

Two Types of Verb Fronting in Russian*

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Russian has two types of verb fronting with doubling: when the fronted verb is an infinitive, and when it is fully inflected. I explore the semantic differences between the two types of verb fronting, previously ignored in the literature, and argue that in uninflected verb fronting the fronted constituent is semantically a predicate, while in inflected verb fronting it's an assertion. Syntactically, thus, the two fronted constituents differ in size: it is the largest Aspect Phrase in uninflected verb fronting and a (Speech) Act Phrase with its complement elided in inflected verb fronting.

1 Introduction

Verb fronting with doubling (VF) is a common phenomenon cross-linguistically (Cable 2004, Landau 2006, Kandybowicz 2007, a.o.). Russian has two types of VF: in the first one the fronted verb is an infinitive (uninflected verb fronting, UVF) while in the second one the fronted verb is fully inflected (inflected verb fronting, IVF):

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- (1) a. Pet' (-to) on poët, no ploxo. [UVF]
sing_{IPFV.INF} TOP he sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} but badly
‘As for singing, he does that, but poorly.’
- b. Poët *(-to) on poët, no ploxo.^{1,2} [IVF]
sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} TOP he sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} but poorly
‘As for the fact that he sings, that’s indeed true, but he does so poorly.’

The previous literature on VF in Russian either didn’t recognize the existence of IVF (Abels 2001) or didn’t discuss the semantic differences between the two types of VF (Aboh and Dyakonova 2009).

In this paper I explore novel data on the semantic differences between UVF and IVF and propose an account of the syntax/semantics mapping in the two cases. In particular, I argue that UVF picks an antecedent predicate from the discourse and says whether it’s true of its continuation (i.e., the rest of the sentence, in the sense of continuation semantics, as in Barker 2002, a.o.), or what it needs to combine with to return a true proposition. IVF, however, can only pick an assertion and confirm it. I further propose that in UVF the fronted constituent is the largest Aspect Phrase (AspP), in which the verb has acquired all the aspectual but not yet tense and ϕ -feature morphology, and in IVF it is an Act Phrase (ActP) with an elided complement, in which the verb has already acquired all the morphology.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. In section 2 I discuss the semantic differences between UVF and IVF, focusing, in particular, on the contexts in which the two can be used, their interaction with negation, and their interaction with Focus. In section 3 I lay out my semantic and syntactic accounts of the said differences. In section 4 I discuss some open questions. Section 5 is a conclusion.

¹ As can be seen from (1), the *to* Topic marker on the fronted constituent is optional in UVF and obligatory in IVF; the reasons for the obligatoriness of *to*-marking in IVF might have to do with avoiding ambiguity, since a *VINFL Subject VINFL* sequence (with a somewhat different prosodic pattern than the one in IVF) in Russian can be interpreted as an iterative or temporally prolonged eventuality.

² A caveat: not all native speakers of Russian accept IVF in the first place. Thus, the judgements I report in this paper only come from those speakers who accept IVF to begin with, but for them the contrasts reported here are robust.

2 Differences between UVF and IVF

In this section I review the differences between UVF and IVF along three dimensions: felicity in different contexts, interaction with negation, and interaction with Focus. I argue that all the differences thus identified suggest that in UVF the fronted constituent is semantically a predicate, and in IVF it is an assertion.

2.1 Contexts

UVF and IVF have a similar structure: (i) they include a fronted constituent that requires an antecedent in the preceding discourse³ and carries a prosodic contour associated with that of Contrastive Topics in the sense of Büring 2003, (ii) they assert something about that fronted constituent lower in the clause, with some part of that assertion being in Focus (again, in line with the Contrastive Topic + Focus configuration), and (iii) they are followed by a contrastive continuation, overt or implied.

However, for the fronted constituent in UVF a predicative antecedent is enough, while in IVF the antecedent has to be at least a proposition. For example, IVF is impossible in B's response in (2a), since there is no antecedent proposition 'B sings' in A's utterance, but possible in (2b), since A's utterance contains the antecedent proposition 'Ivan sings'. UVF is possible in both cases, since it only requires the predicate antecedent 'sing', which is present in A's utterance.

