

Report from the First FSIM Workshop: Formal Semantics in Moscow, April 2005.
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Abstract: The first annual workshop “Formal Semantics in Moscow”, organized by a team of young Russian linguists with mentoring by Barbara Partee, was held at Moscow State University on Saturday April 23. The workshop was informal and friendly, like the student-run New England Semantics workshops; there were 12 papers and attendance of about 30. Anna Verbuk gave a paper, and there were papers from Leipzig and from St. Petersburg as well as from Moscow. Everyone was delighted with the results.

On Saturday, April 23, 2005, the first annual “Formal Semantics in Moscow” Workshop was held at Moscow State University (MGU). The organizers were Igor Yanovich and Lisa Bylinina, 5th-year undergraduates at MGU; Peter Arkadiev, a Ph.D. student and researcher at the Institute of Slavistics of the Academy of Sciences; Yury Lander, a young research linguist at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences familiar to UMass linguists as a co-organizer of the 2002 Possessive Workshop and co-editor with Ji-Yung Kim and me of UMOP 29, the Possessives volume; and me, Barbara Partee, of UMass Amherst, this spring a Fulbright Professor at MGU and RGGU in Moscow.

The Workshop idea came jointly from me and from the members of a lively Semantics Reading Group that organized itself in Moscow last fall while I was in Amherst. I helped with ideas for both, using as models the UMass student-organized Semantics Reading Group and the student-organized semantics workshops that were first just UMass-UConn-MIT and are now ‘New England’.

The main expressed goal of the workshop was for students and young researchers to be able to present their work in an informal and supportive environment where they could share their ideas with one another and get good feedback. Another goal was to help young linguists with an interest in formal semantics to network with one another; formal semantics is relatively new in Moscow, and the fall 2004 reading group plus this workshop have really made a difference in building a sense of community. A third goal was to help strengthen bridges between “western” and “Russian” approaches to semantics; papers that contributed to that strengthening were especially encouraged, and several did that quite explicitly, either by testing western formal semantics-based analyses on challenging Russian data, or by explicitly comparing western and Russian analyses of some phenomena. Papers were not required to be explicitly “in” a formal semantics framework, and not all were. I think it is safe to say that all of the goals were met, and all the participants were very pleased with the workshop.

The young local members of the organizing committee did all the organizing and all the work and publicity – I was more of an advisor and mentor of the project. In the end we had 12 papers, each 20 minutes plus 10 minutes discussion. (There were fifteen abstracts submitted, I believe, and at first in order to include them all there was going to be a poster session, but then there were a few last minute withdrawals, so in the end they were all presented as talks.) Two students came from Leipzig, having heard about the workshop from Liane Jeschull, two from St Petersburg, Anna Verbuk came from UMass, and the others were all from Moscow – some from MGU, some from

RGGU, some from various institutes of the Academy of Sciences – advanced undergraduates, graduate students, and young researchers. Three of the talks were in English and the rest in Russian. Two talks used Power Point (using what was originally to be posters), and all the others used handouts. There were about 30 people in attendance.

Authors and titles (my translations of the Russian titles, maybe not always perfect.)

0. Opening words, Barbara Partee, UMass, RGGU, and MGU.
1. George Bronnikov, RGGU, *Vsjakij* [an untranslatable Russian determiner, something like “every kind of”.]
2. Elisaveta (Lisa) Bylinina, MGU, Depreciative Indefinites in Russian.
3. Olav Müller-Reichau, Uni-Leipzig, Object-Reference, Kind-Reference and Spatiotemporal Localisation in ‘Western’ and Russian Semantics.
4. Peter Arkadiev, Institute of Slavistics, Acad. of Sci., Scope of Aspectual Operators and Aspectual Composition in Adyghe.
5. Anna Pazelskaya, VINITI, Acad. of Sci., Subcategorizational Properties of Russian Deverbal Psych-nominals.
6. Philip Dudchuk, MGU, The Effector Role in Russian: Diathetic Shifts and the Structure of Events.
7. Irina Azarova and Ekaterina Ovchinnikova, St Petersburg Univ., Propositional and Formal Semantic Descriptions in the Computational Processing of Russian Texts.
8. Alexei Dobrov, St. Petersburg Univ., Formal Semantic Representation of the Semantics of Word Formation (Based on Material from the Lexicographic Description of Russian Morphemics).
9. Yury Lander and Elena Rudnitskaya, Institute of Oriental Studies, Acad. of Sciences, “Referrelativization”.
10. Anna Verbuk, UMass. The Semantics and Pragmatics of Russian Predicate Clefts.
11. Diana Forker, Uni-Leipzig. Denial in Russian.
12. Alexander Letuchij, RGGU. Russian Constructions with the Meaning of Comparison of Situations: *kak budto*, *kak by*, *kak esli by*.

The workshop ended at 6pm and was followed by tea in the main office of the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics of MGU. Everyone agreed the workshop had been a great success; new acquaintances were made, the feedback on the presentations was all very friendly, constructive, and useful, and everyone expressed hopes that this would become an annual tradition. Peter Arkadiev has proposed to create a FSIM website and to post copies of the handouts and as many as possible of the full papers there, and has suggested that a number of the papers might be published in a special number of one of the Moscow linguistics journals. Plans for that are still pending. The only regrets were that Igor Yanovich, one of the organizers, was unable to attend because commitments at his workplace, that two or three of the planned participants were unable to participate because of illness, and that class schedules for Saturday classes made it impossible for some people to attend who would have liked to. (One faculty member, Yakov Testelelets, reported with regret on Sunday that he would have liked to attend at least the morning session but had a class then; but then it turned out that all but one of his students had cut his class to come to the workshop anyway. We’ll have to try to see if anything can be done to solve such problems next year.)

FSIM photos taken by Philip Dudchuk: <http://fidicen.narod.ru/pics/FSIM/index.html>