Locus of Causation and *by itself* Phrases:
A Case Study of Russian *sam po sebe*[*]

Katie Sardinha
University of California, Berkeley

The interpretation of *by itself* phrases has been used to argue for different and even competing theories of causal semantics, even within the same language (Chierchia 2004, Koontz-Garboden 2009, Levin and Rappaport-Hovav 1995, Schäfer 2007). Given the centrality of the claims at stake, it is important that we investigate the semantics of *by itself* phrases in particular languages as a prerequisite to relying on them as diagnostics for lexical semantic features. The goal of the present study is to provide a descriptive, empirically-driven generalization about the meaning of the *by itself* phrase in Russian, *sam po sebe*. In particular, I will argue that *sam po sebe* is used to both assert the presence of a cause and to profile a referent as a causal locus.

1 Introducing *sam po sebe*

English *by itself* phrases are often ambiguous between two readings (Levin and Rappaport-Hovav 1995). This ambiguity is apparent in (1), which can mean either that Masha walked to school unaccompanied –

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the 'alone' reading – or that Masha walked to school unassisted – the 'without outside help' reading. Of these two readings, only the latter is causal in nature.[1] Schäfer (2007) recognized that to account for examples like (2) with inanimate referents, we in fact need to adopt a broader paraphrase for the causal reading of *by itself*, namely 'without outside force'. In (2), only the 'without outside help/force' interpretation is available.

(1) Masha walked to school **(all) by herself**.
   a.   Masha walked alone/unaccompanied: ✓
   b.   Masha walked without outside help or force: ✓

(2) The alarm turned on **(all) by itself**.
   a.   The alarm turned on alone/unaccompanied: ✗
   b.   The alarm turned on without outside help or force: ✓

Unlike the English *by itself* phrase, Russian *sam po sebe* is unambiguous: it can only have the causally-relevant 'without outside help/force' reading. An example sentence containing *sam po sebe* is in (3), and possible and impossible readings of the sentence are summarized in (4).

(3) Kompjuter vyključaetsja i   vključaetsja   **sam   po   sebe**.
    computer   turn.off$_{3SG.REFL}$ and turn.on$_{3SG.REFL}$ intens$_M$ prep self$_{DAT}$
    'The computer turns off and on **all by itself**.'

(4) a.   The computer turns off and on alone/unaccompanied: ✗
    b.   The computer turns off and on without outside help/force: ✓

The phrase *sam po sebe* consists of three lexical items. The first of these is the intensifier *sam* (König, Siemund, and Töpper 2014), which agrees in gender and/or number with the referent it modifies.[2] The intensifier is

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[1]   The presence of *all* in (1)-(2) appears to be significant for the interpretation of English *by itself* phrases, but I leave this issue aside here.
[2]   Syntactically, *sam po sebe* phrases appear to only modify structural subjects and not objects, a property common to *by itself* phrases cross-linguistically (Schäfer 2007). See Comrie (1974) and Madariaga (2006) for discussion on the syntactic position of phrases similar to *sam po sebe* in Russian.

followed by the preposition *po*, which has many uses in Russian and no single translation in English, overlapping in distribution with 'by', 'according to', 'along', 'around', 'about', or 'on', depending on context. The preposition *po* assigns dative case to the third lexical item *sebe*, which is a reflexive pronoun.   My assumptions about these three meaning components of *sam po sebe* phrases are summarized in Table 1, along with glossing conventions (in square brackets). In what follows, I simply write *sam* to refer to the set including *sam*, *sama*, *samo*, and *sami*.

LEXICAL ITEM	GLOSS
sam (masculine sg.) *sama* (feminine sg.) *samo* (neuter sg.) *sami* (plural)	'self' intensifier [intens$_M$] [intens$_F$] [intens$_N$] [intens$_{PL}$]
po	'by, according to, along, around, about, on,' [prep]
sebe	reflexive pronoun in dative case [self$_{DAT}$]

Table 1: Assumptions about the meaning components of *sam po sebe*

In this paper I will be concentrating on the interpretation of *sam po sebe* as a phrasal constituent, thereby relegating the task of providing a compositional semantic analysis of the phrase to future research. I will also be treating the intensifier *sam* as an obligatory component of the *by itself* phrase, and will set aside questions of how *sam po sebe* phrases differ from closely related phrases such as *sam soboj*.

  The rest of this paper investigates the interpretation of *sam po sebe* phrases with verbs that differ in lexicalized causal properties. I begin in Section 2 by providing an overview of data used in the study; then in Section 3 I present the data and use it to state three empirical generalizations. In Section 4 I offer an analysis where *sam po sebe* is used both to assert the presence of a cause and to profile an argument as the locus of the causal event.   I then explain how the analysis can account for my three generalizations, and discuss how and why the analysis differs from a previous proposal made in relation to other languages, the 'no cause' analysis (Schäfer 2007). I then briefly address

the question of what *sam po sebe* modification can tell us about the causative alternation in Russian. Section 5 concludes.

