Semantic Scope of Slavic Aspect
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Towards an areal typology of prefixal perfectivization

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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!):

- 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 *резать* ~ ***раз****резать*
- Baltic: Lithuanian *skaitė* ‘was reading’ ~ ***per****skaitė* ‘read through’
- Germanic: Yiddish *washn* ‘be washing’ ~ ***oys****washn* ‘wash up’

Uralic:

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

Prefixal perfectivization

In the Caucasus:

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

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

Prefixal perfectivization

To a varying extent, prefixal perfectivization is also attested in Romani dialects (e.g. Schrammel 2005), Istro-Romanian (Клепикова 1959), 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, Dargwa).

Research goals

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, Майсак 2005, Kiefer 2010 and especially Tomelleri 2008, 2009, 2010.

Research goals

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

Research goals

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.

Research goals

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

Research goals

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. 2013).

Languages examined

- Major Slavic languages (including Sorbian)
- Baltic: Lithuanian and Latvian
- Yiddish (and 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.
- Morphological subclassification of preverbs (e.g. separable vs. inseparable preverbs in Germanic).

Functional properties of preverbs

- Types of basic (non-aspectual) function of preverbs.
- Functional subclassification of preverbs, in particular the expression of deictic notions.
- Use of preverbs for deriving productive Aktionsarten.
- “Purely” aspectual uses of preverbs.
- Delimitative uses of preverbs with atelic verbs.

Functional properties of verbal systems

- The type of functional opposition between prefixal and non-prefixal verbs, *inter alia*:
  - restrictions on the use of the present tense of prefixal verbs;
  - “division of labour” between prefixal and non-prefixal verbs with relation to lexical meanings (Konturation vs. Modifikation, Lehmann 1999).

Functional properties of verbal systems

- Means of secondary imperfectivization.
- Non-prefixal means of perfectivization.
- Non-prefixal perfective verbs.
- Prefixal non-perfective verbs.
- 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).

