Russian prefixes and phase boundaries
Peter Svenonius (CASTL, University of Tromsø)

Russian verbal prefixes of the sort associated with perfectivity can be roughly divided into two broad classes, namely the lexical and the superlexical. The lexical prefixes are comparable to Germanic particles, expressing spatial notions, interacting with argument structure, and manifesting a high degree of lexical idiosyncrasy. Various diagnostics pick them out, for example the formation of secondary imperfectives, combination with perfective stems, and the formation of nominalizations. Superlexical prefixes, on the other hand, are quantificational or adverbial in nature; they quantify either over arguments (cumulative na- and distributive po- or pere-, for example) or events (delimitative po-, and inceptive iz-, for example). The diagnostics mentioned above yield negative results for superlexical prefixes, which typically do not form secondary imperfectives, do not combine with perfective stems, and do not allow nominalization. In some cases the two types cooccur, a phenomenon known as prefix 'stacking'; in such cases, the superlexical prefixes are always further from the stem than the lexical prefixes.

I argue that all of these properties can be derived from independently motivated assumptions about the way functional structure combines to form clauses. These assumptions ensure that lexical prefixes are attached to the syntactic structure inside the verb phrase, while superlexical prefixes are attached higher up, in the temporal domain. The analysis posits a boundary between temporal structure and event structure (following work by Ramchand), which may be called Asp, for Aspect. Prefixes which modify event structure, including those with spatial meanings, must merge below Asp, in the verb phrase. This results in a strong parallel between the lexical prefixes and Germanic particles, both of which are introduced as verbal complements. Verbal complements are common sources for idiomatization (cf. Marantz), accounting for the lexical idiosyncracy noted. The secondary imperfective is associated with an aspectual feature in Asp, which relates event structure to temporal structure, and is the highest point at which nominalization is possible. The quantificational meanings associated with superlexical prefixes are part of the higher domain, above Asp; this holds even for quantification over nominal arguments (as argued by Sportiche). The location of the two types of prefix in the two domains ensures their order in cases of stacking. Time permitting, I will show how the domain boundary corresponds to Chomsky's notion of phase.