

Paradigmatic constructions: A usage-based onomasiological study in Polish prefix alternations

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This study tests the viability of Multifactorial Feature Analysis / Behavioural Profiles (Geeraerts *et al.* 1994, Gries 2003) as a tool for producing descriptively and predictively adequate accounts of sets of functionally similar grammatical constructions. The study assumes that constructions are composite form-meanings pairs, learnt and used in a similar way to lexemes. Understood thus, alternations are near-synonyms and any description needs to account for the onomasiological-paradigmatic choice that speakers make in their use. Perhaps one reason why the tradition has focused on two-way choices is that the composite nature of constructions makes the rigorous description of such "paradigms" extremely complex. Accounting for both grammatical and lexical semantics as well as social and stylistic variation simultaneously for more than two composite form-meaning pairs is a non-trivial methodological challenge. The fundamental challenge that such a 'holistic' approach to constructional alternations faces is one of complexity. However, if we are committed to a cognitively plausible description of language production, this challenge must be met.

In Slavic languages, perfectivising verbal prefixes represent notoriously problematic sets of near-synonymous grammatical forms. Comparable to traditional alternation research, they represent functionally interchangeable linguistic choices that contribute open class-semantics for which intuitive explanations are inadequate. The study examines three Polish perfectivising prefixes (*wy-*, *za-*, *na-*), combined with verbs from the lexical field of filling verbs (Levin 1993) (*-pchać/-pychać* 'push', *-pełnić/-pełniać* 'fill', *-ładowywać/-ładować* 'load'). Although the ability of the method to deal with complexity is under scrutiny, certain steps have been taken to simplify the object of study. Socio-stylistic variation is entirely controlled for and the data are restricted to a single field of six verbs, all known to alternate felicitously, productively, and "ambiguously". The data are taken from the National Corpus of Polish (900 occurrences) and the feature analysis focuses on the nominal elements as well as event characteristics (Janda 1986, Dąbrowska 1996, Fabiszak *et al.* 2014).

References

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By extending the principle of alternation in this manner, we are presented with what is essentially a paradigmatic object of study.

We expect that the results will quantitatively map the usage using discriminative quantitative analysis to cluster the contextual features. The descriptive accuracy will then be determined through predictive modelling. It is hoped that these features will produce a non-discrete usage-based map that distinguishes the prefixes paradigmatically.