

De-prefixed truths miscalled simplicia? Simplex versus prefixed secondary verbs in Old Church Slavonic

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Terminology for today

- secondary verb = stem-derived vs. primary verb = root-derived
- denominative = cover term for both:
 - denominal / desubstantival = derived from a noun (Gmn. Substantiv)
 - deadjectival = derived from adjective stems or a property concept (might be *morphologically* primary)
- Slavic context: *prefixes*, not preverbs
 - fully integrated into the verb, no “tmesis”
 - or insertion of, e.g., reflexive markers as in Lithuanian (e.g. Hill et al. 2019, 159)

Verbal prefixes in general

- in the literature on Slavic languages primarily discussed in the context of the aspect system
- main function = mark perfectivity; rule of thumb:
 - simplex verbs are imperfective, prefixed verbs are perfective
 - exceptions occur (cf., e.g., Leskien 1909:219–23; Vaillant 1966:466–7; Schuyt 1990 *passim*)

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- frequent distinction (e.g., Lunt 1974:79; Birnbaum & Schaeken 1997:85; Schuyt 1990:290)
 - “empty” prefixes that are solely perfectivising vs.
 - prefixes that also modify the lexical meaning of the simplex (“full”, “lexical”), or its Aktionsart (sometimes 3rd type)
 - plus: prefixed => “resultative / terminative” meaning

Verbal prefixes in (secondary) word formation

- far less clear: potential role of prefixes in word formation, particularly in the context of secondary verb formation
 - aspectual and lexical functions as in primary verb formation?
 - or obligatory (combined with suffixation) in deriving verbs from nominal bases?
- are secondary verbs always built as simplicia and get prefixed when they need to be perfective and/or resultative, or do denominative verbs originate as prefixed perfectives, with corresponding imperfectives emerging through de-prefixation?

Verbal prefixes and secondary verbs

- implicit assumption that simplex verbs are default (in general)
- rarely acknowledged explicitly in the literature
- exceptions:
 - Dokulil (1976:115) on Czech (synchronic, in comparison with German):
 - difference between prefixed forms of deadjectival simplicia vs.
 - verbs that are built by simultaneous prefixation and suffixation
 - but no further comment on how to make this distinction

Verbal prefixes and secondary verbs

- exceptions:

- Šaur (1981:52) on OCS, ORus. OCz.:

“Je známo, že slovesa byla v těchto případech zpravidla tvořena tak, že k adj. vzniklo **nejprve** některé **prefigované perfektivum** s významem ‘udělat (něco takovýmto)’ a až k němu **deprefixací imperfektivum**”

“It is known that verbs in such cases usually were built in a way that to the adjective there **first occurred some prefixed perfectives** with the meaning ‘to do (sth. like that)’, and to those **deprefixed imperfectives**” (my translation)

- also gives examples with *no* attested simplex verbs, e.g.

(1) OCS *is-*, *naplъniti* ‘fill up’ ← *plъnъ* ‘full’ **plъniti*

NB: var. <-плън-> ~ <-плънъ->

Deprefixation

- G. *Depräfigierung*, Fr. *dépréverbation*, Pol. *deprefiksacja*
- studied to some extent for Slavic (Vaillant 1946, 1963, 1974:732–6; accepted by Schuyt 1990)
- and Baltic (Ostrowski 2014)
- deprefixation understood as mechanism of backformation
 - verbatim at Ostrowski
 - Vaillant (1946:31):

“La dépréverbation fait partie des **formations régressives** de la morphologie : au lieu de tirer une forme dérivée d'une forme simple, la langue inverse le procès, et tire d'une forme sentie comme dérivée une forme simple **qui n'existait pas.**”

