# Im Rhythmus der Linguistik

Festschrift für Sebastian Kempgen zum 65. Geburtstag

hg. von Anna-Maria Meyer und Ljiljana Reinkowski
unter Mitarbeit von Alisa Müller

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# On the history of Russian (Slavic) aspect. A view from outside

## 1. Introduction[1]

1.1. The starting point of the analysis can be summarized as follows: most often, a reconstructed diachronic chain deserves careful consideration; it can namely be more or less convincing, appealing or embarassing, but it is usually extremely difficult to make a strong statement about its rightness or wrongness. In the case of the Slavic aspect, e. g., according to some scholars its grammaticalization is due to the development of secondary imperfective forms: in an aspectual pair like Russian *perepisat'* (PFV) – *perepisyvat'* (IPFV) 'rewrite', the second form is imperfective because of the suffix {-iva-}. In other words, the prefixed verb *perepisat'* is considered to be perfective only because *perepisyvat'*, derived from it through secondary suffixation, is imperfective; the deciding element is not the prefix, common to both forms, but the suffix. This synchronic interpretation, proposed among others by Maslov (1961, 168f.), depicts a plausible scenario for the genesis of a grammatically expressed aspectual opposition, in which the most important role, historically speaking, is attributed to the imperfectivization process: "Not an alleged 'perfectivization' by prefix, but imperfectivization by suffix is the touchstone! [...]. Without an imperfectivization to cancel it, there can be no perfectivity either" (Galton 1976, 297).

A quite different and not less worth noting view, on the other hand, maintains that prefixation already triggered perfectivization. In this approach, the secondary imperfectivization is regarded as a later process, giving the system a new balance, because the prefix very often changed

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not only the grammatical, but also the lexical meaning of the verb (Breu 1992); secondary imperfectivization restored the previous system "to the extent of having an overall system of lexically equivalent aspectual pairs" (Comrie 1976, 93).

The major problem in trying to explain the development of the Slavic aspect system is represented first of all by the fact that the grammaticalization process – from verbal prefixes having spatial meaning to 'pure' grammatical markers through the stage of telicizing bounders – cannot be captured by looking only at the form of the stem (Wiemer/Bisang 2004, 8); indeed, the grammaticalization of the Slavic aspect is a very peculiar process, not accompanied by any change in external form (Lehmann 2004, 169). This fact greatly complicates the diachronic study, although we can rely, in the case of Slavic, on quite a rich written documentation; generally speaking, "it may be difficult to distinguish a preaspectual stage from an early aspectual stage" (Johanson 2000, 41).

A useful tool is offered by the individuation of prototypical, diagnostic contexts, where a (proto)perfective or (proto)imperfective form can be supposed to occur (Kukuškina/Ševeleva 1991, 40f.). This method, however, entails the risk of projecting today's situation into earlier stages of the language under examination; besides that, it is subjected to semantic, syntactic and lexical restrictions: the lack of a form could be as well the consequence of hazard, in the sense that some contexts might accidentally fail to occur in the thematically restricted corpus of written texts we have at our disposal. The work by Bermel 1997, discussed by Wiemer 1999 and reviewed by Galton 1999 and 2001[2], shows that a thorough analysis of the actional-aspectual correlations from a historical perspective can shed some light on the grammaticalization path:[3] a serious diachronic analysis, combined with the study of the synchronic behaviour of aspectual systems, is a necessary but not always sufficient condition for solving questions of origin and development of this very complex category. In defense

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[2]   Curiously, the same review has been published in two different journals, *Russian Linguistics* and *Slavia*.

[3]   This notwithstanding the criticism by Dickey (2000, 286), underlining the fact that Bermel "discusses the grammaticalization process of a single conceptual opposition (involving telicity/totality), and does not consider the possibility of a more fundamental change in the semantic opposition underlying Ru(ssian) aspect".

of, or against a particular hypothesis a cross-linguistic approach, looking at other derivation devices of expressing aspectual values, can prove rewarding; this will be also the perspective adopted in this article.

In the scientific literature there is a huge amount of works devoted to the genesis and development of Slavic (Russian) aspect. They won't be discussed critically here, as far as this has already been done by Bermel (1997, 59–109);[4] my aim is much more modest, namely to put some non-Slavic material and, maybe, fresh ideas into the discussion, drawing the attention on some interesting facts from other languages, which add relevant details to the interpretation of the Slavic aspect.

