The locative alternation has traditionally been characterized as a special relationship between two syntactic realizations of the same verb, which are called the locative variant (cf. [1a]) and the with variant (cf. [1b]).

(1) a. John sprayed the paint onto the wall.
    b. John sprayed the wall with paint.

As Anderson (1971) first noted, subtle differences of meaning exist between both variants, which are related to the so-called holistic effect. In particular, in (1b), but not in (1a), it is conveyed that the truck is full. As Rappaport & Levin (1988) and Pinker (1989) correctly observe, the holistic effect is actually an epiphenomenon of the fact that (1b) specifies a change of state, whereas (1a) refers to a change of location. According to Pinker (1989) a verb must specify a manner of motion from which a particular change of state can be obtained in order to participate in the locative alternation. Thus, spray alternates, as in (1), because it describes a manner of motion, consisting of sending a mist or drops of a liquid and this manner of motion results in the covering of a surface (Pinker 1989:80). In contrast, neither pour nor fill enter into the locative alternation, because they are not capable of specifying both manner of motion and change of state simultaneously: pour describes only a particular way in which a locatum changes location (John poured water into the glass vs. *John poured the glass with water) and fill only describes a particular change of state (John filled the glass with water vs. *John filled water into the glass). In this talk, we show that Pinker’s (1989) generalization does not take into account the important semantic and syntactic effects involved in verbal prefixation in Slavic (cf. also Brinkmann 1997), where some verbs typically associated with the locative variant can appear in the change of state pattern, when prefixed (usually with ob- or za-) (cf. [2] and [3]).

(2) On oblił/ zalił stol molokom. (Russian)
   he OB-poured ZA-poured table-ACC milk-INST
   ‘He poured over the table with milk.’
   (taken from Olbishevska 2004:7)

(3) On obwiesił ściąny obrazami. (Polish)
   he OB-hung walls-ACC pictures-INSTR
   ‘He hung pictures all over the walls.’

Olbishevska (2004) recently claimed in her generative-derivational analysis that the prefixes za- and ob- introduce a resultative state that selects for a location-internal argument, i.e. stol ‘table’ in (2) and ściąny ‘walls’ in (3). While we agree that this is the resultative meaning of the prefixes what triggers the alternation, we argue that Olbishevska (2004) is wrong when treating the prefixes za- and -ob as synonyms with a rather vague completive meaning, introducing “some semantic relation, something akin to ‘G[round] is behind/covered with F[igure]’” [sic]. She seems to ignore the quite distinct prototype-based effects involved in za- and ob- (e.g., cf. Janda 1985). In particular, in Polish za- implies that the trajector completely covers the landmark, whereas the meaning of ob- is based on an image-schema, where the trajector affects only the exterior part of the landmark. Moreover, we show that Olbishevska’s (2004) claim that za- and ob- are derivational prefixes subcategorizing for a Location argument can be provided with more explanatory value if one assumes Goldberg’s (1995) or Michaelis & Ruppenhofer’s (2001) Construction Grammar framework: indeed, it is not the case that the prefix derives a
new verb with a different argument structure, but rather it is the verb that is integrated into the location-as-object construction headed by one or the other prefix. Accordingly, we argue that Goldberg’s (1995) or M&R’s (2001) CG framework is more appropriate since it allows us to provide an elegant model of the valence-changing function of the prefix, which are harder to account for in verb-centered models. Furthermore, drawing on examples from the National Corpus of Polish (http://nkjp.pl/), we show that different selectional restrictions are involved in the pattern headed by za- and that headed by ob- (for instance, the ob-construction allows for change of position verbs, such as wieszać ‘to hang’ or klaść ‘to lay’, while these verbs are hard to be found in the za-location-as-object-construction [cf. (3)]: the za-construction combines more frequently than the ob-construction with intensification modifiers such as całkowicie ‘completely’; in contrast, the ob-pattern, unlike the za-pattern, is compatible with attenuating modifiers such as e.g. lekko ‘lightly’ [cf. (4)], etc.)

(3) a. (...) aby zdobyć pieniądze na remont kościoła (...) obwiesił świątynię reklamami sponsorów (...).
   ‘He hung the sponsor’s advertisements all over the temple in order to get money for the renovation of the church (...).’

b. *(...) zawiesił świątynię reklamami sponsorów (...).

(4) a. Jak wchodziłem do domu, podszedł do mnie i ochlapał mnie lekko wodą.
   ‘When I was entering the house, he came towards me and sprayed me lightly with water’

b. ??Jak wchodziłem do domu, podszedł do mnie i zachlapał mnie lekko wodą.

References