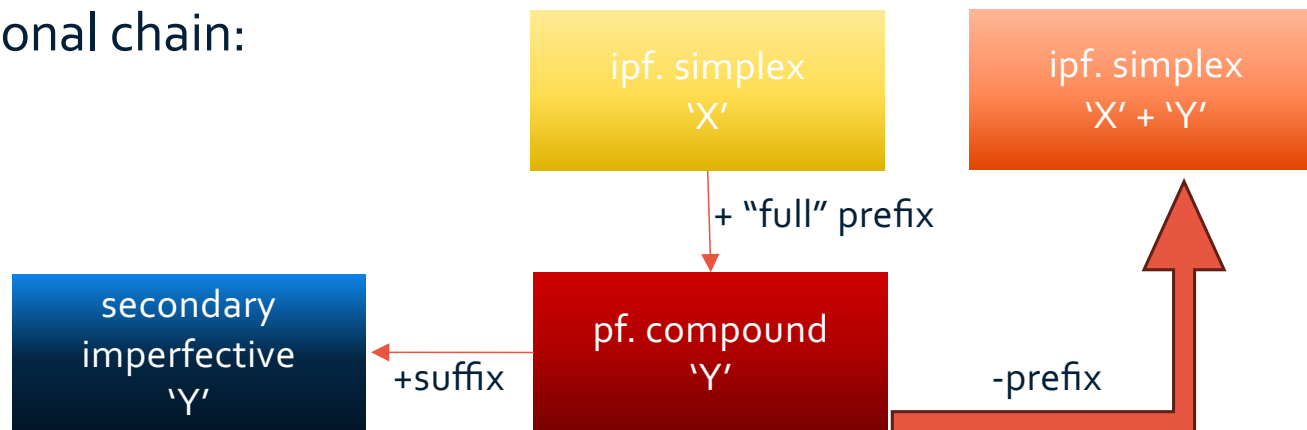
Deprefixation

- while he shows *some* cases where new simplex verbs are created, most of Vaillant's examples are not exactly forms “qui n'existait pas”
- in many cases, a simplex verb that *already existed* becomes polysemous (cf. Ostrowski 2014:172)
- which Vaillant himself admits several times in the paper, e.g., earlier on the same page:

„Le verbe simple nouveau est un imperfectif, qui le plus souvent recouvre exactement
un verbe simple antérieur.”

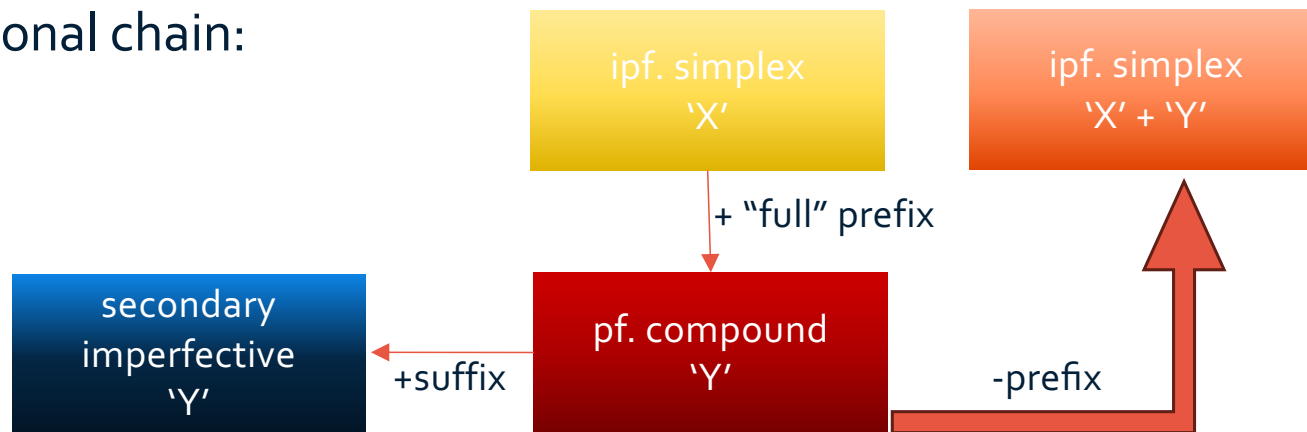
Deprefixation: polysemy

- derivational chain:



Deprefixation: polysemy

- derivational chain:



- (2) Russ. *kovát'*, Nšt. *kòvati* 'to forge'
→ *pod-kovát'*; *pot-kòvati* 'to shoe a horse' ("mettre une ferrure sous (les pieds)")
depr. → *kovát'*, *kòvati* 'to forge'; 'to shoe a horse' (Vaillant 1946:16)

Deprefixation: denominatives?

- Vaillant also includes some examples of denominatives, but often dwells on speculations:

“S.-cr. *bùhati* « chasser les puces » [...] **est-il issu directement de *bùha* « puce », ou bien dépréverbé de *izbuhati* ?**” (1946:20)

Deprefixation: denominatives?