2   Overview of the data

In this section I provide an overview of the data used for this study, and motivate the set of verb classes I selected for investigation below.

2.1   Sources of Data
Three principle sources of data were used in this study: 1) a questionnaire; 2) the Russian National Corpus; and 3) internet data.
2.2.1 Questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of 27 questions, and was completed in Russian by twelve native Russian speakers. These twelve participants included seven women and five men, aged 20 to 60. As there did not appear to be any obvious differences between the responses of speakers currently residing in Russia (six of the total) and speakers residing in the United States (five of the total), I simply pooled the results.   The questionnaire consisted of grammatical sentences including the phrase *sam po sebe* along with instructions on how to judge the sentences as *xorošo* ('good'), *tak sebe* ('iffy') or *ploxo* ('bad') based on how meaningful and correct they sounded. Some sentences were also accompanied by explicit contexts, and speakers were asked to judge if the sentence containing *sam po sebe* could describe that context. Following each judgment, speakers were invited to provide comments concerning why they judged the sentence the way they did, how the sentences could be improved, and what additional situations the sentence could be used in: in the end, every question received comments from between three and seven speakers in total.
2.2.2 Online Corpus. The second source of data for this study was the online Russian National Corpus (hereafter RNC) at http://www.ruscorpora.ru/en/, accessed during the months of November and December of 2013. The examples cited in this study are taken from the spoken corpus only, and come from a pool of 370 contexts including the phrase *po sebe*, with or without *sam*. I restricted the dataset to the spoken corpus to keep the study a manageable size. As I have no reason the expect *sam po sebe* to be used differently in written versus spoken speech, this choice should not effect the findings.

2.2.3 Yandex.ru Search Engine. Additional examples of spontaneous uses of *sam po sebe* were taken from online forums and message boards accessed through yandex.ru. Examples obtained this way were later checked for grammaticality by native Russian speakers.

2.2   Verb Classes Surveyed
Given that interpretations of *by itself* phrases in other languages have been taken to diagnose lexical causal properties of verbs, the study here focused on testing the interpretation of *sam po sebe* in sentences with verbs that have particular relevance to causal semantics. In particular, I selected Russian equivalents of verbs which in English have been argued (Levin and Rappaport-Hovav 1995) to lexicalize externally-caused events (agent transitives), internally-caused events (bodily process verbs, verbs of emission), and acausal events (verbs of appearance, disappearance, and occurrence); as well, I looked at how *sam po sebe* modifies adjectival predicates (which are stative, and therefore acausal) and at causative-alternating verbs (discussed below). These verb classes are summarized in Table 2 alongside Russian examples.

Category	*Verb Class*	*Example*	
EXTERNALLY-CAUSED	AGENT TRANSITIVES	narezat'	*'slice'*
INTERNALLY-CAUSED	BODILY PROCESS VERBS VERBS OF EMISSION	krovotočit' taraxtet'	*'bleed'* *'rattle'*
ACAUSAL	VERBS OF APPEARANCE, DISAPPEARANCE, and OCCURRENCE ADJECTIVES	pojavit'sja propadat' proisxodit' xorošo	*'appear'* *'disappear'* *'occur'* *'be good'*
???	CAUSATIVE ALTERNATING	otkryt'(sja)	*'to open'*

Table 2: Classification and Examples of Verbs Studied

In what follows, I assume the following definitions for the terms in Table 2, adapted from Levin and Rappaport-Hovav (1995): an *externally-caused* verb lexicalizes an eventuality that is brought about by a property, force, or agent that is construed as existing external to an

argument that undergoes a change of state or position.; an *internally-caused* verb lexicalizes an event that is brought about by a property or force inherent to, or located within, an argument that undergoes a change of state or position; and an *acausal* verb lexicalizes a state of being or existence which is unspecified with regards to its causal genesis.

It is important to note that the classification of events in Table 2 as externally caused, internally caused, or acausal was established on the basis of English data and has not been established for Russian at the level of the entire lexicon. In particular, the classification of causative alternating verbs as externally-caused or internally-caused is an area of active cross-linguistic research (Levin and Rappaport-Hovav 1995 Schäfer 2007), including in Russian (Paducheva 2003). An example of the causative alternating verb in Russian *otkryt'* 'to open' is illustrated in (6); verbs in this class occur with both transitive and intransitive alternants – the latter with reflexive morphology on the verb – and can occur with either agentive or non-agentive causer subjects.

