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A multifactorial areal-typological  
approach to prefixal perfective  
in the languages of  
Europe and the Caucasus

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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

**Preverbs** (NB definition is independent of aspectual considerations!):

a subtype of verbal satellites (Talmy 1985), which

- systematically (though not necessarily always, cf. Hungarian or German) occur as verbal prefixes;
- express broadly understood spatial modification of the eventuality denoted by the verb.

# Prefixal perfectivization

- The so-called “bounder-based” perfectives (Bybee & Dahl 1989, Bybee et al. 1994).
- More derivational than inflectional.
- In principle, independent of tense.
- Varying degrees of idiosyncrasy of verb+preverb combinations.
- Systems of *Aktionsarten*, where perfectivization is coupled with other so-called “procedural” meanings.

# Prefixal perfectivization

Indo-European:

Slavic: Russian *rezal* 'was cutting' ~  
***razrezal*** 'cut (into two)'

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 varying extent, prefixal perfectivization is also attested in Romani dialects (e.g. Schrammel 2005), Istro-Romanian (Klepikova 1959, Hurren 1969), and Livonian (de Sivers 1971), where both prefixes and their functions have been borrowed from languages with which these languages have been in intensive contact.

# Prefixal perfectivization

Verbal prefixation without systematic aspectual functions is found on the “fringes” 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, Tabassaran).



# Goals of the talk

Parallels to Slavic aspectual systems in the neighbouring languages have been pointed out in general works on aspect at least since Comrie (1976), see Dahl 1985, Breu 1992, Majsak 2005, Kiefer 2010 and especially Tomelleri 2008, 2009, 2010.

# Goals of the talk

However, to date a comprehensive comparative study of **all** the aforementioned aspectual systems, approaching them with a common typological methodology and scrutinizing the **reality** of the phenomenon, has been lacking.

# Goals of the talk

1. Arrive at a comprehensive typology of prefixal perfectivization in Slavic, Baltic, Yiddish, Hungarian, Ossetic and Kartvelian based on a uniform system of parameters comprising morphosyntax, semantics and functional properties of verbal systems.

# Goals of the talk

2. Establish types of **clusterization** of systems of prefixal perfectivization and assess the correlations between resulting clusters and genetic or geographic groupings.

## Not in this talk:

3. Assess the role of genetic inheritance, universal typological tendencies and language contact in the development of prefixal perfectivization in the languages under study (cf. “triangulation” approach proposed by Wiemer et al. 2014).

But see Appendix I & II on the handout.

# Languages examined

- Major Slavic languages (including Sorbian)
- Baltic: Lithuanian and Latvian
- Yiddish (+ German as a point of reference)
- Hungarian
- Ossetic
- Kartvelian: Georgian, Svan, Mingrelian, Laz
- + Adyghe (North-West Caucasian)

# Typological parameters

1. Morphological properties of preverbs.
2. Functional properties of preverbs.
3. Functional properties of verbal systems.

# Morphological properties of preverbs

- Morphological status of preverbs (bound morphemes vs. separable wordforms).
- Iteration of preverbs.
- Verbal prefixes different from preverbs.
- Position of preverbs within the verb.
- Morphological subclassification of preverbs (e.g. separable vs. inseparable preverbs in Germanic).



# Morphological properties of preverbs

- Separability of preverbs:

German

*Die Männer werden das Heu **aufladen**.*

‘The men will load the hay up.’

*Die Männer laden das Heu **auf**.*

‘The men are loading the hay [up].’

# Morphological properties of preverbs

- Iteration of preverbs.

Latvian

***pa-iz-meklēt***

PRV-PRV-search

‘to investigate for a while’

# Morphological properties of preverbs

- verbal prefixes other than preverbs:

Lithuanian

tebe-**per-**rašo

CNT-PRV-write:PRS.3

‘is still rewriting’

# Functional properties of preverbs

- Systematic expression of deictic notions.
- “Purely” aspectual uses of preverbs.
- Delimitative uses of preverbs with atelic verbs.
- Durative (actual present/past) use of prefixed verbs (NB verbs of motion vs. other semantic classes)

# Functional properties of preverbs

- Delimitative preverbs

Russian

*ja po-spa-l neskol'ko časov*

I PRV-sleep-PST a.few hours

'I slept for a few hours.'