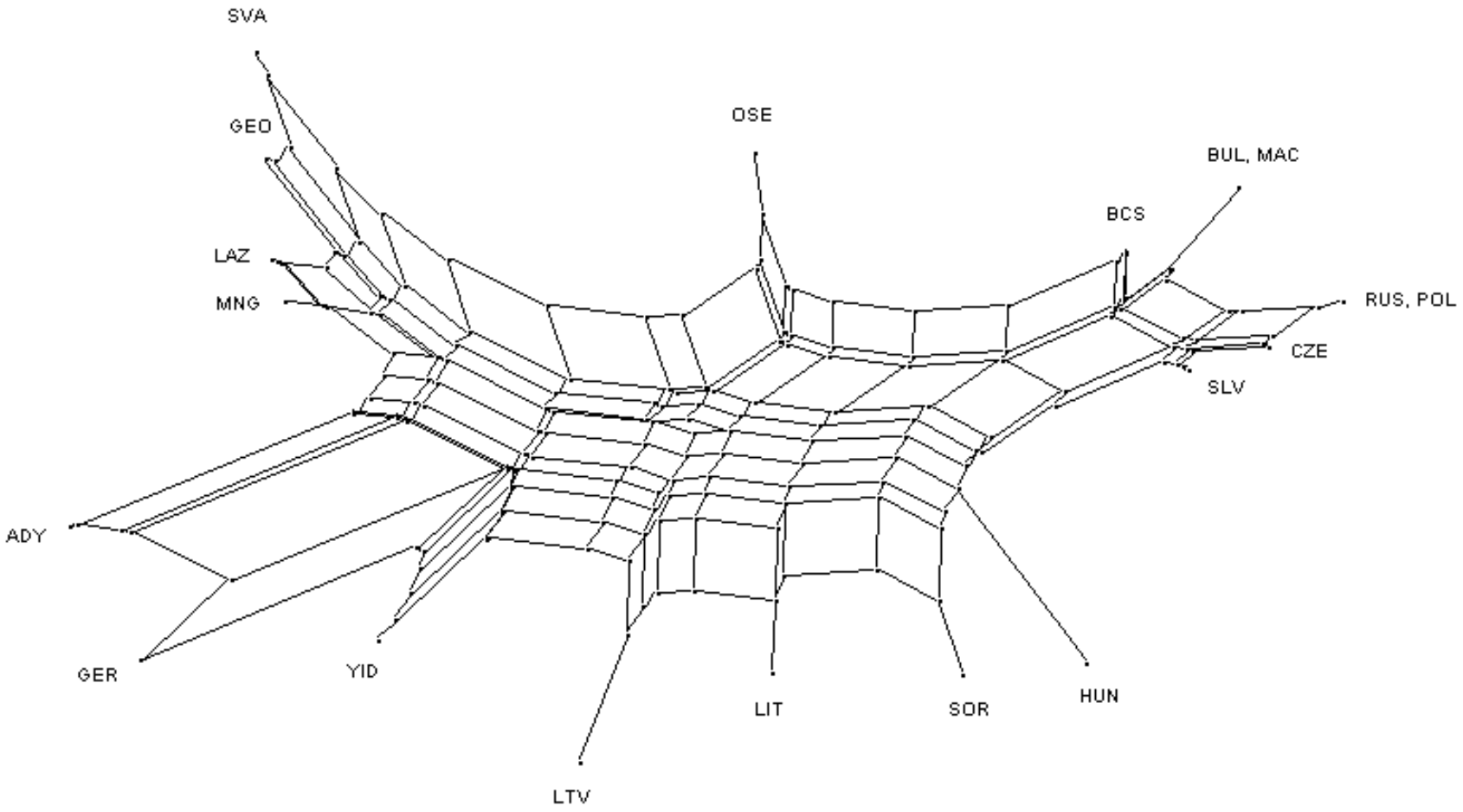
Results

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 betwen 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

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

- Slavic (with Sorbian vernaculars as an outlier)
- Kartvelian

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.

