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On Slavic semelfactives and secondary imperfectives: implications for the split 'AspP'

1. Introduction: some background on the nature of Aspectual prefixes in Slavic

→ In his recent work Svenonius 2004a,b,c building on Ramchand and Svenonius 2002, makes three important points regarding the nature of Slavic aspectual operators needed for the background of this talk:

(A) there are important connections between German particle verbs and Slavic verbs with perfective prefixes. This is illustrated in [1] and [2]

[1] a. pick the book up b. pushed the ball out c. carry the books in

[2] a. My **pod**-njali knigi
we pref-lifted1stPl books-pl
we picked up the books

b. Dima **vy**-tolknul mjach
Dima out-pushed-3rdSgMsc ball
Dima pushed out the ball

c. Dima **v**-nes knigi
Dima perf-carry books
Dima carried the books in

(B) there are important parallels between prefixes and particles on the one hand and prepositions on the other (Svenonius 2004a, p.213). This is seen from [3] for English and [4] for Russian:

[3] a. give up ~ up the tree
b. drop out ~ out the window
c. carry in ~ in the room

→ The similarities between perfective prefixes and prepositions in Slavic have been previously noted in Matushansky 2002, Fowler 1994:

[4] a. **iz**-bezhat' ~ **iz** doma
out.of-run ~ out.of house
avoid ~ out of the house

b. **pod**-bezhat' ~ **pod** domom
under-run ~ under house-instr
run up to ~ under the house

c. **ot**-bezhat' ~ **ot** doma
away-run ~ from house
run away from ~ from the house

(A) and (B) are summed up as follows by Svenonius: "Germanic and Slavic use prepositional expressions of spatial relations as verbal augments in a strikingly similar way"(Svenonius 2004a, p.214) That is, both of them are instances of a category 'P'.

→ Focusing on the Slavic perfectives, he notes following Filip 2000, Babko-Malaya 1999, 2003 that

(C) There are two types of prefixes in Slavic: VP-internal and VP-external. The VP-internal (lexical) prefixes are akin to small clause predicates, while VP-external (superlexical) prefixes are akin to adverbs

(i) *VP-internal (lexical) prefixes are idiosyncratic, while external prefixes have more stable meanings.*
VP external prefixes include '*za-*' = *inceptive; 'pere'= distributive; 'po-*' = *diminutive; 'na'* = *distributive.* (VP-external and VP-internal prefixes may be homophonous).

[5] **VP-external inceptive 'za-'**
a. za-begat' = incep-run = start running
b. za-katat' = incep-roll = start rolling
c. za-kurit' = incep-smoke = start smoking

[6] **VP-internal 'za-'**
a. za-iti = perf-walk = walk in
b. za-brat' = perf-take = take away
c. za-pisat'= perf-write = write down

(ii) *VP-internal prefixes are unique – one per verb- while VP-external prefixes may co-occur with each other and with the VP-external prefixes*:

[7] a. vy-pisat' = write out;'
b. za-pisat' = write down;
c. ***vy-za**-pisat' / ***za-vy**-pisat' = perf-perf-write

[8] a. **po-na**-pis-iv-at' = dist-cuml-write-imp-inf = to write (something) many times
b. **po-vy**-pis-iv-at' = dist-perf-write-imp-inf = to write out (something) many times
c. **pere-za**-poln-a-t' = distr-perf-fill-imp-inf = to fill out one by one

(iii) Finally, VP-external prefixes can combine only with imperfective stems, unlike VP-internal prefixes that can combine with simplex perfective stems also (see Svenonius 2004a,b,c)

