Wishing and Wanting in Russian
A Behavioural Case Study in Lexico-Constructional Near-Synonymy

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Aim of the study

To quantify and describe the conceptual differences between near-synonyms in their constructional contexts

Russian verbs:  жела́ть (želát’) ‘wish’
               хоте́ть (xotét’) ‘want’

Develop methods

accounting for language structure and variation holistically
as lexical and constructional variation complex of many to many mappings
Choice of lexemes and constructions

Two lexemes:

желать (želát´) ‘wish’

хотеть (хотéť) ‘want’

They take prefixes to mark perfectiveness:

ро- : пожелать

за- : захотеть

The direct complements can also have case alternation:

(по)желать + object in Accusative OR Genitive cases

(за)хотеть + object in Accusative OR Genitive cases
Choice of lexemes and constructions

Thus, there are 8 lexico-constructional variants:

[IMPERFECTIVE + želát’ + ACCUSATIVE]

[IMPERFECTIVE + želát’ + GEN.]

[PERFECTIVE + želát’ + ACCUSATIVE]

[PERFECTIVE + želát’ + GENITIVE]

[IMPERFECTIVE + xotét’ + ACCUSATIVE]

[IMPERFECTIVE + xotét’ + GENITIVE]

[PERFECTIVE + xotét’ + ACCUSATIVE]

[PERFECTIVE + xotét’ + GENITIVE]
Conceptual choices in a speaker’s lexico-grammar

1) **WISH vs. WANT - Lexical Semantics**

   Does *the intensity* of wishing/wanting determine lexical choice?

2) **Partitive (GEN) vs Non-Partitive (ACC) Complement – Constructional Semantics**

   Does *the plexity of patient argument* determine the choice between the complement types?
Data and Method

**LiveJournal Corpus** (Speelman & Glynn, 2005/2012): online diaries

**Step 1:** Annotation of a sample with 4000 occurrences (2000 for each lexeme)

**Step 2:** Subsample with 366 examples of:

- [(IM)PERF. + xotét’ + ACC./GEN.]
- [(IM)PERF. + želát’ + ACC./GEN.]

**Multifactorial Usage Feature Analysis / Behavioural Profile Approach**

(Dirven *et al.* 1982; Geeraerts *et al.* 1994)

**Step 1:** Operationalization of semantic-pragmatic features

Qualitative manual annotation of a large sample for these features

**Step 2:** Multivariate exploratory and predictive modelling of the results
## Feature Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Feature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporeity - Dichotomous</td>
<td>Concrete, Abstract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporeity - Talmy's Plexity</td>
<td>Uniplex, Multiplex: Bounded or Unbounded, Discrete or Continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plausibility - Affectability</td>
<td>Affectable, Unaffectable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plausibility - Possibility</td>
<td>Likert scale (1 to 9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity Ordinal</td>
<td>weak, neutral, intense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensity Continuous</td>
<td>a Likert scale (1 to 9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Plausibility of Obtainability and Intensity of DESIRE

Plausibility Possibility: 9-Likert Scale

Plausibility Affectability:

a. Affectable:
   "Я холодного пивка Баночку хочу…"
   "I want a cold beer."

b. Unaffectable:
   "…желаю Всем Вам больше Радости, крепких Семей, любимых Традиций."
   "…I wish you all more Joy, strong Families, beloved Traditions."

Intensity Continuous: 9-Likert Scale

Intensity Ordinal:

a. Weak:
   "… мне не очень хотелось однородной массы. Поэтому и все овощи я резала не слишком мелко."
   I did not really want a homogeneous mass. Therefore, I did not cut all the vegetables too finely.

b. Neutral:
   " Можно в конце разговора пожелать “Спокойной ночи” …"
   "You can wish “Good night” at the end of your chat…"

c. Intense:
   "… уж очень хочу МНОГА ДЕНЕГ эту работу."
   ... I really want MUCH MONEY for this job
Corporeity of Desired Object

Corporeity - Dichotomous
a. Concrete:
   “...когда еду в Россию обязательно хочу бабушкиного капустного пирога...”
   “Each time I go to Russia I definitely want the grandma's cabbage pie”

b. Abstract:
   “Скажу честно, по секрету я хочу балов эдак 8 ...”
   “Frankly speaking, in secret, I want around 8 points ...”

Corporeity - Talmy's Plexity:
a. Uniplex:
   “В глубине души захотелось сумку за тридцать тысяч ...”
   “In my heart I wanted a thirty thousand roubles bag.”

b. Multiplex: Discrete Unbounded:
   “В новый год хочется подарков.”
   “We usually want (to receive) gifts for the New Year.”

c. Multiplex: Discrete Bounded:
   “А ещё захотелось такие же полосатые чулки ...”
   “I also wanted (to buy) the same striped stockings ...”

d. Multiplex: Continuous Unbounded:
   “... теперь все ждут зиму... хочу снега-а-а ...”
   “… everyone is waiting for winter now... I want snow-w-w”

e. Multiplex: Continuous Bounded:
   “А мне просто хочется МОРЯ.”
   “I just want some SEA.”
## Results: Wish vs. Want

### ~ Intensity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Effect Size (Pr)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Intensity</td>
<td>1.2418 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral Intensity</td>
<td>1.6494 *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Intensity</td>
<td>0.2913 NS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C: 0.642 (bootstrapped n= 100: 0.6286)

(red= wish, blue = want)

### ~ Corporeity + Plausibility (Possibility + Affectability)

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<tr>
<td>Affectability</td>
<td>Unaffectable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility</td>
<td>Low Possibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility</td>
<td>Medium Possibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility</td>
<td>High Possibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporeity</td>
<td>Concrete</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C : 0.860 (bootstrapped n= 100: 0.84775)

(red= wish, blue = want)

Note:
Intensity is no longer significant when combined with other predictors
Results: Partitive vs. Non-Partitive Complement Cx

In line with expectations, Accusative Cx correlates significantly with Bounded Patients but only in the Imperfective.

Genitive (Partitive) Cx correlates significantly with Unbounded objects but only in the Perfective.

The inverse for the anticorrelations is also true but again only in certain aspects.
Results: Aspect and Complement Cx

As predicted
Accusative / Non-Partitive Cx associated with Bounded Patients
and
Genitive / Partitive Cx associated with Unbounded Patients

BUT!

Genitive and Accusative Cxs both associated with Uniplex Patients only if in the Perfective Aspect!
Results: Many to Many form meaning pairings

Interaction between Perfective-Imperfective Alternation and Partitive (GEN) + Non-Partitive (ACC) Alternation

Continuum from Unbounded Continuous through Unbounded Discrete and Bounded Discrete and Bounded Continuous
Discussion – Many to Many Pairing

1. Lexical Semantics

We have shown that the lexical semantics are in line with expectations but that a combination of other semantic traits better distinguishes the lexemes

2. Constructional Semantics

We have shown that the constructional semantics are in line with expectation, but have revealed that other factors come into play.

Specifically, in the context of DESIRE verbs, the Partitive Cx - Accusative Cx Alternation appears to interact with the Perfective - Imperfective Alternation in an unpredictable manner.
References


Thank you

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