(3) one example from Lithuanian (ibid. 44; Ostrowski 2014: 177–8; ALEW s.v. *ãklas, akis*)

1. *akis* 'eye'

2. → prefixed *ap-àkti, -aĩka, -ãko* (O; ALEW: *api-*) 'go, become blind'

3. → simplex *àkti, aĩka, ãko* 'id.'
(according to Ostrowski synchronically associated with *akis*)

Simplex vs. prefixed: philology

- Ostrowski emphasises the importance of a philological analysis of the texts to determine which form is the basis and which is derived
- meaning that it is important to find out whether the simplex or the prefixed form occurred first, or is more frequent, instead of relying solely on data from, e.g., dictionaries
- cf. Šaur above
- caveat: this implies assumptions “older = basic” (or “more frequent = basic”)
 - which may well be true in many cases
 - but, as always, a non-attestation might be accidental

Simplex vs. prefixed: textual biases

- furthermore, especially in cases like OCS, there might be textual biases
 - largely composed of translated texts
 - occurrence of simplex vs. prefixed may also reflect the aspectual value of the source verb, or calque its shape with prefix without aspectual value (but not necessarily)
 - plus: variation between simplex and compound verb in general between texts or manuscripts
 - cf., e.g., Koch (1990: 326–8) on the variation of *mogŕ, mořti* vs. *vъzmogŕ, vъzmořti* ‘be able to’ in the Gospels
- what does “older” in this context mean?

Simplex vs. prefixed secondary verbs in OCS

1. collect secondary verbs
 2. analyse for
 - a. diachronic distribution
 - b. frequency
 - c. distribution of prefixes, e.g.,
 - i. do certain verbs favour certain prefixes?
 - ii. do certain prefixes occur earlier than others?
 - d. verbs in original texts (if original is known)
 - e. which forms are attested?
presents, aorists; non-finite forms?
 3. compare to other Slavic languages
- ? What does it tell us if OCS shows only prefixed verbs, but other older languages have simplicia?

Interim findings step 1.-2. a., b.: deadjectival examples

- no simplex attested (all examples via GORAZD)

- (1) *na-plъniti* 'fill up' ← *plъnъ* 'full' no **plъniti*, although adj. exists
is-plъniti 'id.'; 'fulfil, complete'
- (4) *ob-, po-noviti* 'renew' ← *novъ* 'new' no **noviti*
po-n. 2x in Supr.
- (5) *o-črъněti* 'become black' (Supr) ← *чрънъ* 'black' no **črъněti* NB: var. <-ън-> ~ <-ън->
o-črъniti 'blacken' (Bes) no **črъniti*

Interim findings step 1. – 2. a., b. – examples

- prefixed verb more frequent than simplex

(6) *čistiti* 'clean, purify' ← *čistъ* 'clean' 2x Supr; later in Prophetologia (non-canonical)
vs.

o-čistiti 'make clean'

46x attested in oldest documents + more in non-canonical

iz-čistiti <*ištistiti*> 'id.'

23x in Gospels + more in non-canonical texts

po-čistiti 'id.'

1x in CanMis (14th ct.)

prědъočistiti 'purify beforehand'

1x in Napis (1346)

Interim findings step 1. – 2. a., b. – examples

- prefixed in canonical documents, simplex later

(7)	<i>slaběti</i> 'become weak, lose strength' ← <i>slabъ</i> 'weak'	10x in Bes
	vs.	
	<i>o-slaběti</i> 'id'	pf. + ipf.!
	<i>ra[s]-slaběti</i> 'id'	12x canonical + more later (incl. Bes!)
	<i>u-slaběti</i>	4x Supr
		1x var. of <i>o-slaběti</i>
fact.	<i>o-slabiti</i> 'to weaken'	66x canonical + more later
	<i>*ra[s]-slabiti</i>	not attested, but via participle <i>raslab(l)jenъ</i> and secondary imperfective <i>raslabljati se</i>

Interim findings step 1. – 2. a., b. – examples

- next up:
 - only simplex attested
 - simplex more frequent than compound

Conclusion

- role of prefixation in secondary verb formation is understudied
- mainly discussed in the context of aspect system
- philological work points to cases where prefixed verbs might be older
- textual nature and chronology of OCS might shape our interpretation of diachronic processes such as word formation
- more generally: reflection on why one assumes a certain thing to be “default”

Děkuji za Vaši pozornost!

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And sorry to William Shakespeare for corrupting “And simple truth miscall'd simplicity” from Sonett 66!

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