

Relatedness in periphrasis: a paradigm-based perspective

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There are a number of constructions in various languages which occupy a problematic position between morphology and syntax. Though they are made up of more than one word and are phrasal in nature, they also occupy a place in the morphological paradigm. We can illustrate this with an example from Russian. In Russian verbs are either of perfective, or of imperfective aspect. All verbs have synthetic past tense forms. The imperfective but not the perfective verb has a present tense form. In the future tense, however, perfective verbs have a synthetic form, whereas imperfective verbs have a phrasal, or periphrastic form (see the table below):

	(NA)PISAT' 'write'	
	perfective	imperfective
Present tense	-----	<i>pišu</i>
Past tense	<i>napisal</i>	<i>pisal</i>
Future tense	<i>napišu</i>	<i>budu pisat'</i>

In this paper we discuss the ways in which this 'mixed' (morphological and syntactic) nature of periphrastic constructions like *budu pisat'* affects their properties. We review a number of periphrastic constructions, particularly in Slavic languages, and show that periphrastic constructions can differ from each other in important ways (generality, syntactic independence of the constituent elements, degree of grammaticalization). Of particular interest to us is how periphrastic constructions are affected by their role in the morphological system of a language and more specifically by their paradigmatic organization. As seen from our Russian example, the phrase *budu pisat'* expresses a morphological feature set: [Tense:future, Aspect:imperfective]. In other words, a piece of syntax realizes a set of oppositions which we would normally expect to see expressed in the morphology. It is this paradigmatic organization which seems to set periphrastic constructions apart from other constructions in a language and which makes the notion of 'periphrasis' a worthwhile object of study.