

**Graduate Conference on Areal Linguistics,
Grammar and Contacts**
Tartu, May 4-6 2012

Two areas of prefixal perfective in Eastern Europe

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Prefixal perfectivization

Prefixation (preverbation) as a means of **perfectivization** (broadly understood as expressing a bounded event, most saliently, the terminal point of a telic process) is attested in many of the Central and Eastern European languages, both Indo-European and non-Indo-European.

Prefixal perfectivization

Indo-European:

Slavic: Russian *rezal* ‘was cutting’ ~ ***razrezal*** ‘cut (into parts)’

Baltic: Lithuanian *skaitė* ‘was reading’ ~ ***perskaitė*** ‘read through’

Germanic: Yiddish *washn* ‘be washing’ ~ ***oyswashn*** ‘wash up’

Uralic:

Hungarian: *olvasta* ‘was reading it’ ~ ***felolvasta*** ‘read it through’

Prefixal perfectivization

In the Caucasus:

Kartvelian: Georgian *c'ers* 'is writing' ~
dac'era 'wrote up'

Iranian (IE): Ossetic *fysta* 'was writing' ~
nyffysta 'wrote up'

Prefixal perfectivization

To a less systematic extent, prefixal perfectivization is attested in Romani dialects (e.g. Schrammel 2005) and Livonian (de Sivers 1971), where both prefixes and their functions have been borrowed from languages with which they have been in intensive contact.

Prefixal perfectivization

Prefixation without systematic aspectual functions is attested in the “margins” of the area, e.g. in such languages as German and Dutch to the West, Ostyak, Vogul and Selkup (Uralic, Kiefer & Honti 2003) to the East, and North-Caucasian (e.g. Abkhaz, Adyghe, Agul, Dargwa).

Prefixal perfectivization

The common view is that the primary function (both diachronically and synchronically) of prefixation is not aspectual, but lexical-semantic modification of the meaning of the verb (*Aktionsart*, cf. e.g. Breu 1992, Kiefer 2010), in particular the specification of the spatial configuration of the situation (Plungian 2002).

Research questions

The verbal systems of the languages where prefixal perfectivization is systematically attested show both noteworthy similarities and considerable differences in formal (morphosyntactic) and functional (semantic) properties (cf. e.g. Breu 1992, Tomelleri 2008, 2009, 2010, Arkadiev 2007).

Research questions

How can the cross-linguistic variation in the domain of prefixal perfective be assessed in a non-biased manner?

How can the similarities shown by the verbal systems of contemporary languages of the area be explained?

A multi-factorial analysis

Following my own earlier work (Arkadiev 2007) and Tomelleri 2009, 2010, I propose to evaluate the verbal systems of all the relevant languages against an array of parameters comprising both formal and functional properties of preverbs, prefixal verbs and verbal systems with prefixal perfective.

A multi-factorial analysis

Formal properties include:

- separability of preverbs

Hungarian

*János **le-ment** a lépcsőn.* ‘Janos went down the stairs.’

*János nem **ment le** a lépcsőn.* ‘Janos did not go down the stairs.’

A multi-factorial analysis

- morphological subclassification of preverbs:

Georgian: locative preverbs (*a-* ‘up’, *še-* ‘inside’ etc.) vs. deictic preverbs *mi-* ‘thither’, *mo-* ‘hither’

- other verbal prefixes besides preverbs:

Lithuanian *ne-be-per-rašau* ‘I no longer rewrite’

A multi-factorial analysis

Functional parameters include:

- delimitative ('V for a while') preverbs:

Slavic, Baltic, Ossetic vs. Hungarian,
Yiddish, Kartvelian

- non-perfective uses of prefixed verbs

Ossetic:

*c'iw kletkæmæ **ba-tæxy*** 'the bird is flying
towards the cage'

A multi-factorial analysis

- functions of the present tense of prefixal verbs:

Russian, Polish: only future

Lithuanian, Ossetic: historical present, habitual

Czech, Georgian: both future and historical present/habitual

- an aspectually-neutral future tense:

Bulgarian, Baltic, Yiddish, Ossetic vs. Russian, Polish, Czech, Georgian

A multi-factorial analysis

- means of “secondary imperfectivization”:

Slavic: productive suffixal 2Ipf

Russian: *vypit'* → *vypivat'* ‘drink up’

Ossetic: productive prefixal 2Ipf

Rast xur fæ-cæj-nyguyldi ‘when the sun was setting’

Hungarian: morphosyntactic 2Ipf

János le-ment a lépcsőn. ‘Janos went down the stairs.’

