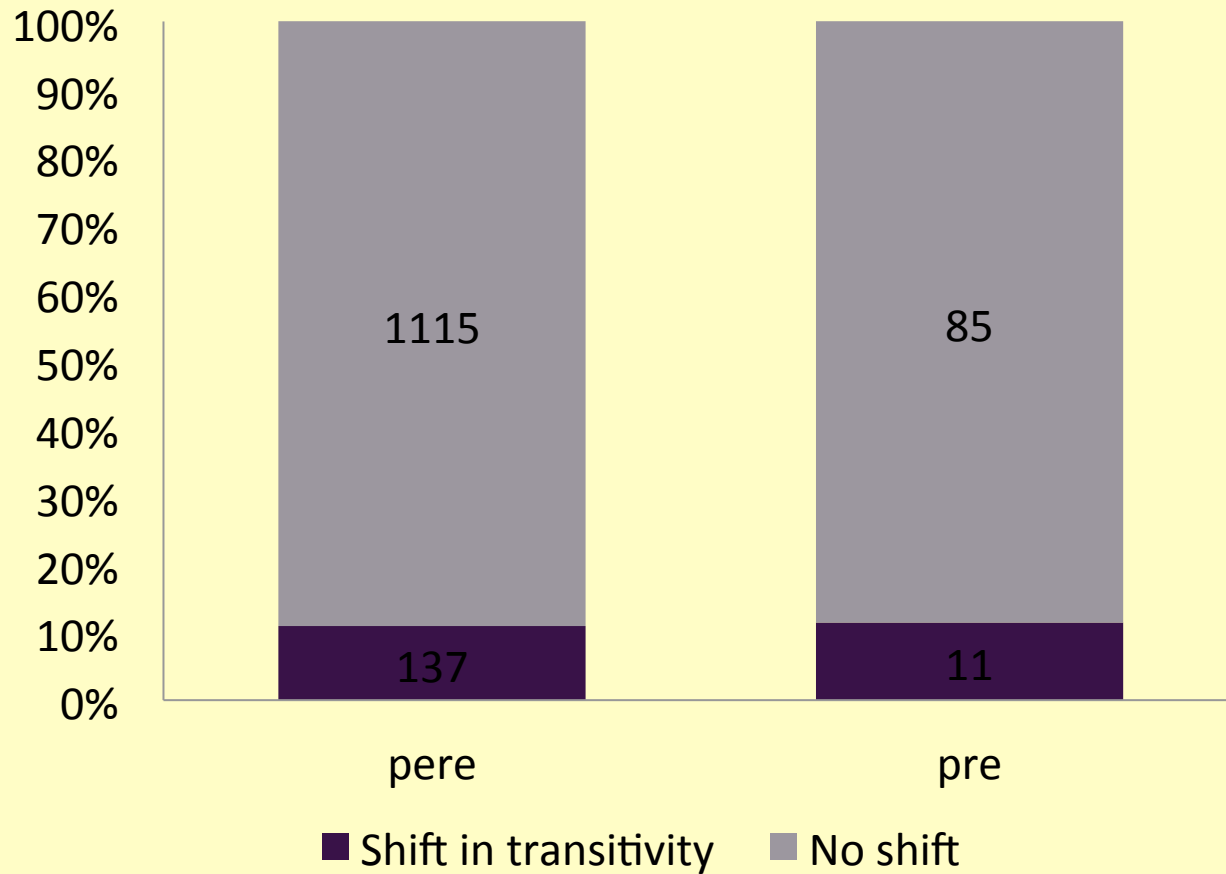
PERE- is almost three times better perfectivizer than PRE-