(2) *Context: A and B are discussing casting for a musical film.*

- A: My možem vzjat' na rol' Ivana — on ved' poet.
we can take on role Ivan he EMPH sings
'We can cast Ivan — [I'm reminding you that] he sings.'
- B: a. Pet'- / *poju- to i ja poju —
sing_{IPFV.INF} sing_{IPFV.PRS.1SG} TOP and I sing_{IPFV.PRS.1SG}
tol'ko ploxo.
only badly
'As for singing, I do that, too — only poorly.'

³ I use the term *antecedent* loosely here, to mean something in the preceding discourse that licenses VF. I certainly don't mean to say that fronted constituents in VF constructions are anaphoric elements.

- b. Pet'- / poët- to on poët, no ploxo
sing_{IPFV.INF} sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} TOP he sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} but badly
‘As for singing, he indeed does that / As for the fact that he
sings, that’s indeed true, but he does so poorly.’

Furthermore, IVF cannot be used in response to unbiased, information-seeking polar questions, only in response to assertions (and possibly to biased, confirmation-seeking polar questions):

- (3) A: Rasskaži mne pro Ivana. On poët?
tell_{IMP.2SG} me about Ivan he sings
‘Tell me about Ivan. Does he sing?’
B: Pet'- / #poët- to on poët, no ploxo
sing_{IPFV.INF} sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} TOP he sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} but badly
‘As for singing, he does that, but poorly. / #As for the fact that
he sings, that’s indeed true, but he does so poorly.’

I take (3) to suggest that in IVF the antecedent is not just a proposition, but an assertion, since, under the standard assumptions about the semantics of questions (Hamblin 1973 et seq.), A’s question in (3) denotes the set {Ivan sings, Ivan doesn’t sing}, making the proposition ‘Ivan sings’ a possible antecedent, which, however, is not enough to license IVF in B’s response.

Furthermore, that antecedent assertion has to contain a proposition that is already in the common ground or is supposed to be there (that’s why A’s utterance in (2) contains the *ved’* particle, which is essentially used to remind the addressee of something or to request a confirmation for a proposition that is supposed to be in the common ground). The only thing IVF can do is reaffirm the status of that proposition, and then the contrastive continuation states that that proposition, albeit true, is somehow irrelevant or less important than some other fact. In other words, IVF cannot be used to disagree with the antecedent assertion. Informally, its sole purpose is to say to the addressee, ‘Your speech act was justified, but irrelevant’.

2.2 Negation

The next dimension to consider is interaction with negation. Whenever there is negation on the lower occurrence of the verb, the higher occurrence can't contain negation in UVF, but must contain one in IVF:

- (4) a. Pet'- / *poët- to on ne poët,
 sing_{IPFV.INF} sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} TOP he NEG sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG}
 no tancuet xorošo.
 but dances well
 'As for singing, he doesn't do that, but he dances well.'
- b. Ne *pet'- / poët- to on ne poët,
 NEG sing_{IPFV.INF} sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} TOP he NEG sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG}
 no tancuet xorošo.
 but dances well
 'As for the fact that he doesn't sing, that's indeed true, but he dances well.'

UVF in (4b) can be saved, if the fronted constituent is interpreted as a "negative predicate", i.e., if 'not sing' is interpreted as something like 'be a non-singer'. Thus, predicates that always come with built-in negation, can be easily fronted in UVF:

- (5) Ne-vzljubit'- to on menja ne-vzljubil,
 NEG-like_{PFV.INF} TOP he me NEG-like_{PFV.PAST.M.SG}
 no gadostej nikakix ne delal.
 but mean things none NEG did
 'Dislike me he did, but he didn't do anything mean to me.'

The ungrammaticality of UVF in (4b) is to be expected if the fronted constituent in UVF is a predicate and, thus, can only contain negation if it's a "negative predicate". The ungrammaticality of IVF in (4a) is similarly expected, if the fronted constituent in IVF is an assertion that can only be confirmed, and, thus, whatever the polarity of the fronted assertion, it has to be matched by the polarity of the lower one.

2.3 Focus

As mentioned above, both UVF and IVF are essentially Contrastive Topic + Focus constructions. The difference between the two, however, is that in UVF the focused constituent can be any one that can plausibly

participate in constructing a set of alternatives, while in IVF it can only be the lower occurrence of the verb:

- (6) A: A vy kak spali...?
 and you how slept
 ‘And how did you sleep?’
 B: Spat'- / *spal- to ja spal
 sleep_{IPFV,INF} sleep_{IPFV,PAST,M.SG} TOP I sleep_{IPFV,PAST,M.SG}
 HOROŠO...
 well
 ‘As for sleeping, I slept WELL...’ [corpus example]

The data above support the idea that in UVF the fronted constituent is a predicate, and Focus placement lower in the clause will then depend on what is asserted about that predicate. Since IVF can only be used to confirm an assertion, the only locus for Focus placement is the lower occurrence of the inflected verb, since inflected verbs bear polarity in Russian (for example, they can be used in short polar responses (Gribanova 2017, a.o.)).