1.2. Russian scholars consider the Slavic aspect (*vid*) as the concrete, somehow idiosyncratic manifestation of the more general and perhaps universal category of aspect.[5] In this respect, Maslov (1985, 1) argues that "the Slavonic perfective and imperfective aspects are thus only one 'special case' of verbal aspect, which occurs in one form or another in the other languages of the world"; as a consequence, it cannot be taken as the prototypical realization of the category, as was the case for a very long time in the linguistic tradition (van Hout et al. 2005, 1). In order to keep them distinct, in Russian the terms *aspekt* 'aspect' and *vid* 'Slavic aspect' are used (Plungjan 2003, 292f.); unfortunately, this terminological distinction cannot be easily extended to other non-Slavic languages, lacking an equivalent for *vid*, which in the Western linguistic tradition is usually translated as 'aspect' (Dickey 2000, x; Jászay 2004, 306).

Anyway, we propose to distinguish the Slavic aspect from the Slavic-style aspect: by the last term a system is meant in which the opposition between perfective and imperfective is expressed by means of a closed set of unpredictable affixes of adverbial or prepositional origin, carrying a grammatical and lexical function, without temporal or modal restrictions. This is only a tentative definition of a broader set of morphological-semantic phenomena, within which the Slavic aspect probably represents the most complex and complete instance. Thus, the Slavic aspect has to

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[4]   For more recent discussion of this topic see Andersen 2009, Böttger 1998, 1999, 2003 and 2004, Bubeník 2000, Dickey 2008, Kakridis 2009, Lehmann 1999 and 2004, Mende 1999.

[5]   Mel'čuk (1998, 100–116) provides an interesting classification of different types of aspect oppositions.

be seen as a 'special case' of this aspect category, which is lexical-semantically conditioned and morphologically rather derivational than inflectional (Dahl 1985, 89).

1.3. Comrie was the first who made an attempt to cross the Rubicon of traditional ideas and to provide a typological comparison of several unrelated languages, showing a morphological expression of aspectual or aspectual-like oppositions (Comrie 1976, 93f.). He also proposed a scale, according to the extent of grammaticalization (from less to more developed opposition): English and German > Hungarian > Baltic > Georgian > Slavonic.[6]

Galton (1976, 295) and Maslov (1985, 40f.), however, argued against a confusion between aspect and telicity (*predel'nost'*): formal identity or similarity does not automatically imply that the functional behaviour should be the same; a similar position is held by Johanson (2000, 69), strongly recommending not to confuse aspect as a view-point operator with the actional content. Are we allowed to speak of a single and unitary aspectual type only on the basis of similar formal patterns of derivation (prefixation and suffixation)? Or should we avoid to confound the Slavic aspect with other language systems? Does the functioning of preverbs in non-Slavic languages carry only actional values, to be strictly distinguished from aspect? He further mantains that it would be erroneuous to consider the Slavic-style aspect as a unitary category (Johanson 2000, 139f.).

Although the "Slavic-style aspect" covers actually a wide range of different phenomena, in this paper I refer to Slavic aspect in more general terms, regarding the origin and initial development of the perfective-imperfective opposition. We shall be involved with two major issues: future time reference and perfectivity (§ 1) and motion verbs (§ 2). In the conclusion (§ 3), the diachronic relationship between tense and aspect will be shortly discussed.

## 2. Future time reference and perfectivity

2.1. There is a north-south line dividing the Slavic languages into two areas: in the North (i. e. West and East) Slavic languages, the perfective non-

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[6]     For a first attempt to further develop his ideas see Tomelleri 2010.

past form denotes per default future time reference (Dickey 2000, 11), although it is, morphologically speaking, a present. This form derives clearly from the grammaticalization of the perfectivity-imperfectivity opposition (Bondarko 1971, 51); as the prefixed form began to indicate a situation attaining its internal limit, it could not be used to express an on-going process:

(1) Russian (from incapability of presentness to future time reference)
   (a) preaspectual stage
   *piš-u* (+/-tel) 'write.PRS-1SG' − *na-piš-u* ' PRV-write.PRS-1SG' (+tel)
   'I write/am writing' − 'I write (to the end)'