János ment le a lépcsőn. ‘Janos was going down the stairs.’

Yiddish, Latvian, Georgian: no 2Ipf

A multi-factorial analysis

- other aspectual categories besides those connected to prefixal perfectivization, in particular, an inflectional distinction between an Aorist (perfective past) and Imperfect (imperfective past)

Bulgarian: complete four-way system

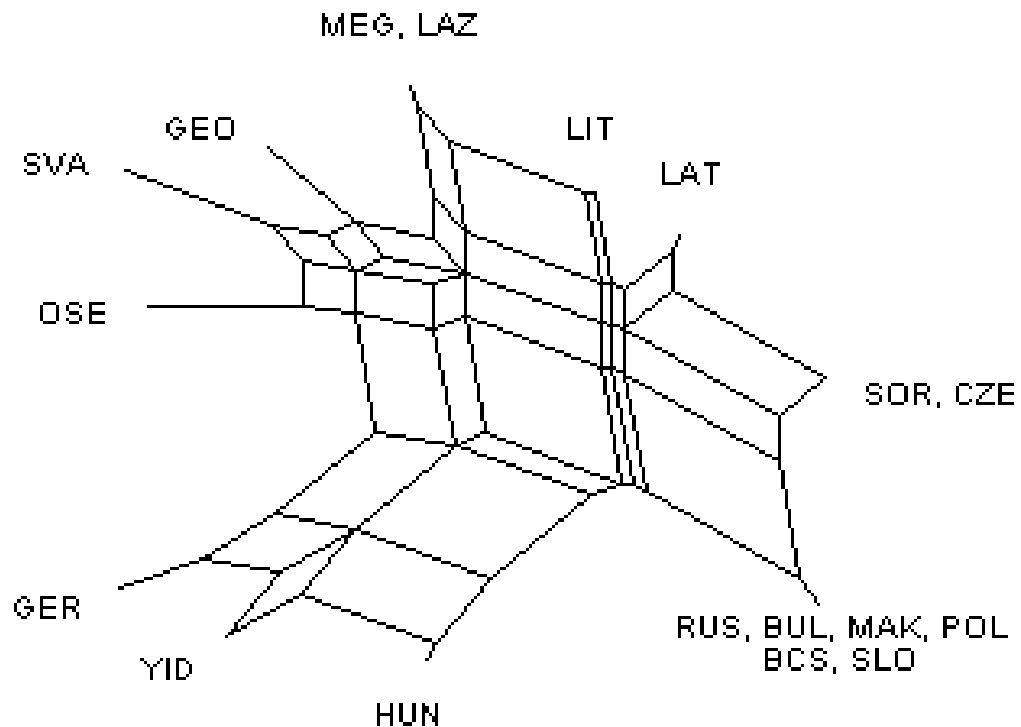
Macedonian, Kartvelian: reduced (virtually no Imperfective Aorist) and modalized (Perfective Imperfect → subjunctive) three-way systems.

A multi-factorial analysis

The results of the survey of the values of the proposed array of features (19 features and 18 languages overall) are plotted on NeighborNet diagrams (using Splitstree software, Huson & Bryant 2006).