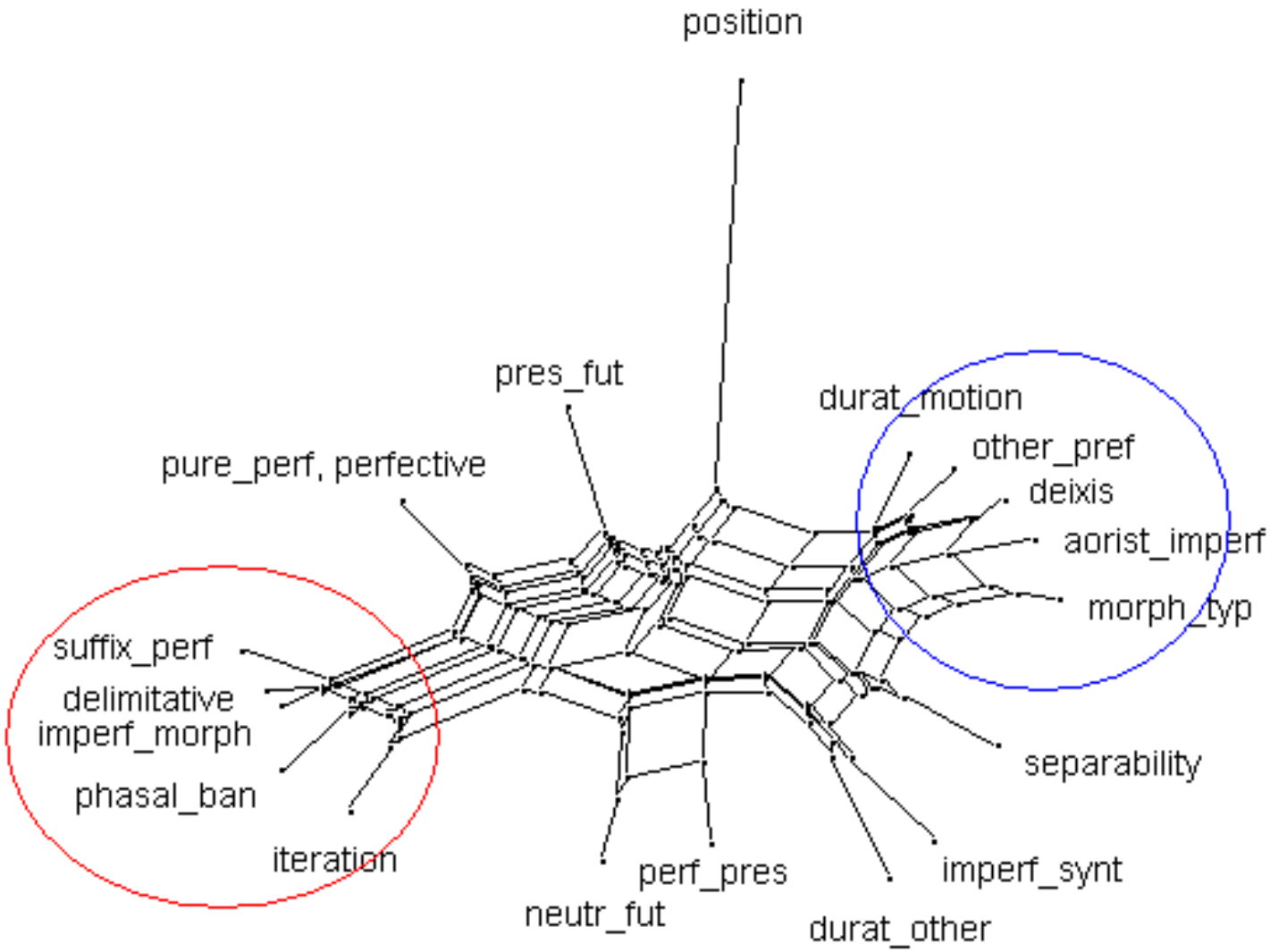
Clusterization

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 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 form 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.

The role of language contact

Language contact phenomena attested in the domain of prefixal perfectivization are rather diverse and include both matter (MAT) and pattern (PAT) borrowing (in terms of Matras & Sakel 2007).

The role of language contact

MAT-borrowing:

- of individual prefixes into a system already possessing preverbs (e.g. Baltic or Finnic dialects in contact with Slavic);
- of whole preverb systems into languages originally without preverbs (e.g. Romani dialects in contact with Slavic, Livonian in contact with Latvian).

The role of language contact

PAT-borrowing:

- restructuring of semantics of prefixes and change in the expression of Aktionsarten (e.g. Yiddish in contact with Slavic or Sorbian in contact with German);
- calquing of the German “adverbial particles” (Slavic and Romani varieties);
- calquing of secondary imperfectivization (Lithuanian in contact with Slavic).

The role of language contact

As usual, in each individual case the extent of contact influence dependes on the sociolinguistic situation and on the structural similarities vs. differences between the verbal systems (e.g. under contact with Slavic secondary imperfectivization did not arise in Yiddish and Latvian, whose verbal systems lack any comparable verbal affix).

The role of language contact

Even in situations of prolonged and very intensive language contact MAT and/or PAT borrowing tends to be limited to formally transparent and semantically loaded features.

“Global copying” of an aspectual system as a whole is not attested and does not seem to be possible.

The role of language contact

There is no reason to assume that the currently observed similarities between the Cental and Eastern 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, indirectly, on Kartvelian).

Typological factor

Verbal sattelites or other elements specifying the spatial extent of the situation tend to develop into aspectual “bounders” cross-linguistically (Breu 1992, Bybee et al. 1994, Maisak 2005).

Notably in various branches of Indo-European, but also elsewhere in the world (e.g. Quechua and some Austronesian languages).

Conclusions and prospects

The distribution of prefixal perfectives in the languages of Central and Eastern Europe and the Caucasus involves a complex interplay of genetic inheritance, contact-induced developments and universal-typological tendencies

Conclusions and prospects

- Though 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

- 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!