   (b) aspectual stage
   *piš-u* (IPFV) 'write.PRS-1SG' − *na-piš-u* 'PFV-write.FUT-1SG'
   'I write/am writing' − 'I'll write (to the end)'

The aspectual opposition for situations located in the future was later restored by the periphrastic form (in Russian with the auxiliary verb *budu*), functioning as the imperfective correlate of *napišu*. In the synchronic description of Russian there is no agreement about the representation of the verbal paradigm. If we do not want to admit that perfective verbs lack a future tense (Dickey 2000, 11), two are the possible solutions, both having advantages and shortcomings. The first postulates the existence of two different but homonymous prefixed forms (2a), the second, instead, does not distinguish the present from the future within the perfective aspect (2b):

(2) Paradigm of the verb *čitat'/pročitat'* 'to read' (Russian)
   (a) Two homonymous forms

|  | Imperfective | Perfective |
|---|---|---|
| Past tense | čital | pro-čital |
| Present tense | čitaju | pro-čitaju |
| Future tense | budu čitat' | pro-čitaju |

(b) A single polysemous form

|               | Imperfective | Perfective  |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|
| Past tense    | čital        | pro-čital   |
| Present tense | čitaju       |             |
| Future tense  | budu čitať   | pro-čitaju  |

As already mentioned, Bondarko (1971, 51) argues that the future time reference of the perfective present is the result of a later development, caused by the grammaticalization of the aspectual opposition. Some uses of the perfective present in habitual (non actual) or iterative contexts can be explained as remnants of a previous situation in which the prefixed present form did not carry any future meaning. In the so-called potential or exemplary meaning (*nagljadno-primernoe značenie*), e. g., a single instance is presented as a typical instance of a situation which is non stated but simply presented as possible:

(3) Potential meaning of PFV in Russian (Dickey 2000, 86)

| On | pro-jd-et | po | kanat-u |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3SG.S | PFV.through-go-PRS.3SG | PREP.along | tightrope-DAT |

| s | zavjazann-ymi | glaz-ami |
|---|---|---|
| PREP.with | bounded-INSTR.PL | eye-INSTR.PL |

'He walks/can walk a tightrope blindfolded'

The shift from present to future can be betrayed as a later crystallization consequence of the perfectivization of prefixed verb forms (Forsyth 1972, 498), "a makeshift device in languages not possessing a morphologically well characterized future, like O.C.S." (Galton 1976, 298); this development made the formation of an imperfective correlate necessary. To sum up, the evolutionary chain in the North Slavic languages results as follows:

1) telic to perfective > 2) perfective with no actual meaning in the present >
3) present perfective to future > 4) formation of a new imperfective future.

The situation in the South Slavic languages is quite different. Perfective verbs do possess both a present and a future form; the perfective present does not refer to a situation located in the future, but is used only as a non-actual form and in subordinate clauses. In Croatian, e. g., the future

tense of both aspects is built analytically by means of an inflecting clitic form of the verb *htjeti* "to want":

(4) Paradigm of the verb *čitati/pročitati* 'to read' (Croatian)

|  | Imperfective | Perfective |
|---|---|---|
| Past tense | čitao sam | pro-čitao sam |
| Present tense | čitam | pro-čitam |
| Future tense | čitat ću | pro-čitat ću |

The different behaviour of the aspectual forms, depending on the tense distribution, could be connected with the relative chronology of the grammaticalization process: in the South Slavic languages the gradual development of a future, based on a Balkan (Greek) pattern, seems to be quite an early phenomenon, already attested in Old Church Slavonic texts (Birnbaum 1958). In this case, the existence of a (not yet) fully grammaticalized future tense form could have prevented the shift from present to future of the present perfective, which does not refer to the future, like in the North Slavic languages, but can not denote an on-going situation. A similar explanation has already been given for Lithuanian (Senn 1941, 260), which possesses a very old sigmatic future of Indoeuropean origin, directly comparable to the Greek or Sanscrit formations. Interestingly enough, Lithuanian presents an aspectual or aspectual-like distinction, showing some formal and semantic similarities with the Russian system, but also significant differences (Arkad'ev 2008). Anyway, the perfective-imperfective opposition, or the telic-atelic distinction between prefixed and unprefixed verbs, does not affect the present; it is usually relevant, with the exception of biaspectual verbs (Ambrazas 1997, 235), only with past or future time reference.[7]