Note also that the Focus facts are intertwined with the facts discussed in section 2.1 on contexts. In particular, the IVF sequence in (2a) isn't just infelicitous, it's ungrammatical, due to Focus being on *ja* ('I').

3 My Proposal

Now that I have demonstrated that there are plenty of reasons to believe that UVF and IVF differ in the size of the fronted constituent, I proceed to lay out my account of the semantics and syntax of UVF and IVF.

3.1 *Semantics of UVF and IVF*

As anticipated in the previous section, I propose that both types of VF in Russian are semantically Contrastive Topic + Focus constructions in the sense of Büring 2003, i.e., they both evoke a nested question under discussion (QUD; in the sense of Roberts 1996, a.o.) structure.

UVF evokes a pair-list super-QUD one of whose sub-QUDs is about the antecedent predicate. One option for UVF is to map predicates to truth values when fed a certain fixed continuation, in which case the Focus will be on the lower occurrence of the verb:

- (7) Pet'- to Ivan POĚT, no ploxó.
sing_{IPFV.INF} TOP Ivan sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} but badly
‘As for singing, Ivan does that, but poorly.’
Super-QUD: Which predicate returns which truth value, with Ivan as
the agent and the existential closure over events applied?
Answer: $\lambda e.\text{sing}(e) \rightarrow T$, $\lambda e.\text{sing}(e) \wedge \text{well}(e) \rightarrow F$.

Another possibility is for UVF to map predicates to arguments or
modifiers so that those predicates combined with those arguments or
modifiers (and fed a certain continuation) return ‘true’:

- (8) Spat'- to ja spal HOROŠO,
sleep_{IPFV.INF} TOP I sleep_{IPFV.PAST.M.SG} well
no prosnulsja s trdom.
but wake-up_{PVF.PAST.M.SG} with effort
‘As for sleeping, I slept well, but I woke up with effort.’
Super-QUD: Which predicate combined with which modifier returns
‘true’, with the speaker as the experiencer and the existential closure
over events applied?
Answer: $\lambda e.\text{sleep}(e) \rightarrow \lambda e.\text{well}(e)$, $\lambda e.\text{wake-up}(e) \rightarrow \lambda e.\text{with-}$
effort(e).

As for IVF, I have shown above that the only thing it can do is confirm
that the antecedent speech act was justified, but then the contrastive
continuation indicates that the truth of the asserted proposition is
somehow irrelevant/unimportant. One way of thinking about it is in
terms of sorting assertions into justified vs. relevant/important for the
larger context. For example, if (9) is uttered in the context of a discussion
on whether we should cast Ivan in a musical film, it evokes the super-
QUD about which facts are simply true and which facts are relevant for
the issue at hand:

- (9) Poët- to Ivan POĚT, no ploxó.
sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} TOP Ivan sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} but badly
‘As for the fact that Ivan sings, that’s indeed true, but he does so
poorly.’

Super-QUD: Which assertions are justified and which are relevant for whether we should cast Ivan?

Answer: ‘Ivan sings’ → justified, ‘Ivan sings poorly’ → relevant.

3.2 *Syntax of UVF and IVF*

3.2.1 Syntactic Assumptions. In this section I will lay out a syntactic account that ensures the right semantics for UVF and IVF and captures the morphological differences between the two.

My account relies on the following general assumptions:

- The Copy theory of movement (Chomsky 1995).
- Word formation is syntactic (e.g., Distributed Morphology (Halle and Marantz 1993)).
- Russian verbs don’t move to T (Bailyn 1995), but they move through several aspectual projections to acquire aspectual morphology, and eventually land in a certain intermediate position below T (and below Neg) — let’s call it ϕ — where they get tense and ϕ -feature morphology.