(6) a. Vanja / silnyj   veter   otkryl   dver'.
       Vanya / strong$_{\text{M.SG}}$ wind$_{\text{M}}$ open$_{\text{M.PST}}$ door$_{\text{F.ACC}}$
       '{Vanya / a strong wind} opened the door.'
    b. Dver' otkrylas'.
       door$_{\text{F}}$ open$_{\text{F.PST.REFL}}$
       'The door opened.'

Paducheva (2003) provides empirical arguments for Russian alternating verbs being conceptually externally-caused verbs. I will return in 4.3 to the question of whether the interpretation of *sam po sebe* with transitive and intransitive alternants can be used to argue for one alternant being conceptually more 'basic' than the other.

3   The interpretation of *sam po sebe* phrases

In this section I illustrate how *sam po sebe* is interpreted in sentences containing verbs belonging to the classes identified in Section 2.2. We will see that *sam po sebe* sounds **redundant** and is judged infelicitous modifying an event containing a verb that lexicalizes either an external or internal cause, but sounds **informative**, and is accepted, with verbs lacking a lexically-specified cause. Although our focus will be on the

default readings of sentences with *sam po sebe*, we will also see that default readings of internally-caused verbs can be overriden when an external cause is present in context, making *sam po sebe* felicitous.

3.1   Agent Transitives
Agent transitives lexicalize events with an agentive subject – the external cause of the event – and an undergoer direct object. The subject must meet strict requirements of animacy and ability to complete the action denoted by the verb. With agent transitives, speakers consider *sam po sebe* phrases to sound redundant. Example (7) with *narezat'* 'to slice' was rejected as infelicitous by 12/12 of my Russian consultants:

(7)   # Mixael   narezal   kartofel' **sam   po   sebe**.
             M.   slice$_{3.SG.M}$ potato   intens$_M$ prep self$_{DAT}$
             'Michael sliced the potatoes **by himself**.'

Consultants' comments (8) are helpful in articulating how redundancy is at the heart of why sentences like (7) are judged as infelicitous:

(8) a.   *"Kak ešče on mog narezat' kartofel'?"* ("How else could he cut the potatoes?")
     b.   *"Po sebe - lišnee."* ("'po sebe' is superfluous".)
     c.   *" 'sam po sebe' ne nužen, Mixael i tak vpolne samostojatelen."* ("'sam po sebe' isn't necessary, Michael is totally independent.')

No consultant was able to volunteer a context where (7), as-is, could be felicitous. Instead, to get the intended reading of 'without outside help' with *narezat'*, one consultant recommended removing *po sebe* as in (9):

(9)   Deti   **sami**   narezali   kartošku.
             children intens$_{PL}$ slice$_{PST.PL}$ potato$_{ACC}$
             'The children **themselves** cut the potatoes.'

The possibility of using the intensifier *sam* alone to get the intended meaning may play a role in blocking speakers' attempts to come up with a context where sentences like (7) are felicitous. In any case, the reading of redundancy in sentences like (7) is robust.

3.2   Bodily Process Verbs

By default, bodily processes are conceived of as occurring inside a referent's body and as occurring naturally – that is, without any sort of intervention. This is the basis of their classification as verbs which lexicalize internally-caused events. As with agent transitives, speakers find *sam po sebe* phrases to sound redundant with these verbs. This is illustrated in (10) with *krovotočit'* 'to bleed', which was judged 'good' by 4/12 consultants, 'iffy' by 2/12, and 'bad' by 6/12.

(10) ?? Ranka   **sama po   sebe**   krovotočit, zaživat' ne   xočet.
        wound$_F$ intens$_F$ prep self$_{DAT}$ bleed$_{3SG}$ heal$_{NFIN}$ neg want$_{3SG}$
        'The wound is bleeding **all on its own**, it doesn't want to heal.'

Once again, consultants' comments in (11) establish that redundancy plays a significant role in making (10) infelicitous.

(11) a. ['bad'] *"Vpolne ponjatno bylo by bez oborota 'sama po sebe',*
        no s nim pojavljaetsja verojatnost' togo, čto ranke čto-to ili kto-
        to možet pomešat' zaživat'." ("It would make complete sense
        without 'sama po sebe', but with it there, it makes it sound likely
        that something or someone could be interfering with the
        healing.")
    b. ['bad'] *"Rana v principe ne možet krovotočit' s čej-libo*
        pomošč'ju. Utočnenija takogo roda javljajutsja izlišnimi i ploxo
        zvučat." ("Wounds, in principle, cannot bleed with any kind of
        help. Refinements like this are unnecessary and sound bad.")