# Functional properties of preverbs

- imperfective use of verbs of motion with preverbs (usually only with present tense)

Georgian

**še-dis** 's/he is going in' (imperfective present)

**še-ak'eteb**s 's/he will repair it' (perfective future)

# Functional properties of verbal systems

- Uses of perfective present:
  - for habitual or *praesens historicum*;
  - for futurate expressions.
- Means of secondary imperfectivization.
- Non-prefixal means of perfectivization.
- Restrictions on the use of prefixal verbs with phasal predicates.

# Functional properties of verbal systems

- Interaction of prefixal and non-prefixal verbs with other TAM-categories:
  - formation of future tense;
  - combination of prefix-based aspectual distinctions with inflectional tense-aspect categories (e.g. Aorist and Imperfect in Balkan Slavic and Kartvelian).



# Functional properties of verbal systems

- Perfective present:

– habitual                      Lithuanian

*rektori-us*                      ***pa-raš-o***                      *įvad-a*  
rector-NOM                      PRV-write-PRS.3                      introduction-ACC

‘The rector (usually) writes an introduction’

– futurate                      Russian

*rektor*                      ***na-piš-et***                      *vvedenie*  
rector-NOM                      PRV-write-PRS.3                      introduction-ACC

‘The rector will write an introduction’

# Functional properties of verbal systems

- secondary imperfectivization

- morphological      Russian

- let-e-l* ‘was flying’ (ipf) → ***vy-let-e-l*** ‘flew out’ (pfv)

- ***vy-let-a-l*** ‘was flying out’ (ipf)

- syntactic      Hungarian

- men-t* ‘was going’ (ipf) → ***le-men-t*** ‘went down’ (pfv)

- *men-t* ***le*** ‘was going down’ (ipf)

