The ethical pronoun “me” in Brazilian Portuguese.

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Definition and example: the term ethical constructions is used here to refer to sentences in which a pronoun is used to express that someone is (negatively) affected by the content of the main assertion.

(1) a. Scenario: Mary spent a whole week organizing a surprise birthday party for John. On the day before, she found out that John went to São Paulo.
   b. Mary: o João me foi pra São Paulo!
      the John me went to São Paulo
      ‘John went to São Paulo (and the speaker disapproves of it)
      Alternatively: ‘John went to São Paulo ON ME!’

A constraint on co-reference: ethical pronouns cannot co-refer with referential elements in the same clause in Brazilian Portuguese (BP). Co-reference with adjuncts is possible (originally observed by Borer and Grodzinsky 1986).

(2) Indirect Object x ethical pronoun
   O João (*me) apresentou a Maria para mim!
   The John (*me) introduced the Mary to me
   “John introduced Mary to me (and the speaker disapproves of it)"

(3) Adjuncts x ethical pronoun
   O João (me) apresentou a Maria pro Paulo antes de mim!
   The John (me) introduced the Mary to-the Paul before of me
   “John introduced Mary to Paul (on me) before me”

Goals: a. provide a structure that captures the main properties of these constructions, and b. explain how the constraint on co-reference arises.

Structure: ethical pronouns start in a low projection in the VP system and move to a higher A’-projection in the split IP system, which I call OrientP, in order to check a feature [+S] related to the sentential force and speaker orientation. Evidence for the ethical pronoun base-generation in the VP system, not vP, comes from their compatibility with unaccusative constructions, as shown below.

(4) Unaccusative constructions
   a. As flores (me) caíram no chão!
      the flowers (me) fell on-the floor
      ‘The flowers fell on-the floor (and the speaker disapproves of it)’

Evidence for this movement comes from the fact that ethicals cause relativized minimality effects (Rizzi 1990) blocking all kinds of A’-movement, for instance, wh-movement, as shown below.

(5) Wh-questions involving internal arguments
   a. Pra quem que o João (*?me) vendeu a casa da Marta?
      To whom that the John me sold the house of-the Martha?
      ‘To whom did John sell Martha’s house?’
Crossover: Strong crossover is a violation involving A'-movement of one phrase over a co-indexed phrase (see Postal 1971; Wasow 1972; Lasnik 1976). My proposal is that, when the ethical pronoun undergoes A'-movement to the specifier of OrientP, if it crosses a co-indexed phrase, it causes a strong crossover violation (against Bastos 2007, which analyzed this phenomenon as a Lethal Ambiguity violation in the sense of McGinnis 1997). In addition to symmetries between strong crossover and the constraint on co-reference, I also discuss one case that can potentially be analyzed as a weak crossover violation in BP.

References
McGinnis, M. (1997), Reflexive external arguments and lethal ambiguity. WCCFL.

Is UP always GOOD? A case of non-trivial evaluation in Russian prefixes.

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GOOD IS UP is a well-known orientational metaphor (Lakoff & Johnson 1980). In this study we address the question whether the spatial semantics of upward motion always gives rise to positive metaphorical extensions. We report on a case study of the two historically related Russian prefixes VZ-and VOZ-, both of which denote an upward movement. However, while the prefix VOZ-shows the GOOD IS UP effects, the prefix VZ-tends to develop mostly negative connotations. By analyzing this deviation from the general tendency we additionally approach the specific properties of metaphorical extensions in prefixes.

We propose that the difference in the metaphorical development of the two prefixes comes from an additional component of their semantics – the length of the trajectory. VZ-refers to a shorter trajectory, which realizes as a brief, unexpected movement. By contrast, VOZ-is characterized by a longer trajectory, which takes more time to pass (voz-vesti ‘put up a building’ vs. vz-vesti ‘raise a hammer on a gun’). Thus, different prototypes trigger different metaphorical effects. The most productive meaning for VZ-focuses on the space close to the surface and refers to surface violation (vs-boronit ‘furrow’) or even damage (vs-porot ‘rip open’), while VOZ-gives rise to abstract meanings bearing positive connotations (vos-pet ‘eulogize’). Contrastive evaluation of the two prefixes is particularly visible in minimal pairs like vs-pylit ‘suddenly become angry’ vs. vos-pylat ‘come to passion, love’. Thus, though the prefix VZ-refers to the upward movement, its short trajectory mostly triggers negative evaluation.

Our proposal is based on the semantic analysis of 97 perfective verbs derived from imperfective base verbs via VZ-and VOZ. The verbs were extracted from the new frequency dictionary (Lyaševskaya&Šarov forthcoming) based on the Modern subcorpus (98 million words) of the Russian National Corpus (RNC). Our semantic analysis suggests that both prefixes can be described via the same radial category where they exhibit slightly different profiles (see Figure 1). We show that VZ-mostly attaches to the verbs of physical impact and change of state, as they are tagged in the RNC. The combination of the prefix and the base verbs of the mentioned semantic classes form the subcategory SURFACE VIOLATION, which often carries negative connotations and is not attested for VOZ-. The latter, on the contrary, specializes on the subcategory HIGH STATUS, which mostly bears positive connotations and cannot be expressed by VZ.

Thus, the non-trivial qualitative evaluation of the prefix VZ-comes from the quantitative property of its spatial prototype – the length of the trajectory. The negative connotation of this prefix does not indicate that UP IS BAD but rather shows that SMALL IS BAD. The latter metaphor contradicts the general tendency found in suffix evaluation SMALL IS GOOD (Grandi & Montermini, 2005) and might be a specific property of prefixes. The evaluation of a prefix is the result of its compatibility with the base verb, which is determined by the prototype of the prefix.

References
Lyaševskaya, O. N. & Šarov, S. A. (Forthcoming), *Nový častotný slovar ruskoj leksiki*.

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