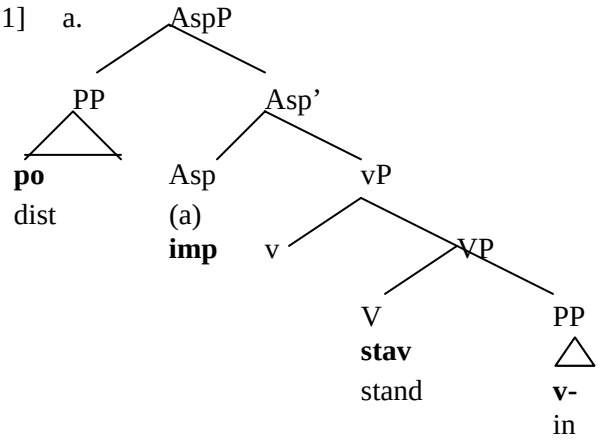
[9] a.za-brosat' / ***za-brosit'*** = incep-throw(imp) /***incep=throw(perf)*** = start throwing
b. vy-brosit' = perf-throw(perf) = throw out

→ The structure of the VP-external prefixes, VP-internal prefixes, and the imperfective suffix is given in [11a] (Svenonius 2004a, p.206, 239). [11b] illustrates just the position of the VP-internal prefix with respect to the VP and the ResultP phrase

[10] a. po-v-stav-a-t'
Dist-Perf(in)-stand-Imp-Inf
to stand up one by one

b. za-bros-it' mjach
intro-throw-inf ball
throw (the ball) into ball

[11] a.



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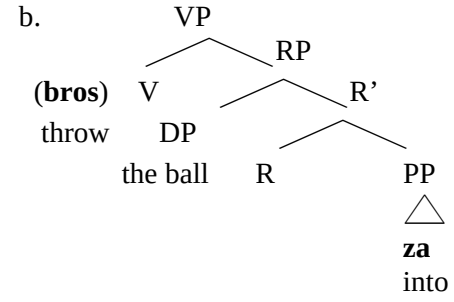


→ The correct ordering of the aspectual elements and the verbal stem is achieved by movement. The nature of this movement shall be addressed shortly.

→ The above analysis explains the behavior of perfective prefixes, but what about aspectual *suffixes* in Russian?

2. The Data

→ There are two aspectual suffixes in Russian: the semelfactive perfective suffix *-nu* shown in [12] and the secondary imperfective suffix[1] *-iv* shown in [13]

[1] The secondary imperfective suffix '-iv' has another allomorph '-a'. I will refer to the suffix as '-iv' because it is the more common allomorph.

→ The semelfactive suffix *nu* [12] (*nou* in Czech, *na* in Polish) has received relatively little attention in the otherwise rich literature on Slavic aspect(Forsyth 1970, Fowler 1994, Borik 2002, Svenonius 2004a,b,c, Filip 2000, 2003, Ramchand 2003, 2004 Romanova 2004, inter alia)

→ This suffix presents a particularly interesting problem as it shows striking differences from other perfective operators and unexpected, previously unobserved similarities to the secondary imperfective suffix *iv* [13].

[12] Dima tolk-**nu**-l / stuk-**nu**-l Mish-u
Dima push-nu-pst /hit-nu-pst Misha-acc
Dima pushed (once)/ hit(once) Misha

[13] Misha pod-pryg-**iv**-al / pri-stuk-**iv**-al
Misha perf-jump-imp-pst/ perf-knock-imp-pst
Misha kept jumping / knocking

→ At first *iv* and *nu* seem different: *nu* is perfective, while *iv* is imperfective, as seen from the following perfectivity tests(Borik2002):

→ *nu*-verbs unlike *iv*-verbs can't get an ongoing present tense reading:

[14]a. Oni pryg-**nu**-t
They jump-nu-3rdPlPrs
they *(will) jump

b. Oni otpryg-**iv**-ajut
They jump-imp-3rdPlPrs
They are jumping

→ they cannot be complements of *begin/ continue*:

[15] a. *Dima nachal pryg-**nu**-t'
Dima began jump-nu-inf
Dima began to jump;

b. Dima nachal podpryg-**iv**-at'
Dima began jump-imp-inf
Dima began to jump;

→ Finally, they cannot form present participles:

[16] a.*pryg-**nu**-jushchij mal'chik
jump-nu-part boy
The jumping boy

b. pod-pryg-**i**v-ajuschij mal'chik
perf-jump-imp-part boy
the jumping boy

→ Despite the differences, *nu*, like *iv*, is highly regular and attaches to any semantically compatible stem, unlike the idiosyncratic VP-internal perfective prefixes [17a,b] (Romanova 2004).