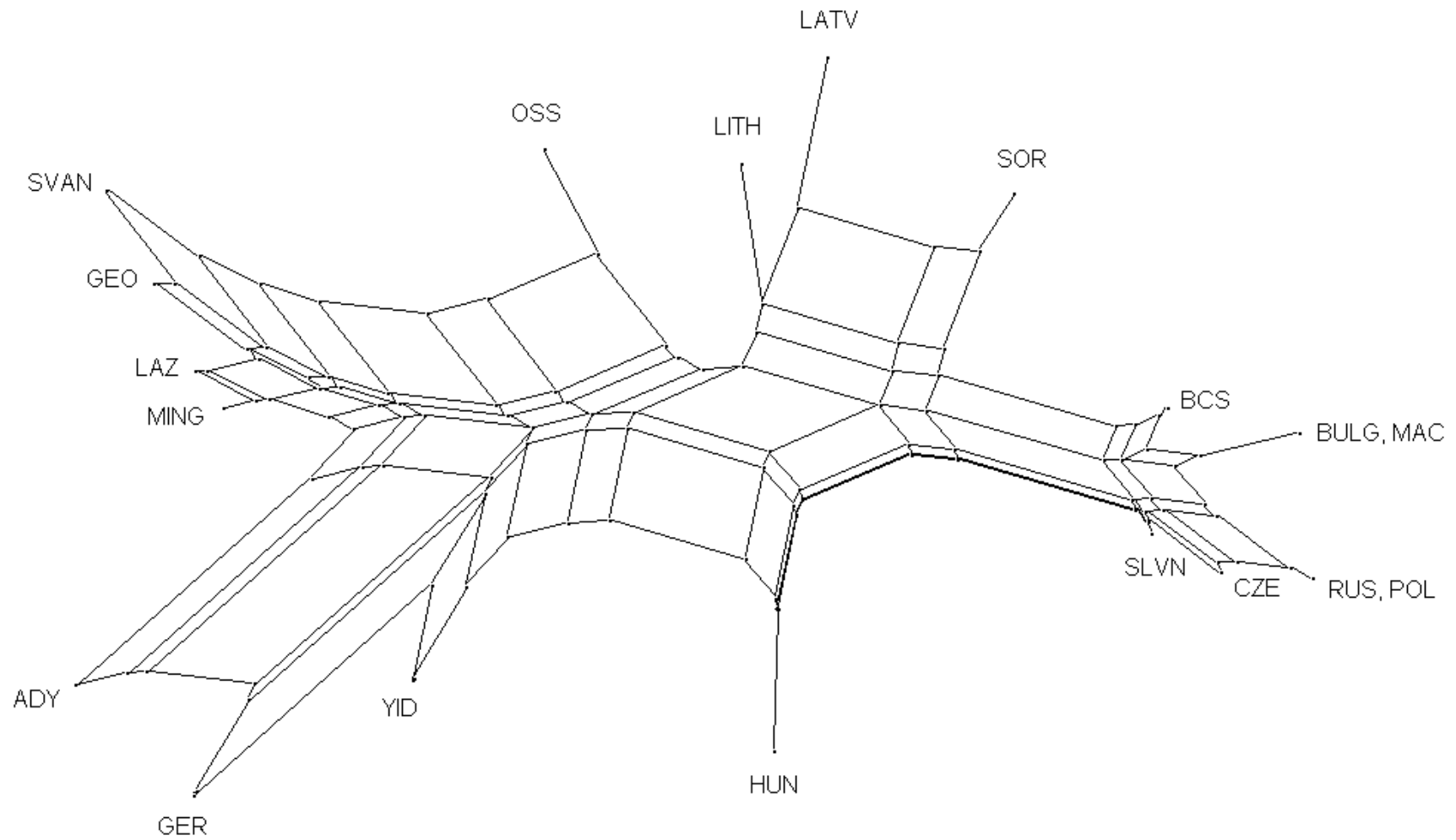
# Results

The preverb-based aspectual systems in the languages studied display a high degree of diversity, amply revealed by a multi-factorial analysis not focusing only on the most evident aspectual distinctions conveyed by preverbs.