2.2. In Georgian, a South Caucasian (or Kartvelian) language, we find an aspectual system which resembles the Slavic one. The opposition between prefixed and unprefixed form corresponds formally and semantically to the perfective-imperfective opposition of Russian:[8]

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[7] For a criticism on this point see, however, Wiemer (2001, 43).
[8] Some features of the Georgian aspect are discussed in Tomelleri/Topadze 2015.

(5) Georgian (Gecadze 1984, 265)

    (a)    Mxat'var-ma    surat-i    xat'-a        IPFV
            painter-ERG    picture-NOM    paint(IPFV)-AOR.3SG>3
            'The painter was involved in the painting of the picture'

    (b)    Mxat'var-ma    surat-i    da-xat'-a        PFV
            painter-ERG    picture-NOM    PFV-paint.-AOR.3SG>3
            'The painter painted the picture'

(6) Russian (same meaning)

    (a)    Chudožnik-Ø    risova-l-Ø    kartin-u    IPFV
            painter(M)-NOM    paint.IPFV-PST-M.SG    picture(F)-ACC.SG

    (b)    Chudožnik-Ø    na-risova-l-Ø    kartin-u    PFV
            painter(M)-NOM    PFV-paint-PST-M.SG    picture(F)-ACC.SG

Georgian has preserved in the past tense the old inflectional opposition between aorist and imperfect, in the grammatical tradition labeled *c'q'vet'ili* 'interrupted' and *uc'q'vet'eli* 'uninterrupted', respectively; this fact offers curious analogies with the South-East Slavic languages Bulgarian and Macedonian (Arkad'ev 2015, 166); in addition, the aorist imperfective, particularly if followed by the negation of the corresponding perfective form, conveys a conative meaning (Christophe 2004, 165f.), whereas the perfect (resultative) has developed an evidential meaning (on this see also Boeder 2000).

    Usually, preverbs in Georgian change not only the aspectual meaning of a verbal lexeme, but also the temporal reference (from present to future), like in North Slavic; in addition, they can add a new lexical meaning to the simple form. From the absence of a secondary imperfectivization it follows that an unprefixed form may be the imperfective correlate of several prefixed verbs, each having a perfective sense together with other different lexical meanings. Taking the present of the verb *k'eteba* 'to do' in the third person singular present, we get the following picture:

(7) Georgian

| | present | future |
|---|---|---|
| | ak'etebs 'X does, is doing Y'(IPFV) | ga-ak'etebs 'X will do Y' (PFV) |
| | ak'etebs 'X repairs, is repairing Y'(IPFV) | še-ak'etebs 'X will repair Y' (PFV) |
| | ak'etebs 'X cures, is curing Y' | mo-ak'etebs 'X will cure Y' (PFV) |

Unlike *še-* and *mo-*, the preverb *ga-* transforms aspect and temporal reference of the verb, without changing its lexical meaning; usually, non-prefixed verbs are imperfective, whereas the perfective aspect is mostly expressed by prefixed forms, with some notable exceptions (suppletion or otherwise semantically conditioned phenomena). Some seeming counter-examples must be considered bookish borrowings from Old Georgian, in which preverbs did not possess any aspectual function, as they only changed the lexical meaning of the verb (Tomelleri 2007, 299); the XIth–XIIth centuries set the boundary between the older stage and the new one (Šanije 1942). Future time reference was expressed by the so-called Subjunctive II, a form derived from the perfective (aorist) stem (Schmidt 1984). We have, shortly, a situation which reminds us of the North Slavic languages: no clear-cut morphological future and on-going development of the aspect opposition by means of prefixes. The results are 1) a shift from present to future and, in the case of North Slavic, but not of Georgian, 2) the formation of a secondary imperfective future form from already existing iterative forms. Therefore, North Slavic seems to be aspectually more developed than Georgian, and this is in accord with the grammaticalization scale proposed by Comrie (1976, 93f.).