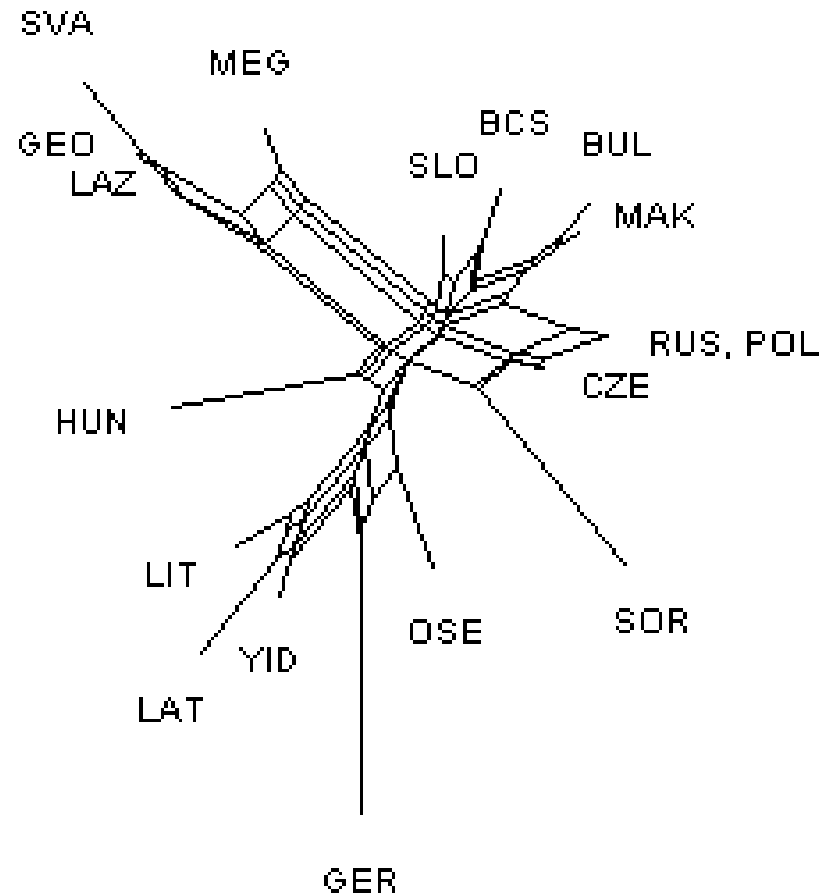
A multi-factorial analysis

Plotting according to the 5 morphological features:
Morphology strongly correlates with genetic affiliation – but note Ossetic and Kartvelian



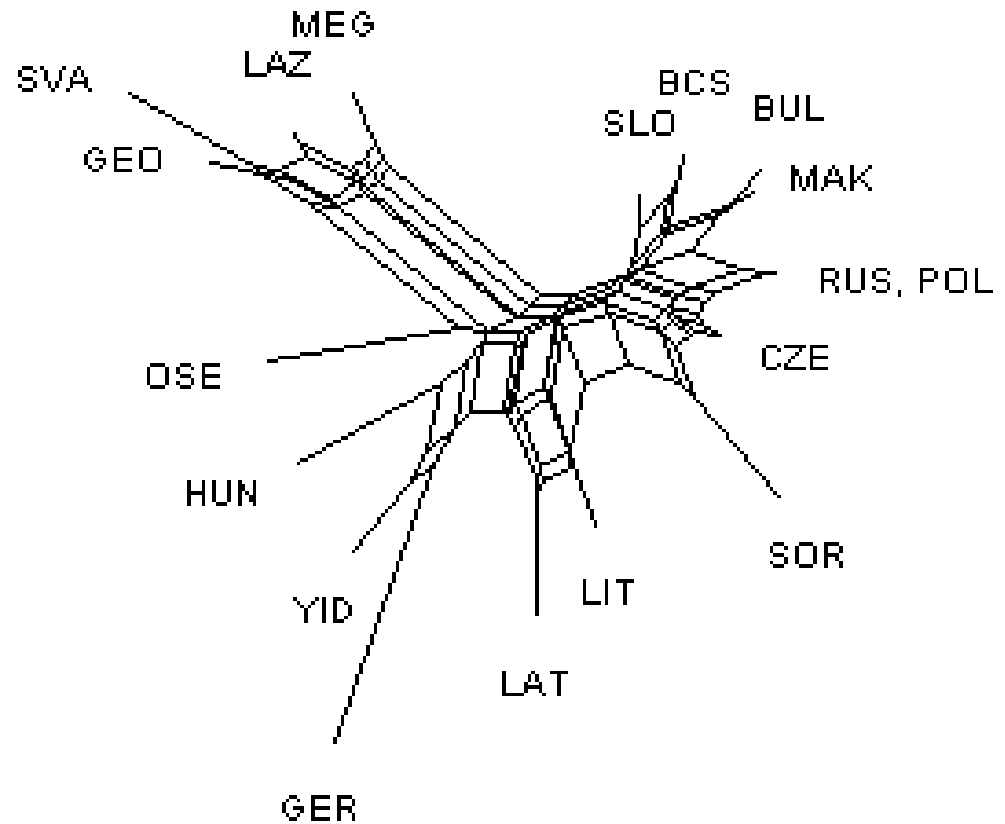
A multi-factorial analysis

Plotting according to the 14 functional features:
two genetically defined coherent zones (Slavic and Kartvelian), while other languages are distributed quite randomly.



A multi-factorial analysis

Plotting according to the whole array of 19 features: some unexpected results.