[17]a Dima *__na__-brosil/ (ok) __vy__-brosil musor
Dima perf-throw / out-threw garbage
Dima threw out the garbage/

b. Dima *__pro__-pisal / (ok) __na__-pisal knigu
Dima perf-wrote perf-wrote book
Dima wrote a book

→ Second, like *iv*, *nu* can appear with telicizing VP-internal perfective prefixes[18a,b] that cannot occur with each other [19a,b], as was briefly shown above (Svenonius 2004c, Filip 2003)

[18]a.Dima *vy-tolk-**nu**-l* Mish-u iz pojezda
Dima perf-push-nu-pst /Misha-acc from train
Dima pushed Misha out of the train

b. Dima *vy-talk-**iv**-al* Mish-u iz pojezda
Dima perf-push-imp-pst Misha from train
Dima pushed Misha out of the train

[19]a.Dima *pro-vy-tolk-al Mishu
Dima perf-perf-push-pst /Misha-acc
Dima pushed Misha out

b. Dima *na-pro-rezal xleb
Dima perf-perf-cut bread
Dima cut up / cut through the bread

→ Third, though *iv* appears with other perfectives[20a,b], it is crucially impossible with *nu*[21a,b].

[20]a. Dima vy-pis-**iv**-al chek
Dima-perf-write-imp-pst check
Dima wrote a check

b.Dima na-vy-pis-**iv**-al chekov druz'jam.
Dima cuml-perf-write-imp-pst checks-gen friends-dat
Dima wrote a lot of checks to his friends

[21]a. Dima (pod)-mig**-(*nu)-iv**-al Mish-e
Dima perf-wink-nu-imp-past Misha-dat
Dima kept winking at Misha

b. Dima pod-pryg**-(*iv)-nu**-al
Dima perf-jump-nu-imp-past
Dima kept jumping

→ Semantically, a combination of a *nu* and *iv* is not problematic: [21a,b] could mean to repetitively or continuously wink/ jump. It is also possible phonologically.

→ Finally, *nu* is the only perfective suffix in Russian, which in isolation may seem accidental, but becomes significant taken with the above facts.

3 The Proposal.

3.1 iv/nu is a realization of an atelic v

→ I argue that *nu* /*iv* are two realizations of a single VP-selecting light v (Butt2003, Adger 2003:34; Filip 2003, Levin 2000) that denotes an atelic event

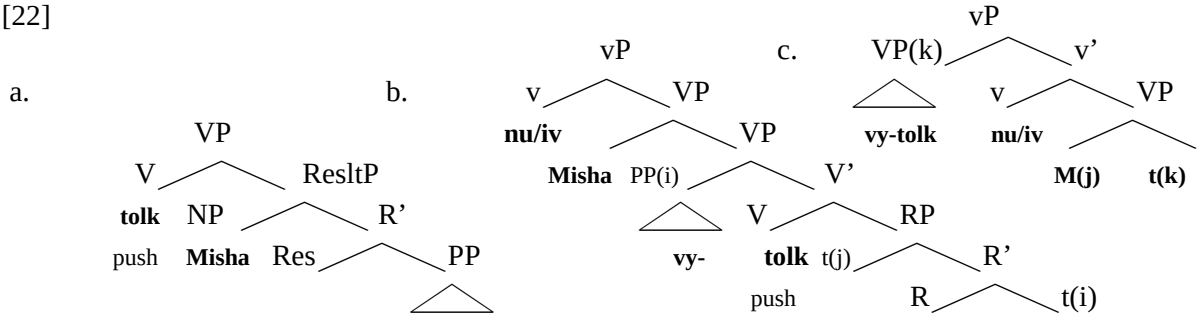
→ Whether the v is realized as *nu* or *iv* depends on whether it has features [+Inst] or [+Prog]/[+Hab] respectively. Since *nu/iv* spell-out a single v head, they cannot occur together.

