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Intentionality and accidentality at the interfaces

Abstract: In my talk, I will inspect two types of readings that emerge in a range of environments (e.g., in negated imperatives, under 'not want', under 'fear', etc.): (i) ABSTAIN readings, implying willingness to prevent someone from intentionally engaging in an activity, and (ii) AVOID readings, implying willingness to prevent a potentially unintended outcome. The ABSTAIN vs. AVOID distinction has a variety of grammatical reflexes cross-linguistically, e.g., (anti-)licensing of 'some'-indefinites in English: 'Don't call anyone!' (which asks the addressee to abstain from intentionally engaging in the activity of calling someone) vs. 'Don't call someone!' (which cautions the addressee against accidentally calling someone). I will focus on perfective vs. imperfective aspect and distribution of indefinites in Russian. I will argue that the relevant complements in ABSTAIN vs. AVOID cases have distinct compositional structures: there is a situation layer in AVOID, but not in ABSTAIN cases. This will allow us to explain the relevant Russian facts about aspect and indefinites. The choice between the two compositional structures in the environments at hand is, in turn, driven by global pragmatic considerations about preventing unwanted scenarios, yielding the diverging inferences arising in the two cases.