More specifically, the comments in (11) imply that (10) would be felicitous in a non-prototypical context where wounds were understood to somehow require outside forces to cause them to bleed; otherwise *sam po sebe* is redundant. In fact, consultants generally found it possible to use *sam po sebe* to modify events with bodily process verbs whenever the default semantics of the verb (as internally-caused) could be overriden by a context licensing the existence of an external cause. The sentence in (12) with *zasnut'* 'to fall asleep' clearly illustrates this possibility; it contains an overt external cause (the singing). This example was judged as 'good' by 6/12, 'iffy' by 5/12, and 'bad' by 1/12,

but the comments in (13) show that peoples' judgments crucially depended on whether or not they accepted the overriding context.

(12)   Obyčno mne   nado   pet'   malčiku, do   togo   kak
        usually me$_{DAT}$ necessary sing$_{NFIN}$ boy$_{DAT}$ until dem$_{GEN}$ as

            ...on   zasypaet, a   sevodnja on zasnul   **sam**
            he   sleep$_{3SG}$ but today   he fall.asleep$_M$ intens$_M$

            ...**po   sebe.**
            prep self$_{DAT}$
        'Usually I have to sing to the boy until he falls asleep, but today he fell asleep **all on his own**.'

(13) a. ['good'] *"Normal'noe opisanie, gde vtoraja situacija zasypanija*
            rebënka protivopostavljaetsja pervoj imenno blagodarja
            oborotu 'sam po sebe'." ("This is an okay description, where the second situation concerning the sleeping child is opposed to the first owing primarily to the use of 'sam po sebe' .")
    b. ['bad'] *"Značenie 'samostojatel'nosti' peredaëtsja s pomoščju*
            'sam', no ne 'sam po sebe'." ("The meaning of 'independence' is given with the help of 'sam', but not 'sam po sebe.")

Likewise, the sentence in (14) with *česat'sja* 'to itch, scratch' was judged by 5/12 as 'good', 1/12 as 'iffy', and 5/12 'bad'. The polarity of peoples' judgments related to different construals of the event.

(14) ? Moi   ruki   češutsja   **sami   po   sebe.**
        my$_{PL}$ hand$_{PL}$ itch$_{3.PL.REFL}$ intens$_{PL}$ prep self$_{DAT}$
        'My hands are itching **all on their own**.'

(15) a. ['good'] *"Esli ruki češutsja, to predpolagaetsja čto est' pričina*
            (grjaznye, pocarapannye, i t.d.) – esli češutsja sami po sebe
            značit est' kontrast meždu ožidaemym i dejstvitel'nym,
            predloženie obosnovano." ("If hands are itching, its assumed that there's some reason for it (they're dirty, scratched, etc.) – and if they itch on their own it means that that there's a contrast

between what we expect and what is really happening, so the
usage [of *sami po sebe*] is licensed.")
   b. ['bad'] *"Možno tak skazat', predpologaja, čto u vas net česotki
   ili allergii."* ("It's possible to say that, assuming you don't have
   scabies or allergies.")

The final example in (16), found online, shows *sami po sebe* felicitously
occurring with *krasnet'* 'to turn red, blush'. Prior to the occurrence of
(16), a mother is discussing how her daughter keeps inexplicably
flushing. At first she suspects allergies to be the cause, but later reasons
this can't be the case. In (16), she is using *sam po sebe* to express the
lack of any apparent external cause for the flushing.

(16)   V tom to i delo,   čto   èto ne svjazano   s   užinom...
       as a matter of fact comp this neg connected with dinner$_{M.INST}$

       ...Ščëki   krasnejut   **sami   po   sebe.**
         cheek$_{PL}$ turn.red$_{3.PL}$ intens$_{PL}$ prep self$_{DAT}$
       'As a matter of fact, this wasn't connected with the dinner [we
       ate]. [Her] cheeks just turned red **on their own**.'
       [*http://2006-2009.littleone.ru/archive/index.php/t-940183.html*]

The examples in this section show that *sam po sebe* can be used
felicitously with bodily process verbs if a context is first established for
the event being externally-caused. Otherwise, modification with *sam po
sebe* sounds redundant with the default readings of these verbs.

3.3   Verbs of Emission
Verbs of emission encode events of sound, light, smell, or substance
emission. The subject is by default the internal cause of the emission
event, and so these are internally-caused eventualities. We might predict
that *sam po sebe* behaves similarly with this class as with bodily process
verbs and indeed, this is what we find: *sam po sebe* sounds redundant
with these verbs, unless a context is established where an external cause
is present. The sentence in (17) with *taraxtet'* 'to rattle' illustrates this
interpretive pattern; it was judged 'good' by 3/12 consultants, 'iffy' by
6/12, and 'bad' by 3/12. Consultants' comments in (18) are illuminating.