→ [22a] is the initial structure of [18a, b], with the derivation in [22b,c]

[18]a.Dima *vy-tolk-**nu**-l* Mish-u iz pojezda
Dima perf-push-nu-pst /Misha-acc from train
Dima pushed Misha out of the train

b. Dima *vy-talk-**iv**-al* Mish-u iz pojezda
Dima perf-push-imp-pst Misha from train
Dima pushed Misha out of the train

[22]

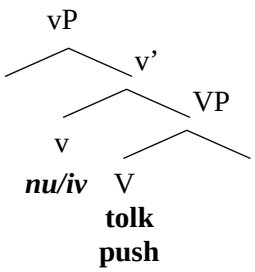


vy(out)

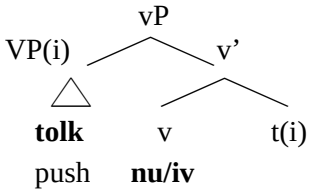
- First, the PP moves to spec VP[22b]: [VP [PP(**vy**) [V(**tolk**)]…]]
- Second, the object is moved from spec ReslutP to a second spec VP [22b]: [VP NP(**Misha**) [VP [PP(**vy**) [V(**tolk**)]…]]]
- Third, the v headed by ***nu/ iv*** is merged [22b]: [vP v(**nu/iv**) [VP NP(**Misha**) [VP [PP(**vy**) [V(**tolk**)]…]]]'
- Fourth, the VP headed by V 'tolk' moves to spec vP[22c] (a la Svenonius 2004a,b), stranding the object: [vP [VP(k) [PP(**vy**) [V(**tolk**)] v(**nu/iv**) [VP NP(**Misha**) [t(k)…]]]

→ The external argument (not shown) is introduced by Voi(tr)(Kratzer 1996) that is separate from the event-denoting light v(Pylkkanen 2002, Collins 2005).
→ Without the low PP, we get [23].

[23]a.



b.



→ That *nu*-verbs, despite being perfective, are atelic, like *iv*-verbs, is supported by their inability to be modified with 'in X time' [24a vs.b],

[24]a.# Dima pryg-nu-l v vodu za sekundu
Dima jump-nu-pst in water in a second
Dima jumped in the water in a second

b. Dima vy-pil stakan vodki za minutu
Dima perf-drikn glass vodka-gen in minute
Dima drank a glass of vodka in a minute

→ Second, they cannot form passive participles unlike telic perfectives[25a vs. b] (Schoorlemmer 1995 for arguments)

[25]a. Dima byl *tolk-nu-t Mishej
Dima was push-nu-part Misha-instr
Dima was pushed by Misha

b. Dima byl **vy**-tolk-nu-t Mish-ej
Dima was **perf**-push-nu-part Misha-inst
Dima was pushed by Misha

→ Finally, they can combine with telecizing prefixes(Filip 2003)[18a,b], which would be unexpected if they were already telic. Telic perfectives resist telecizing prefixes [19a,b]:

[18]a. Dima *vy-tolk-**nu**-l* Mish-u iz pojezda
Dima perf-push-nu-pst /Misha-acc from train
Dima pushed Misha out of the train

b. Dima *vy-talk-**iv**-al* Mish-u iz pojezda
Dima perf-push-imp-pst Misha from train
Dima pushed Misha out of the train

[19]a.Dima *pro-vy-tolk-al Mishu
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Dima perf-perf-cut bread
Dima cut up / cut through the bread

3.2 *nu / iv* and light verbs in other languages

3.2.1 Hindi

→ Importantly, *nu* / *iv* pattern with light verbs in Hindi (Butt 2003, Butt& Ramchand 2002).