I will further assume that both VF constructions are formed via phrase movement to the specifier of a Contrastive Topic (CTop) projection. An alternative would be that the higher occurrences of the verbs are base-generated. One argument against the base-generation analysis would be that at least UVF seems to be sensitive to island violations, as shown in (10).⁴ It’s hard to make the same argument for IVF, since, due to its peculiar semantics, it’s pretty much unembeddable.

- (10) a. Pet'- to ja dumaju, čto on poët.
sing_{IPFV.INF} TOP I think that he sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG}
‘As for singing, I think that he does that.’
b. *Pet'- to ja slyšal slux, čto on poët.
sing_{IPFV.INF} TOP I heard rumor that he sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG}
‘As for singing, I heard a rumor that he does that.’

Another argument against the base-generation analysis is that the two occurrences of the verb in both types of VF in Russian have to be

⁴ With the understanding that many Russian speakers don’t particularly like extraction from embedded clauses in general.

aspectually identical, including super-lexical aspectual prefixes (see, e.g., Svenonius 2004 on the distinction):

- (11) a. *Pet'- / *pel- to on za-pel...
 sing_{IPFV.INF} sing_{IPFV.PAST.M.SG} TOP he INCH-sing_{IPFV.PAST.M.SG}
 Intended: 'As for singing, he started singing... / As for the fact
 that he sang, he started singing...'
 b. Za-pet'- / za-pel- to on
 INCH-sing_{IPFV.INF} INCH-sing_{IPFV.PAST.M.SG} TOP he
 za-pel...
 INCH-sing_{IPFV.PAST.M.SG}
 'As for starting singing, he did so... / As for the fact that he
 started singing, that's indeed true...'

If the two occurrences of the verb in VF are two copies of the same item, aspectual identity follows (given an appropriate constraint on the minimal size of the fronted constituent), while it isn't clear what would ensure aspectual identity if the higher occurrence of the verb was base-generated. Once again, the argument only truly works for UVF, since in IVF aspectual identity should follow from its semantics: all the aspects of the antecedent assertion should be preserved in the confirmation.

While the two arguments above do not extend to IVF, let me note that a movement-based analysis allows us to capture the fact that IVF can only be used to confirm the antecedent assertion: assuming the fronted constituent is large enough to contain polarity, if it is a copy of the lower constituent, there can be no polarity mismatch between the two.

3.2.1 Syntax of UVF. I propose that in UVF the constituent fronted is the largest AspP (to ensure aspectual identity), so that the verb will have acquired all the aspectual, but not yet tense and ϕ -feature morphology. A tree for a UVF example, (1a), is given in Fig. 1.

Now, the tree in Fig. 1 relies on the assumption that there are aspectual projections above *v* (in particular, for super-lexical aspectual prefixes, absent in (1a), but present in examples like (11b)), in line with Gribanova 2013, thus, the fronted constituent will contain the silent copies of the verb's arguments (both internal and external), which will remain both ⟨unpronounced⟩ and ~~uninterpreted~~. The latter is required for the correct predicative interpretation we are after.

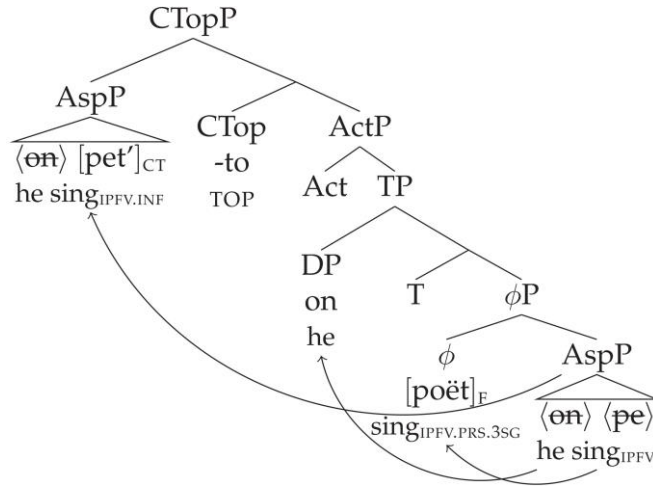


Fig. 1: A tree for (1a) ('sing_{IPFV.INF} TOP he sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG}'), UVF

One might want a neater analysis whereby the fronted constituent is smaller and thus doesn't contain the copies of the verb's arguments to begin with (at least, not the external one — I come back to the question about internal arguments in UVF in section 4). That would require adopting the view that Russian verbs acquire all aspectual morphology before merging with their arguments (contra Gribanova 2013).