Prefix stacking



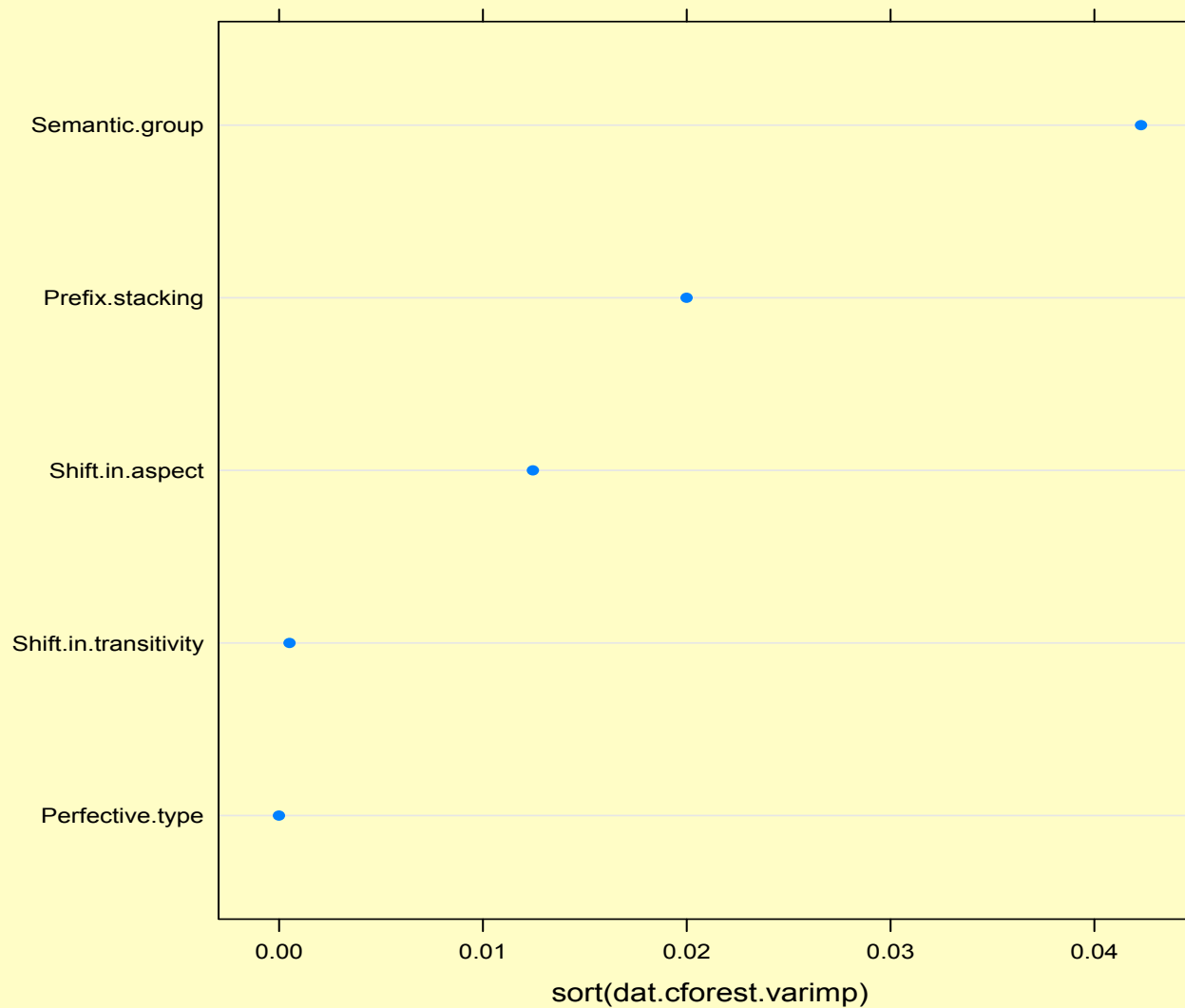
PRE- is much more often stacked over another prefix than PERE-

Transitivity



No significant difference: 11% of cases for both prefixes

Statistical analysis: Scores of variable importance



A similar story: English

Germanic prefix:

OVER-

Verbs:

overdo

overeat

Nouns:

overdose

Latin prefix:

SUPER-

HYPER-

Adj:

supercool

supersensitive

supernatural

hyperactive

Nouns:

superman, supercoach

superpower

hypertension

hyperdemocracy

German prefix:

ÜBER-

(in English mostly
spelled as *uber*)

Adj:

uber-cool

uber-nice

uber-hot

uber-mean

Nouns:

uber-model

uber-nanny

(Kunter 2012)

uber examples from COCA

- Spider walked in. And I was trying to be like uber cool. [2010, Reality Show, transcript]
- Two uber liberal Congress people, Elijah Cummings and Nancy Pelosi, allow Ms. Fluke access to Capitol Hill. [2012, Santorum: FOX Favors Romney]
- Consider the uber model of the moment, Gisele Bundchen. Her hair is full of healthy waves... [2000, Vegetarian Times]
- Our family was in a bad way. We yelled, threatened... A friend said, “You should call Ubernanny” [2012, The Southern Review]

Conclusions

- PERE- and PRE- are variants of a single morpheme and are specialized for different morphological domains
- PERE- (native prefix) is a productive intensifier of activity in the verbal domain
- PRE- (loan prefix) is a a productive intensifier of quality in the adjectival domain
- PERE- and PRE- overlap in semantics and can be used beyond their typical domains
- A similar opposition of native vs. loan intensifying prefixes holds for English: *over-* vs. *super-*, *hyper-* vs. *uber-*