(17) ?? Nočju   moj xolodil'nik taraxtit **sam   po   sebe.**
      night$_{INST}$ my$_M$ fridge   rattle$_{3SG}$ intens$_M$ prep self$_{DAT}$
      'At night my fridge rattles **all on its own**.'

(18) a. ['iffy'] *"Sam po sebe – lišnee."* (" 'sam po sebe' is
        superfluous.")
     b. ['iffy'] *"Taraxtet' – estestvennoe povedenie dlja xolodil'nika,*
        ne trebujuščee naružnogo impul'sa...ispol'zovanie budet
        obosnovano esli budet kontekst objasnjaet čto tvoj xolodil'nik
        obyčno nikogda ne taraxtit." ("Rattling is a natural behaviour
        for a refrigerator that does not require an external impulse...the
        use [of this sentence] would be justified in a context where its
        explained that your refrigerator usually doesn't rattle.")
     c. ['iffy'] *"Neponjatno, čto podrazumevaetsja, ili dnëm*
        xolodil'nik molčit, ili emu pomogajut taraxtet'." ("It isn't clear
        what is being implied, either during the day the refrigerator is
        silent, or they are helping the refridgerator rattle.")

Example (19) shows *sam po sebe* felicitously modifying a verb of light
emission, *svetit'sja*. It is felicitous because the speaker first construes
chemical glowing as potentially externally-caused.

(20)   U menja jest' židkij   fosfor   i on svetitsja.   Počemu
        by me$_{GEN}$ is   liquid$_{M.SG}$ phosphorus and he glow$_{3.SG.REFL}$ why

        ...on imenno nakaplivaja   svet svetitsja? Ili on voobšče
           he exactly   accumuling$_{F.SG}$ light glow$_{3.SG.REFL}$ or he in.general

        ...**sam   po   sebe**   svetitsja?
           intens$_M$ prep self$_{DAT}$ glow$_{3.SG.REFL}$
        'I have some liquid phosphorus and its glowing. Why exactly is
        the light it's accumulating glowing out? Or does it generally
        just glow **on its own**? [*http://otvet.mail.ru/question/40944061*]

These examples show that *sam po sebe* can be used felicitously with
verbs of emission in contexts construed as having an external cause.
Otherwise by default, *sam po sebe* sounds redundant with these verbs.

3.4   Verbs of Appearance, Disappearance, and Occurrence

I am assuming that verbs of appearance, disappearance, and occurrence encode states of being which are not lexically-specified as externally or internally caused. Though they are lexically acausal, a cause may be specified in context. Unlike the verbs we have seen above, these verbs readily accept modification with *sam po sebe* and *sam po sebe* sounds informative. The examples in (21)-(23) were found online.

(21)   Vsë   suščee   javljaetsja   rezul'tatom   samorazvitija.
        everything existing be$_{3SG.REFL}$ result$_{INST}$ self.development

    ...Mir   pojavilsja   **sam   po   sebe**, on xoroš i
    world$_M$ appear$_{3SG.REFL}$ intens$_M$ prep self$_{DAT}$ he good   and

    ...soveršen, izmenjat' ego ne   nado.
    perfect   change$_{NFIN}$ him neg necessary
'Everything that exists is the result of self-development. The world appeared **all on its own**, its good and perfect, and its not necessary to change it.'
[*http://rpp.nashaucheba.ru/docs/index-25004.html*]

(22)   **Sam   po   sebe** propadaet   zvuk   vxoda   v
        intens$_M$ prep self$_{DAT}$ disappear$_{3SG.M}$ sound$_M$ entrance$_{GEN}$ into

    ...sistemu.
    system$_{ACC}$
'**All on its own**, the system log-in sound disappeared.'
[*http://forum.ubuntu.ru/index.php?topic=180026.0*]

(23)   Ničevo ne proisxodit **samo   po   sebe**. Bez   novyx
        nothing neg occur$_{3SG.N}$ intens$_N$ prep self$_{DAT}$ without new$_{PL.GEN}$

    ...ljudej   žizn' Kompanii   zamiraet.
    people$_{GEN.PL}$ life$_F$ company$_{GEN}$ freeze$_{3SG.F}$
'Nothing happens **all on its own**. Without new people, the life of a Company freezes.' [*http://www.kapitalsugurta.uz/career/*]

In (21), the 'cause' of the world's appearance is being conceived of as originating from the properties inherent to the world itself, or at least not

from factors external to it; in (22), a sound's disappearance is attributed to causal factors within an implicit argument (presumably some part of the computer system) and not outside of it; and in (23), a claim is being denied that things can happen 'all by themselves' – that is, without any external influence. Unlike the lexically-causal verbs we have seen so far, modification with *sam po sebe* is informative and natural with these lexically acausal verbs.