2.3. In Ossetic, a Northeastern Iranian language today spoken in the Central Caucasus, preverbs change the aspectual meaning of a verb. Prefixed forms are described as perfective, unprefixed are considered imperfective:

(8) Aspectual opposition in Ossetic

    (a)  Iu    ældar-Ø    mard-i               IPFV
            one   prince-NOM   die.IPFV.PST-3SG.INTR
            'A prince was dying'

(b)   Ældar          a-mard-i                    PFV
      prince-NOM     PFV-die.PST-3SG.INTR
      'The prince died'

According to some scholars (e. g. Kozyreva 1951, 13, Gagkaev 1953, 90, Axvlediani 1963, 236), the aspectual opposition is morphologically and semantically relevant only with past and future time reference. As in the case of some verbs in Lithuanian, "[...] the simple Present always has the meaning of the imperfective aspect whereas the simple Past and Future have the meaning of the perfective aspect" (Sližienė 1995, 218); a perfective present gets per default a habitual meaning:

(10) Habitual meaning in Ossetic (Techov 1970, 28)
     Kæu-yn    kæmæ    fæ-cæu-y,        xud-yn-mæ      fæ-bæll-y
     cry-INF    REL.ALL   PFV-go.PRS-3SG    laugh-INF-ALL    PFV-try.PRS-3SG
     'Who wants to cry, tries to laugh'

Therefore, there is no temporal shift from present to future. Prefixed present forms refer to an action habitually carried to the end, like the secondary imperfective forms of Bulgarian, which cannot be used to describe a process. On the macrolevel, we obtain a repeated set of single acts, each of them viewed perfectively as completed:

(11a) Ossetic *nɣ-ffyss-ɣ* 'PFV-write.PRS-3SG'
(11b) Bulgarian *na-pis-v-a* (tel)-write.PRS-IPFV-3SG
     'He (usually) writes (to the end)'

With temporal reference to past or future situations, the expression of an on-going process or of an action carried out habitually is obtained by means of two devices: the imperfectivizing suffix *-cæj-* (12a),[9] which is inserted between the preverb and the verbal root, interrupting also iconically the perfectivity of the verb (Axvlediani 1963, 236f.), and the clitic element *-iu* (12b), occupying in the sentence the second position according to the Wackernagel law (Axvlediani 1963, 247):

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[9]   It can also be used to express a conative meaning (Levitskaja 2004, 30).

(12a) Processuality in the past (Obraz 2007, 8)

| Iu-xatt | kæddær | mæ | mæd-imæ | ærba-cæj-cyd-ystæm |
|---------|--------|-----|---------|---------------------|
| one-time | ADV.once | CL.1SG. GEN | mother-COM | PRV.hither-PROC-go.PST-1PL.INTR |

| Krasnogor-y | kuyro-jæ |
|-------------|----------|
| place-GEN | mill-ABL |

'Once I was coming with my mother from the mill of Krasnogor'

(12b) Habituality in the past (Ustnye rasskazy 2005, 16)

| Sabat-y | iu | kusærttæg-t-æ | a-tardt-oj | Rekom-mæ |
|---------|-----|---------------|-----------|----------|
| Saturday-INES | HAB | animal for sacrifice-PL-NOM | PFV.away-push.PST-3PL | place name-ALL |

'On Saturdays people used to push the animals to Rekom'

The synthetic future is built both from imperfective (unprefixed) verbs and from perfective (prefixed) ones, like in the South Slavic languages; the temporal marker is a suffix that goes back historically to an auxiliary verb meaning 'to want':

(13a) Imperfective and perfective future in Bulgarian

|  | Present | Future |
|---|---------|--------|
| IPFV | *piš-a* <br> write(IPFV)-1SG <br> 'I write, am writing' | *šte piš-a* <br> FUT write(IPFV)-1SG <br> 'I'll write, I'll be writing' |
| PFV | *(na-piš-a)* <br> PFV-write-1SG | *šte na-piš-a* <br> FUT PFV-write-1SG <br> 'I'll write (to the end)' |

(13b) Imperfective and perfective future in Ossetic

|  | Present | Future |
|---|---------|--------|
| IPFV | *fyss-yn* <br> write(IPFV).PRS-1SG <br> 'I write, I'm writing' | *fyss-dzyn-æn* <br> write(IPFV)-FUT-1SG <br> 'I'll write, I'll be writing' |
| PFV | *nу-ffyss-yn* <br> PFV-write-1SG <br> 'I write (to the end)' | *nу-ffyss-dzyn-æn* <br> PFV-write-FUT-1SG <br> 'I'll write' |

The development of future in the Iranic languages seems to be a late phenomenon, as shown by the fact that the languages of this branch of Indo-European make use of different formations; it is nevertheless common to the whole group, as far as its roots lie already in the proto-language. The category of aspect, instead, is not so widespread, and clearly represents an independ innovation of Ossetic (Èdel'man 1975, 381f.).