3.2.2 Syntax of IVF. I propose that in IVF the fronted constituent is an ActP (Krifka 2013, \approx PolP in Gribanova 2017) with its TP complement elided (but interpreted).⁵ By the time the verb gets to Act, it will, of course, have acquired tense and ϕ -feature morphology. A tree for an IVF example is given in Fig. 2.

In Fig. 2 the TP complements of both ActPs get elided, and it is the two verb copies in the two Act heads that get pronounced. Some material can escape the TP to be elided via ordinary topicalization, as is the case in Fig. 2, but it is not obligatory:

⁵ Thanks to David Pesetsky (p.c.) who insisted that I investigate this possibility.

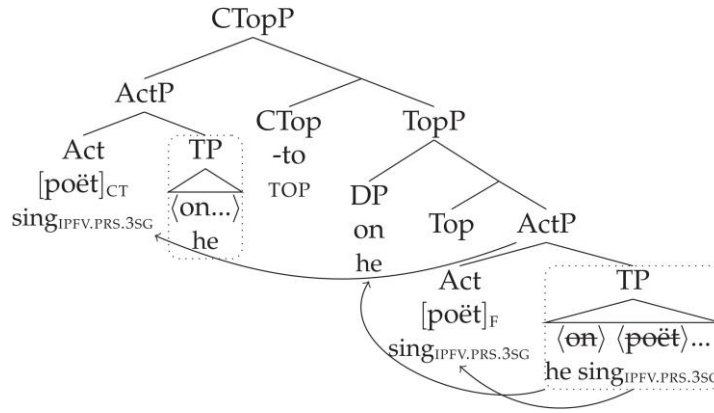


Fig. 2: A tree for (1b) ('sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} TOP he sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG}'), IVF

- (12) A: Ivan ved' poet.
 Ivan EMPH sings
 '[I'm reminding you that] Ivan sings.'
- B: Poët- to poët, no ploxo.
 sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} TOP sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} but badly
 'As for the fact that he sings, that's indeed true, but he does so poorly.'

An alternative way to obtain the same linear string as in Fig. 2 would be to have no TP-ellipsis in the lower ActP and allow for the lower TP-internal copy of the verb to get pronounced instead of the copy in the lower Act head. Since I do not propose any new account of linearization in VF constructions here (previous literature on VF constructions contains quite a few relevant proposals: Kandybowicz 2007, Aboh and Dyakonova 2009, Bleaman 2016, a.o.), I will remain neutral between these two possibilities.

A reasonable question at this point is what the nature of the TP-ellipsis in IVF is. I assume that it is essentially the same TP-ellipsis that happens in general in Russian short polar responses to questions or assertions:

- (13) A: Ivan poët ? / .
 Ivan sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG}
 ‘Does Ivan sing? / Ivan sings.’
 B: Da, poët. / Net, ne poët.
 yes sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} no NEG sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG}
 ‘Yes, he does. / No, he doesn’t.’

Such short polar responses are discussed at great length in Gribanova 2017, who argues that they involve movement of the Focus-bearing element (the verb in B’s responses in (13)) to the Pol head (roughly corresponding to the Act head in my analysis) and subsequent TP-ellipsis.

Based on their function and behavior, IVF constructions are just a special case of polar responses. David Pesetsky (p.c.) also pointed it out to me that, to his knowledge, languages that have IVF-like constructions are also languages that allow polar responses such as in (13), which supports the parallel between the two phenomena.

Now, Gribanova (2017) argues that the TP-ellipsis in short polar responses is not obligatory, although “the pragmatically preferred strategy is the elided one”, which I tentatively agree with (I simplify Gribanova’s original example):

- (14) A: Maša otpravila pis'ma v Moskvu?
 Masha send_{PFV.PAST.F.SG} letters to Moscow
 ‘Did Masha send the letters to Moscow?’
 B: Da, otpravila ona pis'ma. /
 yes send_{PFV.PAST.F.SG} she letters
 Net, ne otpravila ona pis'ma.
 no NEG send_{PFV.PAST.F.SG} she letters
 ‘Yes, she did send the letters. / No, she didn’t send the letters.’