A multi-factorial analysis

- Colloquial Upper Sorbian is a clear outlier in the Slavic domain (indeed, according to Breu 2000, Toops 2001, the aspectual system of this language shows features lacking in other Slavic languages, i.e. possibility to use a prefixed perfective verb in the actual present).
- Though this deviance of Sorbian is clearly caused by its contact with German (cf. Wexler 1972, Toops 1992a,b), Sorbian does **not** show a greater overall degree of similarity to German than any other Slavic language.

A multi-factorial analysis

- Paradoxically, Ossetic shows a greater degree of similarity to the Central European languages, especially in the functional domain, than to its closest Kartvelian neighbours, with which it has been in contact.

An areal-typological perspective

- It is obvious that a multi-factorial analysis as coarse as the one conducted is not sufficient for an adequate characterization of a clearly areal phenomenon.
- It is clear that the current situation is a result of an interplay of genetic, areal (contact-induced) and typological (universal) factors.
- So historical and contact factors must be taken into account as well.

An areal-typological perspective

In all the languages under investigation the use of preverbs for perfectivization is a more or less recent innovation, for which language contact can be at least partially responsible (and is evidently responsible at least in the case of Hungarian and especially Yiddish).

Genetic inheritance

On the other hand, in all the languages under investigation the systems of preverbs encoding spatial meanings are inherited from prehistoric times:

- Slavic, Baltic and at least some Germanic and Ossetic preverbs go back to the Proto-Indo-European verbal satellites;
- Hungarian preverbs find counterparts in the Ob-Ugric verbal satellites (Kiefer & Honti 2003, Honti 1999);
- Though fairly diverse, the preverbs in Kartvelian are attested across the whole family (Hewitt 2004, Rostovtsev-Popiel 2012a).

Genetic inheritance

This implies that at least some (and potentially many) prerequisites for the development of the prefixal perfective have been present in the languages in question prior to any possible contact leading to the spread of the grammaticalization pattern “spatial preverb” → “Aktionsart preverb” → “perfectivizing preverb”.

Universal trends

This finds support in the fact that verbal satellites or other elements specifying the spatial extent of the situation tend to develop into aspectual “bounders” (Bybee & Dahl 1989) cross-linguistically (Breu 1992, Bybee et al. 1994, Maisak 2005).

Universal trends

Such developments have been recurring in the documented history of the Indo-European languages: besides Balto-Slavic cf. late Latin (Haverling 2003, Panov 2012) and Gothic (Maslov 1959, Genis 2012) preverbs, as well as adverbial particles in Germanic (e.g. Brinton 1988), Italian (Iacobini & Masini 2006) and Balto-Finnic (Wälchli 2001).

Role of contact?

There is no reason to assume that the currently observed similarities between the Central-European and the Caucasian subareas of prefixal perfective could have arisen due to language contact between these two groups of languages (contra Abaev 1965, who postulated Slavic influence on Ossetic, and, implicitly, on Kartvelian).

Role of contact?

Though prehistoric contacts between the Balto-Slavic and the Iranian peoples and languages are assumed to have taken place (e.g. Zaliznjak 1962, Èdelman 2002), they must have significantly predated the time when the modern grammatical systems and especially their functional make-up started emerging.

Role of contact?

On the other hand, it is no less obvious that the similarities between the Balto-Slavic and the Kartvelian-Ossetic systems of prefixal perfective are not due to the recent contacts (since the late 18th cent. onwards), for the simple reason that when the Caucasian peoples were incorporated into the Russian Empire their languages already possessed prefixal perfective.

Role of contact?

For example, though in the oldest Georgian texts (5th-8th cent. AD) numerous spatial preverbs did not perfectivize the verb (Schanidse 1982), the rise and spread of the aspectual functions of preverbs must have been completed by the middle-Georgian period (12th century, Rostovtsev-Popiel 2012b), when no intensive contacts with Slavic languages could be reasonably assumed.

Role of contact?

Are there reasons to assume that the Caucasian (Kartvelian-Ossetic) area of prefixal perfective is at least partly due to language contact?

I argue that there is evidence pointing in this direction (contra Thordarson 1982, 2009, who without much discussion dismisses this possibility).

Role of contact?

- 1) The basic spatial meanings of Ossetic preverbs are largely similar to the meanings of Georgian preverbs.

Role of contact?

Two semantic axes:

locative ('upwards', 'downwards', 'inside', 'outside' etc.)

deictic ('towards the speaker' vs. 'from the speaker')

In Georgian the two axes are expressed by different sets of co-occurring preverbs, while in Ossetic they are conflated.

Role of contact?