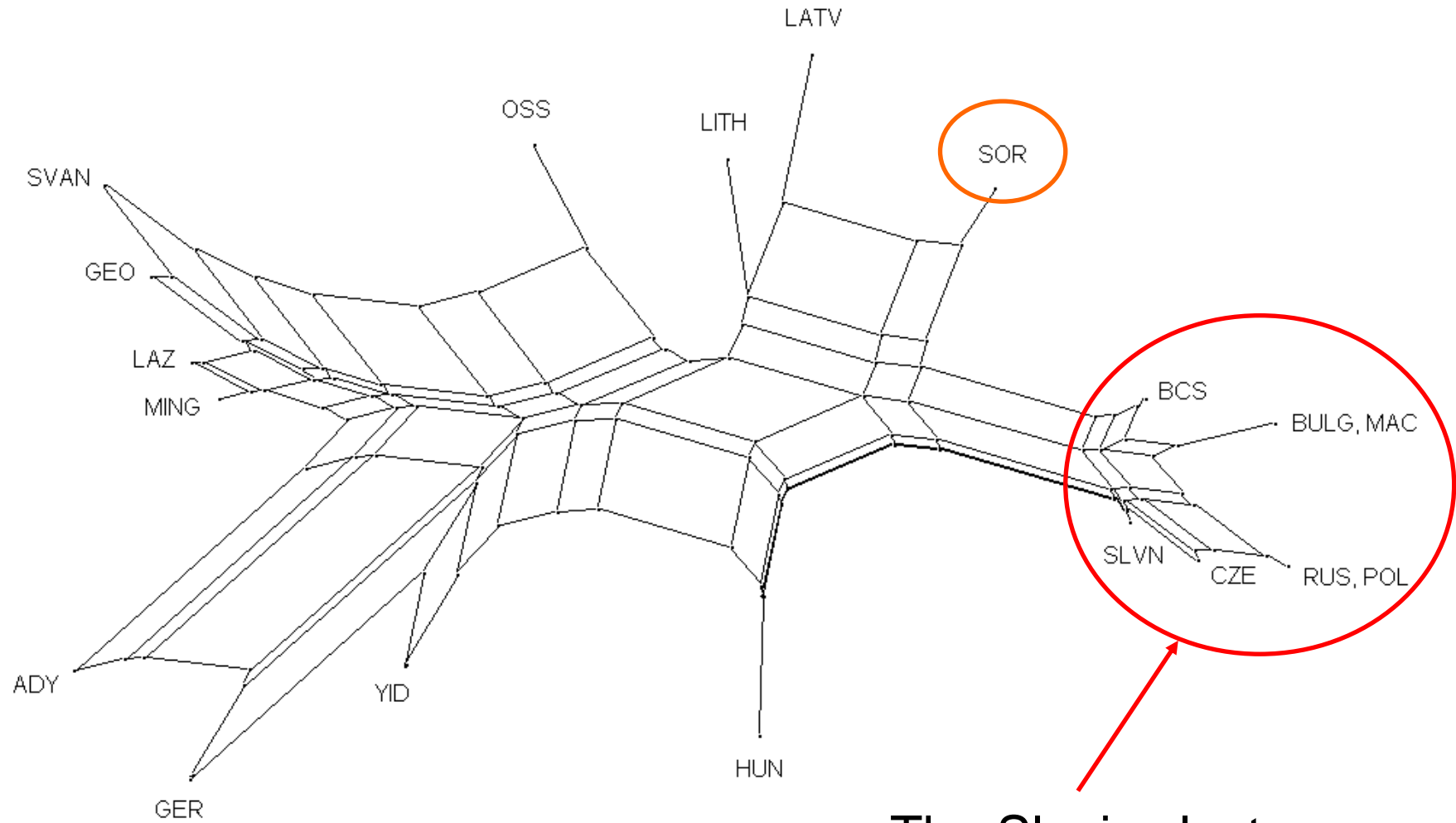
# Results

Notably, the important intra-Slavic distinction between the so-called “Western” and “Eastern” aspectual areas demonstrated by Dickey (2000 and subsequent publications) turns out to be “invisible” from a broader cross-linguistic perspective, being minor in comparison to the full range of diversity attested in the studied languages.