Yet, in IVF, TP-ellipsis seems to be obligatory in at least one of the ActPs:

- (15) a. Poët- to Ivan poët...
 sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} TOP Ivan sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG}
 b. Poët Ivan- to poët...
 sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} Ivan TOP sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG}

- c. *Ivan poët- to Ivan poët...
 Ivan sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} TOP Ivan sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG}
- d. *Poët Ivan- to Ivan poët...
 sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} Ivan TOP sing_{IPFV.PRS.3SG}
 ‘As for the fact that Ivan sings, it’s indeed true...’

This discrepancy between ellipsis in polar responses and IVF is potentially alarming, but the redundancy-reducing requirements can very well differ across utterances and/or clauses (as is the case in polar responses and in some other types of ellipsis) vs. within a clause (as is the case in IVF).

Also, I don’t find the very possibility of obligatory ellipsis particularly scandalous, especially, in contrastive environments. For example, going back to Gribanova 2017, she also discusses a case of what she (to my mind, rightfully) claims to be obligatory ellipsis in the following Contrastive Topic + Focus constructions (again, the original examples are simplified):

- (16) A: Maša otpravila pis'ma v Moskvu?
 Masha send_{PFV.PAST.F.SG} letters to Moscow
 ‘Did Masha send the letters to Moscow?’
- B: Včera — otpravila (*ona pis'ma), a
 yesterday send_{PFV.PAST.F.SG} she letters and-contrastive
 segodnja — ne otpravila (*ona pis'ma).
 today NEG send_{PFV.PAST.F.SG} she letters
 ‘Yesterday she did, but today she didn’t.’

4 Some Loose Ends

There are, of course, still quite a few loose ends to tie up. I will briefly discuss two of those in this section.

4.1 *Internal Arguments in UVF*

First, as promised in 3.2.1, I come back to the issue of internal arguments in UVF. There are two questions to be asked: do internal arguments get interpreted in the fronted constituent, and if yes, do they ever get pronounced up there?

Regarding the first question, it seems that sometimes internal arguments of transitive verbs do get interpreted as part of the fronted constituent, as in (17a), whereby the UVF configuration addresses the sub-QUD about the antecedent predicate ‘shoot movies’, but sometimes they don’t, as in (17b), whereby the UVF configuration addresses the sub-QUD about the antecedent predicate ‘shoot’ (there isn’t an antecedent predicate ‘shoot thrillers’ to begin with; furthermore, ‘thrillers’ in B’s response is focused and, thus, new information):

- (17) a. A: Rasskaži mne pro Ninu. Ona snimaet kino?
 tell_{IMP.2SG} me about Nina she shoots movies
 ‘Tell me about Nina. Does she shoot movies?’
 B: Snimat'- to kino ona SNIMAET,
 shoot_{IPFV.INF} TOP movies she shoot_{IPFV.PRS.3SG}
 no vyxodit poka tak sebe.
 but come-out so-far so-so
 ‘As for shooting movies, she does that, but the results are for now so-so.’
 Super-QUD: Which predicate returns which truth value, with Nina as the agent and the existential closure over events applied?
 Answer: $\lambda e.\text{shoot}(e) \wedge \text{movies}(\text{th}(e)) \rightarrow T$, $\lambda e.\text{shoot}(e) \wedge \text{movies}(\text{th}(e)) \wedge \text{well}(e) \rightarrow F$.
- b. *Context: A and B are planning a movie night and want to invite Nina, who is a film director. A asks B what kind of movies Nina makes to decide on the genre for the movie night.*
 A: A što Nina snimaet?
 and what Nina shoots
 ‘What does Nina shoot?’
 B: Snimat'- to ona snimaet TRILLERY,
 shoot_{IPFV.INF} TOP she shoot_{IPFV.PRS.3SG} thrillers
 no smotret' mozet i KOMEDIJ.
 but watch_{IPFV.INF} can even comedies
 ‘As for shooting, she shoots thrillers, but as for watching, she can even watch comedies.’

Super-QUD: Which predicate combined with which theme returns true, with Nina as the agent and the existential closure over events applied?

Answer (simplified): $\lambda e.\text{shoot}(e) \rightarrow \cap \text{thrillers}, \lambda e.\text{watch}(e) \rightarrow \cap \text{comedies}.$

Such interpretations whereby the internal argument is not interpreted as part of the fronted predicate are similarly available when the doubled predicate contains super-lexical prefixes:

- (18) Ot-snjat'- to ona ot-snjala
 COMPL-shoot_{PFV,INF} TOP she COMPL-shoot_{PFV,PAST,F,SG}
 THRILLER, no reklamiruet KOMEDIJU.
 thriller but promote_{IPFV,PRS,3SG} comedy
 'As for completing shooting, she completed shooting a thriller, but she is promoting a comedy.'