3.5   Adjectival Predicates
Adjectival predicates like *xorošij* 'good' are lexically acausal. They therefore help us see whether the pattern observed in 3.4, in which lexically acausal verbs allowed informative modification with *sam po sebe* phrases, holds more generally. Example (24) shows this to be the case: *sam po sebe* informatively modifies a sentence involving the adjectival predicate *xorošij* 'good'. In this example, *sam po sebe* is being used to assert that the mirror possesses inherent properties that enable the state of its 'goodness'.

(24)   Ono **samo   po   sebe**   zerkalo   xorošee. Bolšoe.
        it$_N$ intens$_N$ prep self$_{DAT}$ mirror$_{N.SG}$ good$_{N.SG}$ big$_{N.SG}$
        *'It is **on its own** a good mirror. Its big.'*
        [RNC: *Разговор знакомых // Из материалов Саратовского университета, 1988*]

As with acausal verbs in 3.4, *sam po sebe* can be used informatively with adjectival predicates to specify the cause of the state lexicalized by the adjective. Here, the cause is identified in some way with the referent modified, namely the mirror. We will return to discuss the nature of this identification below.

3.6   Causative-Alternation Verbs
Recall from (6) above that causative-alternating verbs can occur either transitively or intransitively. Here I show that *sam po sebe* is interpreted differently depending on which alternant is being modified. When *sam po sebe* occurs with the transitive alternant, it sounds redundant and is rejected; but when *sam po sebe* occurs with the intransitive alternant, the resulting sentence is accepted and judged as sounding informative.

Example (25) with the transitive alternant of *razbit'* is rejected and judged as sounding redundant.

(25)   #Vladimir razbil   čašku   **sam   po   sebe.**
       Vladimir break$_{PST.M}$ cup$_{ACC}$ intens$_M$ prep self$_{DAT}$
       lit. 'Vladimir broke the cup **by himself (without outside help)**.'[3]

This judgment puts transitive alternants of causative alternating verbs broadly in the same category as agent transitives, bodily process verbs, and verbs of emission.

On the other hand, examples with *sam po sebe* and intransitive alternants of causative alternating verbs are well-attested. In (26), found online, the speaker is using *sam po sebe* to assert that some glass in his or her house broke without any apparent external cause.

(26)   Samo   po   sebe   razbilos'   steklo doma.   Čto èto...
       intens$_N$ prep self$_{DAT}$ break$_{PST.N.REFL}$ glass at.home what this

           ...značit?
             mean$_{3SG}$
       '**All on its own** the glass at home broke. What does this mean?'
       [Source: *http://otvet.mail.ru/question/44844512*]

In (27), the speaker is using *sam po sebe* to assert that one of the doors of his car opens without any apparent external cause.[4]

(27)   Otkryvaetsja dver' **sama   po   sebe**.
       open$_{3.SG.REFL}$ door$_F$ intens$_F$ prep self$_{DAT}$
       'The door opens **all on its own**.' [*http://kiario4.ru/t655/*]

In (26)-(27), *sam po sebe* is being used to assert that the cause of breaking and the cause of opening are in some way local to the glass and

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[3]   This example was judged by two native Russian speakers, and was not part of the original questionnaire.
[4]   The author of (27) goes on to tell the following story: recently he stopped at a stop light, and even though his car doors were locked, one of the doors just clicked open. He had to get out of the car to close it. He then mentions that he is still not altogether sure how it could have happened.

the door, respectively, even while the exact nature of these causes remains mysterious. Significantly, there is no sense of redundancy in examples (26)-(27); this puts intransitive variants of causative alternating verbs in the same class as the lexically acausal verbs we have seen.

3.7   Generalizations
The following three generalizations arise from the data in 3.1-3.6 above.
3.7.1   Generalization 1. *sam po sebe* is redundant when it modifies events with (i) agent transitives, (ii) bodily process verbs, (iii) verbs of emission, and (iv) transitive alternants of causative alternating verbs.
3.7.2   Generalization 2. *sam po sebe* is informative when it occurs in sentences with (v) verbs of appearance, disappearance, and occurrence, (vi) adjectival predicates, and (vii) intransitive alternants of causative alternating verbs.
3.7.3   Generalization 3. Bodily process verbs and verbs of emission can felicitously occur with *sam po sebe* phrases in a context where the event is construed (non-prototypically) as externally-caused; *sam po sebe* modification is then informative.

     In the next section I will propose an analysis which explains these generalizations as deriving ultimately from lexical causal semantics.