# Clusterization



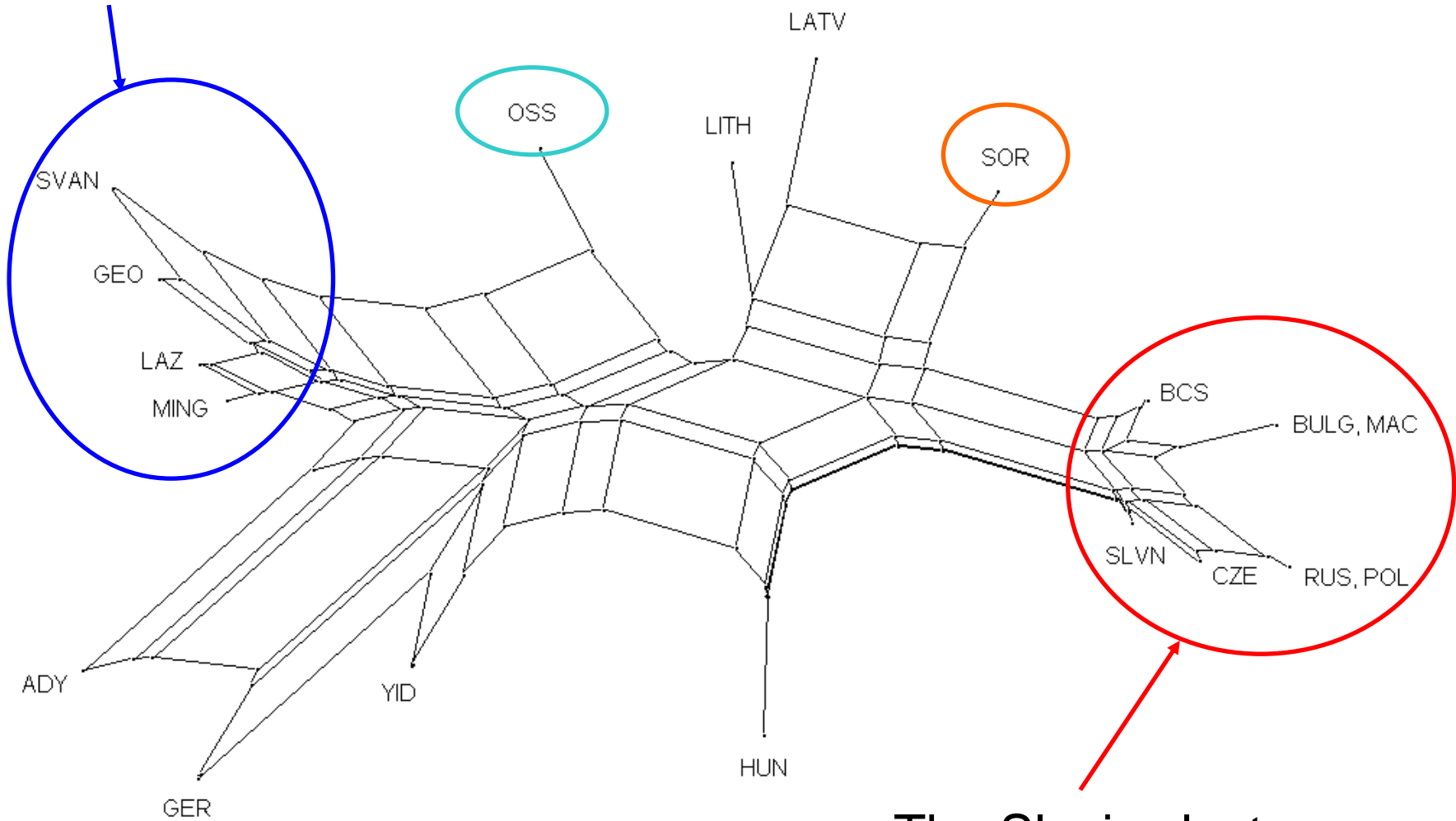
# Clusterization



The Slavic cluster

# Clusterization

The Kartvelian/Caucasian cluster



The Slavic cluster

# Clusterization

Two major clusters of systems of prefixal perfectivization, both defined more by **genetic relationship** rather than **areal proximity**:

- Slavic (with Sorbian vernaculars as an outlier)
- Kartvelian (with geographically close but genetically unrelated Ossetic as a distant outlier)



# Clusterization

Other languages occupy intermediate positions in the continuum whose opposite poles are constituted by the Slavic and Kartvelian clusters, showing significant similarity neither to each other nor to either of the two poles.

