THE CONVERGING PARADIGMS OF SLAVIC LINGUISTICS: INSIGHTS FROM THE 20TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SLAVIC LINGUISTICS SOCIETY (SLS-20)

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1 THE SLAVIC LINGUISTICS SOCIETY (SLS): MISSION, ACTIVITIES, AND HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 20TH ANNUAL MEETING (SLS-20)

The Slavic Linguistics Society (SLS) operates as a dedicated professional organization committed to the systematic and scholarly study of the Slavic languages, actively supporting the international community of scholars and students in the field. The society's inception traces back to a pivotal roundtable discussion held in December 2004 during the annual meeting of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL), leading to its first official meeting in September 2006. The core activities of the SLS center on advancing research through various means: it publishes the Journal of Slavic Linguistics (JSL), a peer-reviewed academic journal covering all aspects of synchronic or diachronic Slavic linguistics; it organizes a major annual international scholarly meeting, with the conference location rotating between continents; and it actively supports emerging scholars by offering both Graduate Student Travel Awards and the prestigious Charles E. Townsend Memorial Award.

In line with its mission to promote the scholarly exchange of ideas, the SLS successfully executed its 20th Annual Meeting (SLS-20), which was held from September 10 to 12, 2025. The conference was hos-

ted at the University of Verona in Verona, Italy. This location marked a key instance of the Society's effort to rotate its meeting location and engage the broader European scholarly community. The event served as the principal international forum for the presentation and critical discussion of research across the entire spectrum of Slavic linguistics.

The scholarly focus of SLS-20 was defined by three significant plenary talks that addressed diverse areas of Slavic linguistics. Pavel Caha (Masaryk University) presented "Deadjectival Verbs in Slavic: the AAB pattern and its implications", where he analyzed patterns of stem allomorphy in Slavic, particularly focusing on adjectives with the augment *k* (e.g., Czech *slad-k-ý* "sweet"). His work explored how Bulgarian's "AAB pattern" of stem variation contrasts with the pattern found in Czech, raising important theoretical issues for the standard analysis of root suppletion and relating the difference to the type of comparative formation used in each language. In "Things that say -nie!", Ora Matushansky (CNRS/Université Paris-8/PLA) investigated the morphology of N/T action nominalizations across Slavic languages. She argued for a novel analysis where the Passive Past Participle (PPP) suffix combines with the suffix *-j-* before attaching to the lexical stem, providing a unified account for syntactic, semantic, and phonological evidence that has traditionally complicated their derivation from the PPP alone. Finally, Malinka Pila and Walter Breu (University of Konstanz) delivered "Mood and Modality in language contact: Resian and Molise Slavic in contrast". Their joint presentation focused on the profound effects of Romance (Italian) language contact on the categories of Mood and Modality in the endangered Slavic microlanguages of Resian and Molise Slavic. They explored how these languages handle the expression of counterfactuality and potentiality, and detailed the development of contact-induced analytical Future tenses that result in a new modal opposition within the Future systems of both vernaculars.

The scholarly focus of SLS-20, as evidenced by the General Session papers and posters, clearly demonstrates two major, interconnected

trends in contemporary Slavic linguistics: a strong focus on Usage-
-Based and Cognitive/Functional Linguistics and an equally robust
interest in Formal/Generative and Computational Linguistics.

1.1 USAGE-BASED, COGNITIVE, AND FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS

A major trend is the application of Usage-Based and Cognitive fra-
meworks to Slavic data, focusing heavily on meaning-form pairings
as conventionalized units. This is prominently reflected in the push
to develop a Slovak Construction based on Construction Grammar
principles by scholars like Jakob Horsch and Laura A. Janda, aiming
to model the entire language as a network of constructions. Resear-
chers are analyzing how semantic and pragmatic factors drive lin-
guistic choices and variation, moving beyond purely formal rules.
Examples include Yanka Bezinska's study on conceptualizing causati-
vity in Bulgarian child language, Filippo Bazzocchi's proposal for an
"Integrated Approach" to the polysemy of Russian verbal prefixes,
and Agnieszka Latos and Valentina Benigni's analysis of metaphori-
cal binominal constructions across Slavic languages. Furthermore,
functional analyses are being applied to discourse, such as the use of
quotatives in Polish by Anna Kisiel, the procedural semantics of the
discourse marker *tako da* in Serbian by Ivan Knjižar, and the compe-
tition of prepositions in Czech (e.g., Božena Bednaříková). A common
thread in this work is the reliance on large-scale corpus data to ensu-
re empirical grounding in actual language use.

1.2 FORMAL, GENERATIVE, AND COMPUTATIONAL LINGUISTICS

The second strong trend involves Formal, Generative, and Computa-
tional methods, often intersecting with high-level typological and
interface phenomena. Generative studies explore minute structu-
ral differences, such as the re-examination of agreement properties
of Polish copular clauses by Sebastian Zawada and Adam Przepiór-
kowski. In Russian, theoretical accounts are provided for the behavi-
or of additive particles by Marco Biasio and Marco Magnani, linking

their focus properties to movement in the Left Periphery, and for paucal number using an "Insatiable Agree Account" to resolve long--standing typological problems (e.g., Adam Przepiórkowski). The Morphology-Phonology interface is addressed in studies of morphological overabundance in Czech/Slovak by Martin Alldrick.