In Ossetic there is a coherent system of preverbs used as perfectivity markers. The question arises about what is older in Ossetic, the category of derivational aspect or the future? Etymological research has identified the existence of two layers of preverbs (Cabolov 1957): the preverbs of the older one, whose Indo-European origin is undisputable, carry only a lexical meaning and do not affect the grammatical side of the verbal item they are attached to. Only the preverbs of the younger layer, besides their spatial meaning, have developed an aspectual function (Bielmeier 1981, 29–31); this can be very well seen in cases such as the verb form *æmbaryn* 'to understand (IPFV) vs. *ba-mbar-yn* 'id. (PFV)'. Etymologically, *æm-baryn* is a compound form (Abaev 1958/1996, 136), which is felt by the speakers as a simple, imperfective verb; its perfectivization is obtained by adding a preverb of the second layer, *ba-* 'in'. Therefore, it could be suggested that the genesis of aspect in Ossetic followed, in terms of relative chronology, the formation of the periphrastic future.[10] Comparing these data with the Slavic languages we observe a significant parallelism between Georgian and the North Slavic Languages, on the one side, and Ossetic and the South Slavic languages (together with Lithuanian?), on the other:

1) perfectivity-imperfectivity opposition (there is no future) > shift from non-actual present to future > formation of a new imperfective future form (Russian and, to a lesser extent, Georgian)
2) perfectivity-imperfectivity opposition (future already exists) > no shift from non-actual present to future (Ossetic, Lithuanian and South Slavic languages)

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[10]   Levitskaja (2004, 33f.) does not agree with Abaev (1965, 68), who saw in the aspectual function of preverbs a very old Iranian-Slavic isogloss, and argues for a late genesis of aspectual marking through preverbs. For an analogous interpretation of the development in South Slavic see Andersen (2009, 133); a critical assessment of this view has been formulated by Arkad'ev (2015, 158–161).

## 3. Motion verbs

3.1. Motion verbs have attracted the attention of scholars among other things because of their morphological and semantic complexity (Nesset 2000, Hasko/Perelmutter 2010); in North Slavic languages, in particular, a semantic opposition between unidirectional und pluridirectional motion verbs within the imperfective aspect is very strongly organized.

Not less important is the existence in contemporary Russian of homonymous verbs, having different lexical meaning, but, what is much more striking, belonging to different aspects. Let us consider the lexical and grammatical contrast between *za-chodit'*1, a perfective verb with ingressive meaning 'to begin to walk', and *za-chodit'*2, imperfective form correlated to *za-jti* (PFV) 'make a stop on the way'. In the description of Russian this strange homonymy has been convincingly explained in derivational terms: *za-chodit'*1 is a prefixed form, derived from the simple one through prefixation, and conforms to the rule that prefixation always generates perfective verbs. The acceptation of this rule forces us not to consider *za-chodit'*2 as a prefixed verb: it cannot be a prefixed formation because it is imperfective. Within this interpretation, *za-chodit'*2 has to be considered as an imperfective form derived through secondary-suppletive imperfectivization from *za-jti*. Formations like *pri-ezžat'* 'to arrive', the imperfective form derived from *pri-exat'* 'to arrive', confirm this analysis: in fact, the simple form *ezžat'* does not exist, it functions only as a suppletive derivational suffix of secondary imperfectivization (Zaliznjak/Šmelev 1997, 68).[11] A further argument in support to this interpretation is provided by the prosodic behaviour of perfective vs. imperfective forms combined with the prefix *vy-*. The imperfective verb *vy-chodit'* 'to go out', like the simple *xodit'*, is stressed on the last syllable; the perfective verb *vy-chodit'* 'to cure', instead, is stressed on the prefix according to a rule that the prefix *vy-* is always stressed when on a perfective verb. This contrasting accentological behaviour of two otherwise homonymous forms points out to the opposition between prefixation (in the case of the perfective form) and secondary suffixation (in the case of the imperfective form). Thus, we synchronically have an opposition between verbal forms which feature a