- Ossetic (Iron) preverbs

| | 'in' | 'out' | 'down' | 'up' | 'sideways' |
|-----------|-------------|------------|------------------------|-----------|------------|
| 'hither' | <i>ba-</i> | <i>ra-</i> | <i>æ-</i> , <i>cæ-</i> | <i>s-</i> | <i>fæ-</i> |
| 'thither' | <i>æba-</i> | <i>a-</i> | <i>ny-</i> | | |

- Georgian preverbs

| | | 'down' | 'up' | 'out' | 'in' | 'across' | 'forward' |
|-----------|------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| 'hither' | <i>mo-</i> | <i>ča-mo-</i> | <i>a-mo-</i> | <i>ga-mo-</i> | <i>še-mo-</i> | <i>gad-mo-</i> | <i>c'a-mo-</i> |
| 'thither' | <i>mi-</i> | <i>ča-, da-</i> | <i>a-</i> | <i>ga-</i> | <i>še-</i> | <i>gada-</i> | <i>c'a-</i> |

Role of contact?

- Since the functional and morphological distinction between the spatial and the deictic preverbs is a feature common to all Kartvelian languages, it is tempting to hypothesize that the Ossetic system is a result of semantic borrowing from Kartvelian (cf. Levitskaja 2004).
- It is important to note that the key semantic features of the Kartvelian-Ossetic systems of prefixes are lacking in the Balto-Slavic preverbs (but are present in the “outsider” German).

Role of contact?

2) Secondary imperfectivization in Ossetic and Mingrelian:

Ossetic:

fæ-cydi ‘went into smth.’ ~ *fæ-cæj-cydi* ‘was walking into smth.’

Mingrelian:

g-igens ‘(s)he will understand smth.’ (pfv) ~

gi-tm-igens ‘(s)he understands smth.’ (ipf)

Role of contact?

- The origins of the Ossetic and the Mingrelian markers of secondary imperfectivization are obscure, and the exact semantic characterization of the Mingrelian marker *t(i)m(a)-* is lacking, but it is tempting to regard their formal and functional similarity as non-accidental, i.e. as a case of contact-induced development.

Role of contact?

- Turning to the better studied Central European region, we see similarities not only and not primarity in the aspectual systems, but in the domain of preverb semantics as well, in particular in their polysemy patterns.
- Cf. Gast & van der Auwera (to appear) on the significance of polysemy in contact-induced grammaticalization, and Wälchli 2001 on verbal satellites in particular.

Role of contact?

- Borrowing of polysemy patterns of preverbs have been documented for Yiddish (← Slavic, Wexler 1964, 1972, Talmy 1982) and Sorbian (← German, Wexler 1972, Toops 1992a, 1992b), as well as for some other Slavic varieties under German influence (Bayer 2006).
- Similarities in “semantic networks” of preverbs can be observed between Baltic and the neighbouring Slavic languages (cf. e.g. Kozhanov 2011).

Role of contact?

The question of the similarities and possible borrowings of polysemy patterns of preverbs between Ossetic and Kartvelian is yet to be investigated; such a study is hampered by the lack of reliable and sufficient data, especially when dealing with dialects and uncodified minority languages such as Mingrelian or Svan.

Role of contact?

Though still not completely resolved, the case of the areal nature of the prefixal perfective systems in Ossetic and Kartvelian is supported by independent evidence: (not so numerous) lexical borrowings (Thordarson 1999) and notably shared grammatical features, e.g. negative indefinites and preverbal focus constructions (Erschler 2010, 2012).

Conclusions and prospects

- The distribution of prefixal perfectives in the languages of Eastern Europe involves a complex interplay of genetic inheritance, contact-induced developments and universal-typological tendencies, not yet investigated in full detail.

Conclusions and prospects

- Though clearly “areal” on the surface, the distribution of prefixal perfectives cannot be reasonably attributed to a single center of innovation and spread (e.g. Slavic).
- Rather, at least two mutually independent centers of development must be postulated: the Balto-Slavic and the Caucasian.

Conclusions and prospects

- Clues of possible contact-induced developments are to be sought not in the easy to grasp major grammatical features, which can well be explained by the universal tendencies, but in the more intricate properties of grammatical systems, e.g. in the semantics and polysemy of preverbs.

Conclusions and prospects

- Future research will show to which extent “sematic networks” of preverbs of different languages of the region match each other and in which cases such similarities can point towards semantic borrowing, as has been already shown for Slavic and Yiddish.

Thank you for your attention!

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