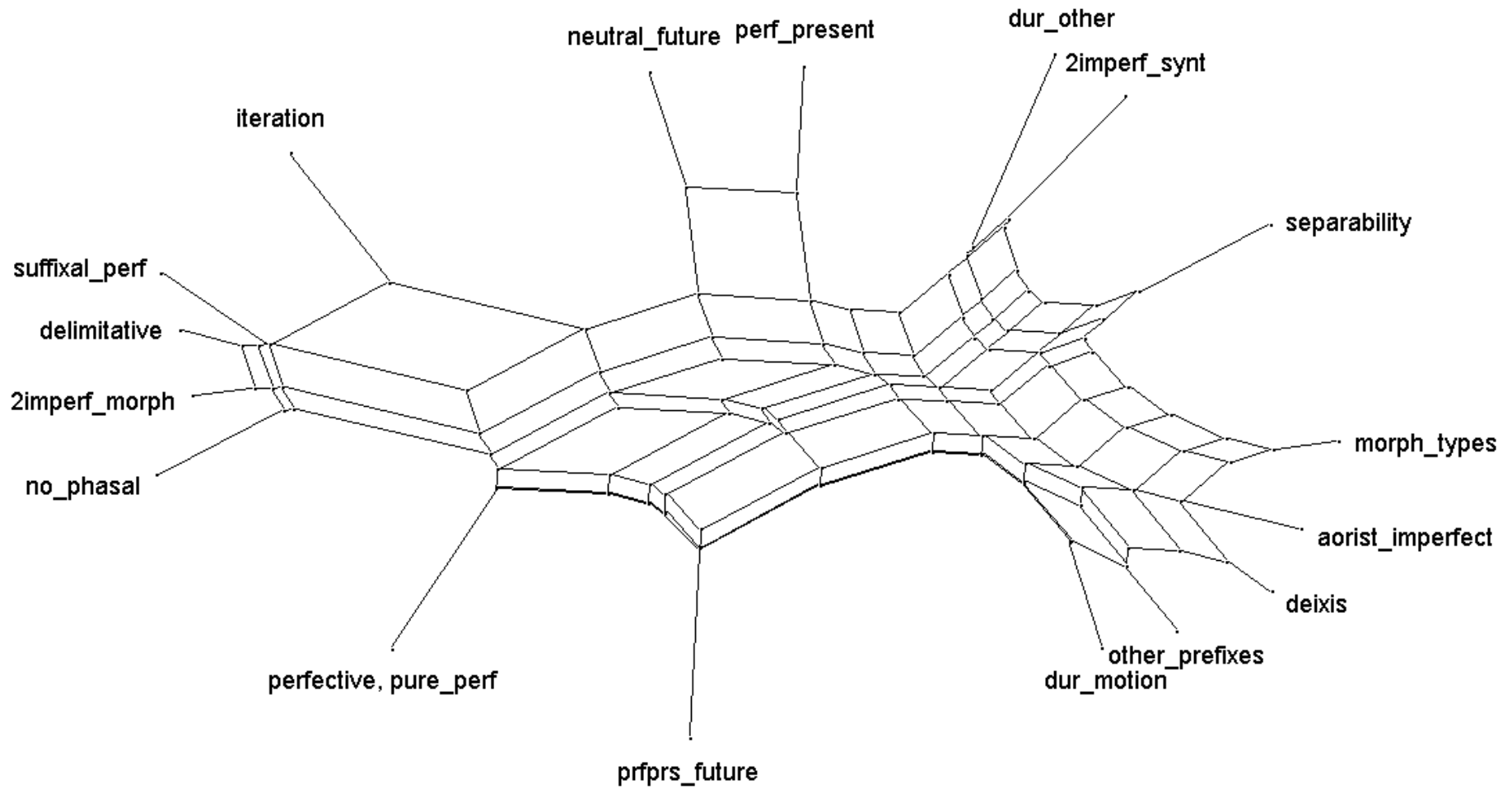
# Clusterization

Not only clustering of **languages**, but clustering of **features** as well, showing that the two clusters of prefix-based aspectual systems are characterized by different constellations of properties.