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[11]  A second book published by the same two authors some years later (Zaliznjak/Šmelev 2000) carries a different title but does not differ substantially from the first publication.

spatial (IMPV) vs. a non spatial (PFV) meaning of the combined preverb. This interpretation, however, is quite problematic from a diachronic perspective, as maintained by Janda (2010); in addition, Dickey (2010) assumes that indeterminate verbs of motion are to be considered the result of a later development; quite a few occurrences of allegedly indeterminate verbs in clearly determinate contexts point out to the fact that "this synchronic notion is of relatively little explanatory value when applied to an earlier stage of Slavic" (Dickey 2010, 69).

3.2. A 'strange' aspectual behaviour of preverbs with verbs of motion can be observed in many languages. The evidence from non-Slavic languages provides us with a partially different distribution of aspectual values. In Georgian, contrary to the prefixation rule formulated above, prefixed motion verbs are not perfective, as far as they can be used in order to describe an actual process and do not carry any future time reference (14b). The same preverbs, consequently, behave differently according to the semantics of the lexical item to which they are added:

(14a) Perfectivizing preverb in Georgian
k'lavs (IPFV)                    mo-k'lavs (PFV)
'X kills/killing Y'             'X will kill Y'


(14b) Spatial preverb in Georgian
prinavs (IPFV)                  mo-prinavs (IPFV)
'X flies/is flying'             'X is flying hither'

In (14a), the prefix *mo-* does not bear the basic physical meaning (orientation towards the speaker) and provides the verbal lexeme with a perfective function and, as a temporal consequence, future time reference. In (14b), the spatial meaning of the preverb is preserved and the form, although prefixed, is imperfective. The reason for this distribution could lie in the retention of the spatial semantics by the preverbs, etymologically derived from spatial adverbs (Marṭirosovi 1953), when combined with motion verbs (Boeder 1992, 38). The development of preverbs from bounders to aspectual markers can be interpreted as a metaphoric process: preverbs lose their original spatial meaning and undergo a process of semantic bleaching. The perfectivization process does not totally affect motion verbs, as the spatial context, within which the motion takes place, still

plays an important role. In Georgian, the semantic opposition 'spatial-non spatial' could have been responsible for the blocking of the grammaticalization process in the prefixed present of motion verbs.

3.3. In Lithuanian, too, there are some prefixed verbs of motion expressing the aspectual opposition in temporal terms. They have a perfective meaning in past and future tenses forms but are always imperfective in the present (Ambrazas 1997, 235; see also Poržezinskij 1916, 146):

(15) Motion verbs with preverbs (Lithuanian)
    (a) Present
        At-važuoj-a!..Atvažuoj-a!
        PFV-come.PRS-3PL
        'They are coming' (IPFV)

    (b) Past
        at-ваž-av-o
        PFV-come.PST-3PL
        'They arrived' (PFV)

This distinction holds only in the present tense, where, according to Bybee et al. (1994, 126), no aspectual opposition is possible, but not in the past and the future.

3.4. The same situation is attested in Ossetic, contrasting in the present tense the perfective and habitual meaning of prefixed forms with the processual use of preverbs denoting the spatial direction of motion verbs. In this last case, preverbs specify the direction and orientation of the movement, without transforming the verb into a perfective form, therefore allowing a progressive interpretation in the present of compound forms (Abaev 1964, 45):

(16) Ossetic
    (a) ny-ffyss-yn
        PFV-write.PRS-1SG
        'I (usually) write (to the end)'       (habitual)

(b)  ra-cæu-yn
out-go.PRS-1SG
'I go out, I'm going out'          (habitual, processual)

In the past and future tense, however, prefixation produces a perfective form (17), whose effects can be neutralized by the suffix *-cæj-* (18) (see also Levitskaja 2007, 89f.):