→ Light verbs affect the aspectuality of the predicate by adding different semantic 'flavors' to the V -- instantenous (*nu)* vs. iterative/progressive*(iv*) -- but are not independent predicators, (ibid).

→ In particular, in Hindi, light v's add benefactive or inceptive meanings to the verb[26a,b](Butt 2003, Ramchand 2003 Butt& Ramchand 2002).

[26]a. Nadya-ne xat likh **di**-ya
Nadya-erg letter write give-perfMSg
Nadya wrote the letter (for someone)

b. Nadya has **par**-i [Hindi, (Butt 2003:11)]
Nadya laugh fall-perf-F-Sg
Nadya burst out laughing

→ Stacking two light v's of the same kind is not possible in Hindi(Butt& Ramchand 2002), much like what we see with *nu/iv*.

Interestingly, Butt 2003 notes following Deo 2002 that light verbs can be historically traced back to preverbs in Sanskrit that have directional meaning, e.g. 'apa' = 'away'; 'adhi' = 'above'; 'nis' = 'out', etc. The preverbs are lost in modern Hindi/Urdu languages, a fact attributed to the development of the productive V-V complexes(Deo 2002, Butt 2003)
Two important points are: (a) preverbs are related phonologically and grammatically to perfective prefixes: para = pere = through; pra =pro = forward/onward/ forth (Butt 2003) and (b) preverbs are historic predecessors light verbs (Butt 2003).
Taken together, the facts offer further support for the claim that light verbs and perfective prefixes are two dimensions of the same 'aspectual coin': both derive from the common ancestor that used to mark aspect in older I-European languages. Hence, it is not surprising that light verbs and prefixes both mark aspect in Slavic

3.2.2 Yiddish

→ Further interesting parallels between *nu/iv* and light verb constructions come from Yiddish (Diesing 1998). The Yiddish light verbs 'ton' = 'do' and 'gebn' = 'give' alter the aspectuality of the predicate they attach to by giving it a 'semelfactive' interpretation.

[27]a. Ikh vel a for ton
I will a travel do
I will travel a little

b. Ikh vel a kush gebn
I will a kiss give
I will give a kiss

→ Diesing 1998 shows that the light verb is semantically bleached in that it does not have the argument structure associated with the homophonous lexical verb (i.e. *give* requires two NP complements, but occurs with only one in the light verb construction.) However, it is not semantically empty as it changes the flavor of the construction by minimizing (semelfacticizing) the event denoted by the lexical verb

→ Diesing 1998 further shows that unlike Japanese light verb constructions, the Yidddish 'ton/gebn' light verb constructions take a verbal not a nominal complement. Despite being preceded by the definite 'article' 'a', 'for' and 'kush' are verbs, not nouns. They cannot be pluralized. Furthermore, there are stems that occur with the light verb construction, but cannot occur as nouns:

[28] *der efn
the open

*der gey
the go

→ there are several interesting parallels between the 'ton/ gebn' light verb construction and the Slavic *nu/iv* suffixes:

→ **First**, the light v in both cases is productively added to the verbal stem and produces a predictable meaning change – i.e. minimizing the event (*nu-)* or inducing a habitual/repeatative meaning (*iv)*

→ **Second**, the light v lacks its own argument structure

→ **Third**, the combination of *a+stem+LightV* forms a unit in Yiddish. Even though it does not form a single word, it cannot be broken apart by topicalization or adverbials (Diesing 1998:128)

3.3.3 Russian?

→ Interestingly, Russian has a "particle" 'nu' that appears to have properties of a light verb akin to the Yiddish 'gebn' [29].

[29] My prishli i Kuki ***(nu)** begat' tuda sjuda
We came-3rdPlpst and Cookie start run-inf here there
We came in and Cookie started to run back and forth

→ In fact, it is used in the same context as the light 'davai'= 'give' [30]. This light verb (davai), used in the imperative form, means roughly 'to suddenly start'.