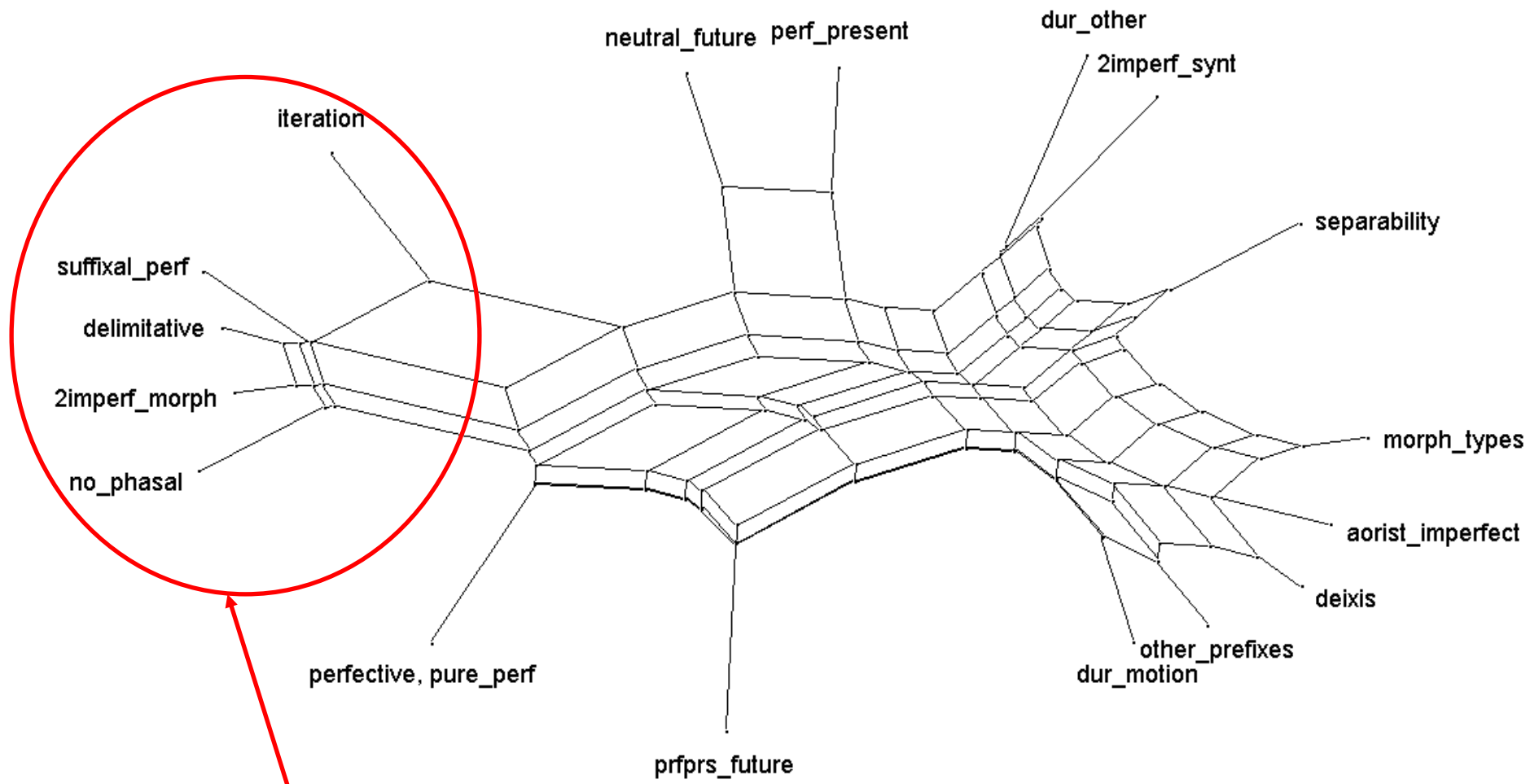
Not **one**, but **two** “prototypes” of prefixal perfectivization:

“Slavic” and “Kartvelian”.