4   Analysis

In Section 4.1 I present the details of my *Causal Locus Analysis*, and explain how it derives the generalizations stated in 3.7. Then in 4.2 I contrast this analysis with the *No Cause Analysis* proposed for a different set of languages in Schäfer (2007). Finally in 4.3 I discuss how my findings bear upon the question of whether transitive or intransitive alternants of causative alternating verbs are conceptually 'basic'.

4.1   Causal Locus Analysis
According to the *Causal Locus Analysis*, modification with *sam po sebe* involves adding the following two assertions to an event description: 1) *sam po sebe* asserts that the event it is modifying has a cause; and 2) *sam po sebe* identifies a particular referent – namely its antecedent, the referent with which *sam* agrees – as the locus of this cause. By 'locus of cause', or 'causal locus', I mean simply the location in the world where the causing event occurred. In other words, I am proposing that speakers

use *sam po sebe* to profile a particular referent as being the site of a causing event. This analysis is summarized semi-formally in (28):[5]

(28) *Causal Locus Analysis: sam po sebe* has two meaning components:
    a. $\lambda e.\exists e'[\text{CAUSE}(e', e)]$ (existence of causing event)
    b. $\lambda e.\lambda x.[\text{CAUSAL.LOCUS}(x, e)]$ (identification of causal locus)

Note that in asserting that a causing event exists and is located 'at' a particular referent, speakers need not be making a choice about whether the cause is located *internal to* the profiled argument or just *not external to* the profiled argument – the speaker could have either or both of these assertions in mind. This flexibility in interpretation is consistent with the data in (29), where sentence 'a' and 'b' are both judged to be possible alternative second statements within the discourse. Specifically, this example shows that speakers allow an assertion with *sam po sebe* to be followed up either with a statement that identifies the cause as internal to the profiled referent (the 'a' example) or as not external to the profiled referent (the 'b' example). These data show, therefore, that we need to allow for both of these possibilities in defining the meaning of *sam po sebe*.

(29) Moja čaška razbilas'   **sama   po   sebe**!
     my$_F$ cup$_F$ break$_{F.PST.REFL}$ intens$_F$ prep intens$_F$
     'My cup broke **all on its own**!

  a. Možet   byt', ona byla   ploxogo kačestva.
     possible be$_{NFIN}$ she be$_{F.PST}$ bad$_{F.GEN}$ quality$_{F.GEN}$
     'Maybe it was bad quality.'

---

[5] Previous formal denotations of *by itself* phrases have been defined only for particular verb classes – for example, the denotation for Spanish *por sí solo* in Koontz-Garboden (2009) is defined only for change-of-state verbs. There are significant formal challenges in defining a denotation that works for all verb classes: in particular, a mechanism is needed to reliably pick out any event's highest (subject) argument. I hope the reader will forgive me for leaving this problem unresolved here, and will find (28) sufficent for the exposition at hand.

    b. Nikogo   ne   bylo   v kuxne   ves' den', i   vetra
      nobody$_{GEN}$ neg be$_{N.PST}$ in kitchen$_{PREP}$ all   day and wind

      ...ne   bylo.
        neg be$_{N.PST}$
    'Noone was in the kitchen all day, and there was no wind.'

This flexibility in interpretation is also consistent with the fact that *sam po sebe* is often used in situations where nothing is known about the nature of a particular cause; all that is known is that the locus of the causal event is somehow 'at' the site of a particular referent.

    How does this analysis explain the empirical generalizations outlined in Section 3.7? Recall that the generalizations related to how modification with *sam po sebe* is either redundant or informative, depending on which class a verb belongs to. Putting aside causative alternating verbs for a moment, I'll now attempt an explanation.

    Generalization 1 can be restated as follows: if a verb is lexically causative – that is, if it is an externally or internally caused verb – modification with *sam po sebe* is redundant. This follows from the first component of the analysis proposed above: since *sam po sebe* asserts the presence of a cause, it is redundant to modify an event using *sam po sebe* if a cause is already lexically present. In asserting the presence of a cause for an event which already has a cause, modification with *sam po sebe* fails to add new information; thus speakers judge it to be redundant.

    Generalization 2 can be restated as follows: if a verb is lexically acausal, modification with *sam po sebe* is informative. This is because *sam po sebe* asserts the presence of a cause which is not lexically present: the fact that a cause exists is always new information.

    Generalization 3 is a little trickier. In a context where an internally-caused eventuality is being construed as externally-caused, we might expect *sam po sebe* to sound redundant, since a cause is present at some level of representation. The reason that *sam po sebe* is nevertheless informative in these instances is due to the second part of (28), namely, the identification of the profiled referent as the causal locus. While the existence of a cause is not new information, the locus of the cause is – therefore, *sam po sebe* is informative in these cases, and not redundant.