[30] My prishli i Kuki ***(davai)** begat' tuda sjuda
We came-3rdPlpst and Cookie give-imper(emph) run-inf here there
We came in and Cookie started to run back and forth

→ Both 'nu' and 'davai' are obligatory to make constructions in [29] and [30] grammatical and are very close in meaning. Though both 'davai' and 'nu' are colloquial, they are very common.

4. Some Implications.

→ Given what was said above, it seems that there is no category Aspect at all. Perfective prefixes are high and low P's while the suffixes *nu* and *iv* are instantiations of a light v.

→ But wait! If the Ps and v's encode viewpoint (outer) aspect, what encodes the verb's situation aspect or aktionsart? Maybe we need AspP after all to encode the verb's inner aspect?

→ Building on the parallels between verbal and nominal domains (Bach 1986,Ramchand2004), simplex imperfectives and underived perfectives can be treated as bare Vs that encode events' aktionsart and are structurally analogous to bare NPs(Chierchia 1995) [31a,b].

[31]a. Dima prygal / begal/ videl Mish-u
Dima jumped ^{Imp}/ ran^{Imp}/ saw^{Imp} Misha-acc
Dima jumped / ran/ saw Misha

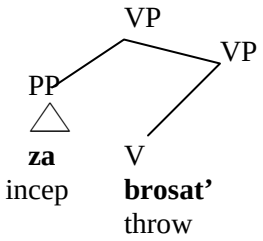
b. Dima leg / sel
Dima lied ^{perf} / sat ^{perf}
Dima lied down / sat down

→ Hence, simplex imperfectives are morphologically 'underived' and compatible with *nu* [32], VP-internal and VP-external perfectives[33,34](Filip 2003), and sometimes with *iv* [35].

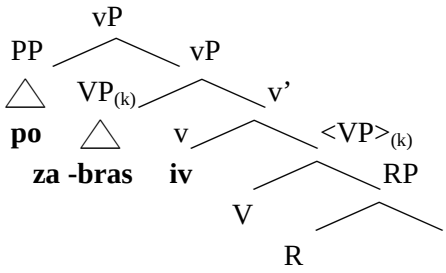
[32] *mig-at'~ mig-nu-t'* = wink~ wink once
[33] *sidet' ~ ot-sidet'* = sit ~ perf-sit
[34] *begat' ~ za-begat*' =run~start to run
[35] *xodit*' *~xazhivat'* walk ~ walk periodically.

→ Finally, the VP-external perfectives(Filip 2000, Svenonius 2004a,b,c) also do not require Asp. Departing from the structure in [5], they can be treated as adjoined to VP[30] or light vP[31].

[36]



[37] *po-za-bras-iv-at'* = distr-perf-thow-imp-inf = to throw around.



→ The adjunction view of VP-external prefixes is supported by their separability from the stem[38], unlike what we see with low Ps[39]:

[38] pere ili nedo-delat' (rabotu)
re- or under-do-inf work
over or under do the work

[39] *vy-ili za-pisat'
out or down write-inf = write out or down
out or down write

→ This view also accords with Svenonius' treatment of the super-lexical perfectives as adverbial in their nature

5. Conclusion.

→ To sum up, I have argued that *nu /iv,* despite initial differences, occupy the same head, v, and have the status of light verbs. Embedded into the framework that treats prefixes as members of the category P, the analysis of *nu/iv* suggests that aspect in Slavic is generally reducible to Ps and v's.

→ Importantly, we are not just renaming Asp as P or v. While treating prefixes as Ps allows us to unify them with Germanic particles (Svenonious 2004a,b,c, Ramchand and Svenonius 2003), treating aspectual suffixes as v's allows us to unify them with light verbs

→ The overall conclusion that emerges from the proposal is that though the perfective/ imperfective aspectual distinction is a real one, it is semantic in nature, and is not due to the [+/- perfective] feature of an Aspect head. The syntactic correlate of (im)perfectivity is 'distributed' among different heads

→ In Slavic, and arguably, universally, Asp, like C is a collocation of syntactic heads (Rizzi 1997), but is not itself a head.

The End