# Clusterization

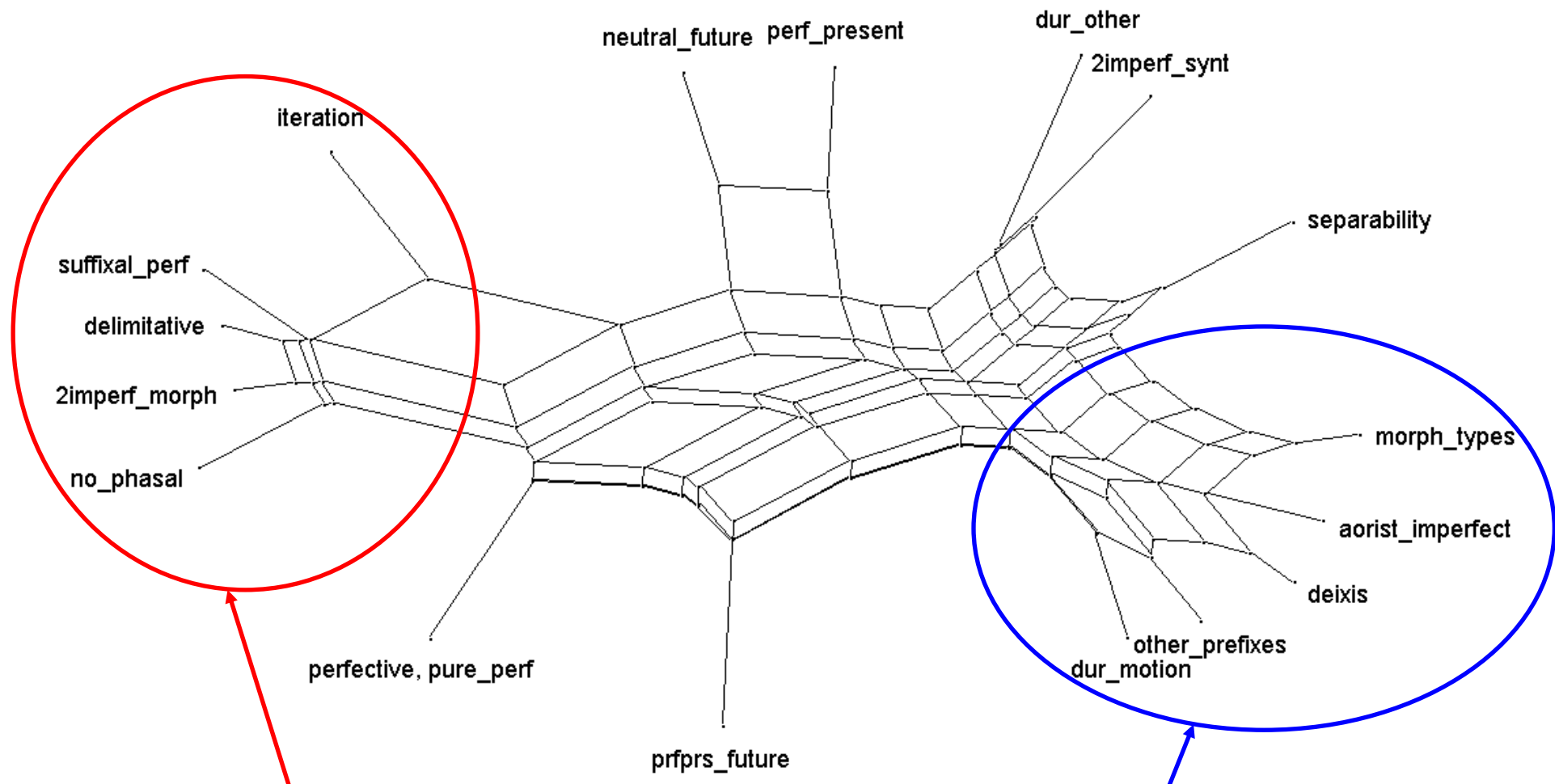


# Clusterization



The Slavic "prototype"

# Clusterization



The Slavic "prototype"

The Caucasian "prototype"

# Clusterization

The “Slavic” prototype of prefixal perfective:

- iteration of preverbs without clear morphological or functional subdivisions;
- lack of other verbal prefixes;
- productive delimitative prefixation;
- productive morphological secondary imperfectivization;
- a suffixal perfectivizer;
- ban on the co-occurrence of perfective verbs with phasal predicates;
- ban on the imperfective use of prefixed verbs of motion.

# Clusterization

The “Kartvelian”/“Caucasian” prototype:

- no preverb iteration;
- morphological and functional subdivisions of preverbs;
- presence of other verbal prefixes;
- systematic expression of deixis by preverbs;
- no productive delimitative Aktionsarten;
- no productive secondary imperfectivization;
- imperfective use of prefixed motion verbs;
- inflectional Aorist and Imperfect.

# Results

The quantitative multi-factorial method does not allow to determine clear areal influences (e.g. Sorbian is shown to be different from other Slavic languages, but is not shown to have similarities to German), which is an indication that contact-induced change affects **individual parameters** rather than **whole systems**.



# Conclusions

- Though areal “on the surface”, the distribution of prefixal perfectives in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus 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

- Slavic aspect is neither a “paradigm case”, nor an “exotic phenomenon” in the typology of aspectual systems. Its place in the general “landscape” of aspectual systems can be assessed by comparing it not only to the “Western European” systems of inflectional aspect (e.g. Breu 1998), but to other “bounder-based” aspectual systems as well.

Thank you for your attention!

Merci pour votre attention!

Grazie per l'attenzione!