    If it is possible to make *sam po sebe* work in context with internally-caused verbs, why then is it not possible to do the same with an

externally-caused verb like *narezat'* 'to slice'? The answer may relate to the fact that while verbs like *narezat'* lexicalize externally-caused eventualities, the agentive arguments that saturate these eventualities are themselves *internal* causes. That is to say that agents can be conceived of as having internal properties such as volition, goals, and intentions which serve as internal causes that enable them to take part in macroevents in which they are external causes. For example, an agentive 'slicer' is both an external cause of a slicing event, and the possessor of certain inherent causal properties which enable her willful participation in events in general. If this explanation is on the right track, then the reason *sam po sebe* sounds redundant with externally caused verbs is that they are already in some sense causal loci by virtue of their agenthood; *sam po sebe*, then, would simply be stating redundant information.

4.2   The No-Cause Analysis

Schäfer (2007) uses data from English, German, Greek, and Italian to argue that *by itself* phrases in these languages are used to deny the presence of a cause(r) for an event. While Schäfer's arguments and analysis may hold up for the languages discussed there, Russian appears to crucially differ from these languages. Consider once again examples like (7) with *narezat'* 'to slice'. If Russian *sam po sebe* was used to assert that an eventuality had no cause, we might expect (7) to be judged as *contradictory* as opposed to redundant, since modification with *sam po sebe* would in that case involve saying that an event, externally caused by Michael, has no cause.   Moreover, English sentences such as 'Michael sliced the potatoes (all) by himself', unlike in Russian, are felicitous and can receive the 'without outside help/force' interpretation. The very fact that these Russian and English sentences differ suggests that Russian *sam po sebe* requires a language-specific analysis.

4.3   Classification of Causative Alternating Verbs

We saw above that the transitive alternant of causative alternating verbs patterns with externally-caused verbs, while the intransitive alternant patterns with acausal verbs. Table 3 shows a revised version of Table 2.

Category	Verb Class	Example	
EXTERNALLY-CAUSED	AGENT TRANSITIVES TRANSITIVE ALTERNANTS	narezat' otkryt'	'slice' 'open$_{TR}$'
INTERNALLY-CAUSED	BODILY PROCESS VERBS VERBS OF EMISSION	krovotočit' taraxtet'	'bleed' 'rattle'
ACAUSAL	VERBS OF APPEARANCE, DISAPPEARANCE, and OCCURRENCE ADJECTIVAL PREDICATES INTRANS. ALTERNANTS	pojavit'sja propadat' projisxodit' xorošo otkryt'sja	'appear' 'disappear' 'occur' 'be good' 'open$_{INTR}$'

Table 3: Classification and Examples of Verbs Studied (Revised)

At this point it is worthwhile to consider whether the pattern outlined here with *sam po sebe* can be used to argue for whether one alternant of causative alternating verbs is conceptually more 'basic' than the other.

Paducheva (2003) argues that in Russia the transitive alternant is conceptually basic and that the intransitive alternant is derived via 'adjunct causer deletion', a rule which can apply to delete unspecified and therefore irrelevant causers. This view can be made consistent with the classification in Table 3 by assuming that *sam po sebe* modification applies to a representation which has already undergone this deletion.

Nevertheless, the opposite view – that the intransitive alternant is conceptually basic – is also consistent with the pattern in Table 3 on a different set of theoretical assumptions. For instance, this could be the case under the assumption that *sam po sebe* modifies the transitive variant only after it has been derived via causativization.

Therefore, I think its important to note that the pattern in Table 3 is potentially consistent with competing, and in this case mutually inconsistent, proposals regarding the causative alternation, depending on which additional theoretical assumptions one chooses to adopt. Thus while *by itself* phrases are clearly relevant to the study of lexicalized causal properties, their ability to serve as a simple diagnostic for one causative alternant being more 'basic' than the other is not a given.

5   Conclusion

In this paper I have proposed a descriptive, empirically-driven analysis

of the meaning of *sam po sebe* phrases in Russian, wherein *sam po sebe* is used both to assert the presence of a cause for an event, and to identify a particular referent as the causal locus. We have seen that the interpretation of *sam po sebe* with verbs from different verb classes is consistent with there being a distinction between externally-caused eventualities, internally-caused eventualities, and acausal eventualities in this language, and that it is sometimes possible to override these default semantics in context. Having investigated the meaning of *sam po sebe*, we are now in a better position to assess what this phrase can tell us about causal semantics in Russian, as well as what it cannot.

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katie.sardinha@berkeley.edu