(17) Secondary imperfectivization in Ossetic

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *cæu-γ* | go.PRS-3SG | IPFV |
| '(s)he goes, is going' | | |
| *ba-cæu-γ* | PRV.in-go. PRS-3SG | IPFV |
| '(s)he is going in' | | |
| *cyd-is* | go.PST-3SG | IPFV |
| '(s)he went, was going' | | |
| *ba-cyd-is* | PRV.in-go.PST-3SG | PFV |
| '(s)he went in' | | |
| *ba-cæj-cyd-is* | PRV.in-IPFV-go.PST-3SG | IPFV |
| '(s)he was going in' | | |

(18) Aspectual minimal pair (Axvlediani 1963, 236)

(a)  

| Boris-Ø | ær-cyd-is | goræt-æj | PFV |
|---|---|---|---|
| Proper noun-NOM | PRV-arrive.PST-3SG.INTR | town-ABL | |

'Boris has arrived from the town'

(b)  

| Boris-Ø | ær-cæj-cyd-is | goræt-æj | IPFV |
|---|---|---|---|
| Proper noun-NOM | PRV-IPFV-arrive.PST-3SG.INTR | town-ABL | |

'Boris was coming from the town'

In his analysis of Old Russian exceptions to the contemporary rules of aspectual distribution, Kuznecov (1953, 225) made the same assumption, pointing to the abstract (non spatial) vs. concrete (spatial) character of the composition and its consequences for the interpretation of the aspectual meaning of the forms involved. He adduces modern Russian aspectual pairs like the example discussed above of *vychodit'*1 (PFV) vs. *vychodit'*2

(IPFV), where the aspectual meaning correlates with the presence/absence of spatial meaning of the preverbs (+ concrete + imperfective vs. - concrete + perfective):

(19) Concrete vs. abstract (Russian)
    *naletat'* (IPFV) 'to swoop down on'    (+ concrete/spatial > IPFV)
    *naletat'* (PFV) 'to spend x hours    (- concrete > PFV)
    (*neskol'ko časov*) in flight'

In his interpretation, a preverb does not perfectivize a non-linear motion verb if it expresses either the conclusion or the result without carrying any other lexical meaning.

## 4. Conclusion

To sum up, the comparison of different languages shows that the aspect opposition 'perfective-imperfective' is more frequently expressed in the past, seldom occurs in the future and undergoes semantic and grammatical restrictions in the actual present; in addition, the morphologization of the Slavic-style aspect suggests a strong correlation with the lexical meaning not only of the verbs, but also of the preverbs. Therefore we cannot exclude that the perfective meaning of the preverbs was, in an older stage of the language, limited to, or much more developed in past time reference. A similar idea was formulated by Forsyth, according to whom the grammaticalization process could consist of the gradual extension of an opposition which arose firstly in the past tense, where the formal expression of the perfective-imperfective opposition is more relevant: "It seems at least as probable that such meaning developed first in one or other tense/mood form and only gradually spread until it embraced the whole paradigm" (Forsyth 1972, 501).

Moreover, the more concrete meaning of preverbs could have blocked the aspectual opposition in the present; as a consequence, compound forms retained their processual meaning, as in the case of Ossetic, Georgian and Lithuanian. Some Slavic languages overimposed the determinate-indeterminate distinction of motion verbs to the aspectual one, thus managing to create a new system of aspectual pairs within this category. Other languages, not having at their disposal this device, did not change the aspectual meaning of prefixed forms in the present tense.

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My necessarily limited observations were simply intended to demonstrate the explanatory force of data gathered from non-Slavic languages in the interpretation and reconstruction of the Slavic verbal aspect. This typologically collected material can, depending on its acceptance or rejection, be either positive or negative; in both cases, however, an advantage is to be gained from such a comparison. In fact, other aspectual systems of the same derivation type can account for the diachronic and synchronic interpretation of the Slavic data; if the differences do not allow a reliable basis for analogies, we can be sure that also a negative result will have helped us to provide a better understanding of the Slavic aspect. Obviously, the explanation of this category presupposes a deeper insight into the Slavic languages themselves and a careful examination of the extant material; nevertheless, going beyond the chronological and geographical boundaries of the Slavic linguistic world and evaluating data from other languages, not genetically related, we can receive substantial help in our task.

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