This suggests that if one wants a neat movement-based analysis of UVF in which the constituent fronted does not contain any uninterpreted copies of the verb's arguments, they will have to assume that Russian verbs acquire all of their aspectual morphology before merging with any of their arguments. I would prefer to remain neutral on the matter for now, however.

As for where the internal argument is pronounced, there are some naturally occurring examples of UVF that suggest that the object can at least sometimes be pronounced next to the higher copy of the verb:

- (19) Tak čto kupit' mašinu ja kupil (...),
 so buy_{IPVF,INF} car I buy_{IPFV,PAST,M,SG}
 no obšenie s sotrudnikami ostavilo nepr[i]jatnyj osadok.
 but interaction with employees left unpleasant residue
 'As for buying the car, I did that (...) but talking to the employees left a bad aftertaste.' (Google; car store review)

- (20) Kupit' vannu[-] to ja kupil (...), no ostavljat'
 buy_{IPVF.INF} bath TOP I buy_{IPFV.PAST.M.SG} but leave
 pomešenie v takom sostojanii bylo nevozmožno.
 room in such state was impossible
 'As for buying a bathtub, I did that (...), but leaving the room in
 such a state was impossible.' (Google; website on renovations)

That said, since Russian in principle allows multiple topicalization, the objects in (19) and (20) could've been topicalized independently from the verb. However, the position of the *to* particle might suggest that in (19) 'buy bath' is a constituent⁶, although the position of such particles is not necessarily a reliable indicator of the constituency structure. Note that a similar point can be made for (15b), although that raises again the question about what exactly the obligatoriness of the *to* marker in IVF is due to and whether it can be satisfied by any *to* marker.

The judgements on where the copy of the object is pronounced are gradient, variable across speakers, and seem to depend on various factors, including, for example, prosodic weight. Investigating these preferences further, as well as how they correlate with those in ordinary VP fronting without doubling in Russian is, however, a matter of further research.

4.2 Other Doubling Constructions

Even though I have only talked about verb fronting so far, it would seem that IVF is just a special case of a more general construction in which the focused part of the antecedent assertion gets doubled to confirm the said assertion and then discard it as less important/relevant than whatever is brought up in the contrastive continuation:

- (21) a. A: Začem uvol'njat' Ivana? On že HOROŠIJ rabotnik!
 why fire Ivan he EMPH good worker
 'Why fire Ivan? [I am reminding you that] he is a good
 worker!'

⁶ While the original example didn't contain it, one can also have a *to* particle after *mašinu* 'car' in (19).

- B: Horošij-to horošij, no u nas deneg net.
 good TOP good but at us money no
 ‘As for the fact that he’s good, that’s indeed true, but we
 have no money.’
- b. A: Davaj pozověm Ivana. On že HOROŠO poët.
 let’s call Ivan he EMPH well sings
 ‘Let’s call Ivan. [I’m reminding you that] he sings well.’
- B: Horošo-to horošo, no bez duši.
 well TOP well but without soul
 ‘As for the fact that he sings well, he does indeed sing
 well, but he does so without soul.’

This further supports the claim that IVF is just a special case of polar responses, since the fronted constituents in (21) would also be the ones used in non-doubled short responses to questions or ordinary assertions with the same Focus structure as A’s utterances in (21).

Naturally, there are no counterparts of UVF for such doubling constructions, but the analysis proposed here for IVF extends straightforwardly to the cases in (21).

5 Conclusion

In this paper I have looked at the previously understudied distinction between uninflected and inflected verb fronting in Russian (UVF and IVF respectively). Drawing from the semantic differences between UVF and IVF, I have argued that the two differ in the size of the fronted constituent. In particular, I have shown that UVF takes an antecedent predicate and says something about it, e.g., whether it’s true or false of a certain continuation, or what arguments/modifiers it needs to combine with to return a true proposition. IVF in its turn can only take an antecedent assertion and confirm it. I have proposed a syntactic analysis to reflect this semantics in which in UVF the fronted constituent is the largest Aspect Phrase, while in IVF it’s a (Speech) Act Phrase with an elided complement. The morphological facts follow from that.

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