2 BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: INTEGRATED FUNCTIONAL--FORMAL APPROACHES IN SLAVIC SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION AND HERITAGE LINGUISTICS

The two major research paradigms—functional and formal—increasingly intersect in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), demonstrating a crucial methodological and theoretical integration in contemporary Slavic studies. A notable example is the large-scale computational study by Nataliya Stoyanova, Ang-duc Vu, Jue Hou and Roman Yangarber focused on "Testing the natural order of acquisition of Russian case forms". By utilizing quantitative data gathered from thousands of users on the Revita digital learning platform, their research employs powerful computational methods on a massive user base to test theories rooted in cognitive and usage-based ideas about the sequential acquisition of grammatical structures. This blend of quantitative corpus analysis with a core SLA/cognitive hypothesis is a critical methodological development, illustrating how computational power is now being effectively used to validate, refine, and generalize functional and usage-based theories of language learning across large L2 learner populations. Specifically, this study by addresses the long-standing hypothesis of a "natural order of acquisition" in Russian L2, which suggests that the sequence of learning depends more on typological markedness than on the order of instruction. By analyzing cross-sectional and longitudinal data from hundreds of students via the Revita AI-tutoring platform, they aim to determine the acquisition hierarchy of the complex Russian case system. This approach exemplifies the methodological intersection: it uses large-

-scale data (Computational Linguistics) to test a fundamental theory about cognitive processing and sequential development (SLA/Cognitive Linguistics) in a morphologically rich Slavic language. Another key intersection of the formal and functional trends is found in Heritage Language (HL) studies, where researchers use rigorous methods to diagnose subtle deviations in grammars that result from language contact and reduced input. A notable example is the work on the acquisition and processing of case alternations (Genitive/Accusative) in heritage Russian. Angelina Rubina uses psycholinguistic methods (Self-Paced Reading tasks) to test how HL speakers (reflecting a functional/sociolinguistic population) process subtle, grammatically constrained semantic distinctions (Specificity/Non-Specificity, a formal/semantic property) in Russian grammar. This demonstrates an integrated approach where the formal rules of case and reference are tested against the functional reality of bilingual speakers' cognitive processing.

3 CZECH CONTRIBUTIONS TO SLS-20: EXPERIMENTAL, CORPUS, AND THEORETICAL STUDIES ON CZECH PHENOMENA

Aside from keynote speaker Pavel Caha (Masaryk University), the Czech Republic was represented by two scholars from Charles University and one scholar from Palacký University, whose presentations spanned theoretical syntax, psycholinguistics, and corpus linguistics. The Czech presence at SLS-20 extended beyond the plenary address, with contributions from scholars whose work exemplified the conference's methodological diversity. Maria Onoeva and Anna Staňková (Charles University Prague) presented a psycholinguistic study titled "Interpreting negation in polar questions: a cross-Slavic naturalness rating study", which provided an experimental comparison of negation interpretation across three Slavic languages. Their results highlighted that Czech unambiguously links Outer Negation

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to the overt interrogative strategy (verb-initial) and Inner Negation to the SVO declarative word order, contrasting with the ambiguity found in Polish and Russian. Concurrently, Božena Bednaříková (Palacký University Olomouc) employed a corpus-based methodology in her paper, "Na Expands? A Corpus-Based Study of Competing Prepositions in Contemporary Czech", which analyzed the complex competition among the prepositions *do*, *v(e)*, and *na*. Her study, grounded in cognitive linguistics, did not uniformly support the hypothesis of *na* expansion, instead revealing dynamic usage patterns, notably showing an increase in *na* use even among older speakers in specific contexts. Together, these contributions demonstrated the Czech academic community's active engagement with both theoretical-experimental and data-driven functional approaches to Slavic phenomena.

4 CONCLUDING REMARKS: SLS-20 AND THE CONVERGENCE OF FORMAL AND FUNCTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The Slavic Linguistics Society (SLS) remains the vital professional nexus for the systematic study of Slavic languages, a role powerfully reaffirmed by its 20th Annual Meeting (SLS-20) in Verona. The conference demonstrated that contemporary Slavic linguistics is defined by a productive methodological convergence: rigorous formal/ generative frameworks are increasingly integrated with data-driven functional/cognitive approaches. This blend-evident in the application of psycholinguistic and computational tools to complex problems in syntax, morphology, and Second Language Acquisition shows the field is rapidly advancing both its theoretical models and its empirical depth. Ultimately, the work presented at SLS-20 underscores the dynamism of Slavic linguistics, which is now well-equipped to tackle complex phenomena and contribute significantly to general linguistic theory.