A MULTIFACTORIAL AREAL-TYPOLOGICAL APPROACH TO PREFIXAL PERFECTIVE IN THE LANGUAGES OF EUROPE AND THE CAUCASUS[*]

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Typological studies of verbal aspect (Dahl 1985, Breu 1992, 2000, Dahl (ed.) 2000) have argued that Slavic aspect constitutes a cross-linguistically rather special type of system and have emphasized the role of prefixation (preverbation) in its diachronic rise and synchronic makeup. Though it is well known that aspectual systems based on prefixal and non-prefixal verbal satellites (Talmy 1985) or bounders (Bybee et al. 1994) are found outside Slavic as well, such systems have not been subject to a detailed typological and areal research (cf. Breu 1992, Tomelleri 2008, 2009).

In this paper I bring under scrutiny the systems of preverbation in Slavic, Baltic (Lithuanian, Latvian), Germanic (German, Yiddish), Hungarian, Kartvelian and Ossetic, applying to them a common set of typological parameters which describe:

(1) morphological properties of preverbs: 1.1. degree of boundness; 1.2. position in the verbal form; 1.3. iteration; 1.4. morphological subclassification;

(2) functional properties of preverbs: 2.1. types of their lexical meanings; 2.2. functional subclassification; 2.3. use of preverbs for deriving Aktionsarten, i.e. productive morphosemantic classes of verbs such as cumulative, repetitive, etc.; 2.4. "purely" aspectual (perfectivizing) uses of preverbs; 2.5. delimitative uses of preverbs;

(3) functional properties of verbal systems: 3.1. the type of functional opposition between prefixal and non-prefixal verbs; 3.2. means of secondary imperfectivization; 3.3. non-prefixal means of perfectivization; 3.4. presence of simplex (non-prefixal) perfective verbs; 3.5. presence of prefixal non-perfective verbs; 3.6. interaction of prefixal and non-prefixal verbs with other TAM-categories.

A qualitative and quantitative analysis of the values of the above parameters in the sampled languages allows to conclude that there are two major clusters of languages exhibiting significant internal similarities in their verbal systems, and these are genetically rather than areally defined, viz. Slavic vs. Kartvelian forming two opposed poles of a continuum in which other languages occupy various intermediate positions. These two clusters are defined by rather divergent sets of typological features. The Slavic verbal system is characterized by 1) productive iteration of preverbs without a clear morphological subdivision; 2) lack of other kinds of verbal prefixes; 3) productive delimitative prefixation and morphological secondary imperfectivization; 4) presence of a suffixal perfectivizer; 5) ban on the co-occurrence of perfective verbs with phasal predicates and on the imperfective use of prefixed verbs of motion. By contrast, the Caucasian "prototype" of prefixal perfective is characterized by 1) the lack of preverb iteration; 2) clear morphological and functional subdivisions of preverbs; 3) presence of other verbal prefixes, e.g. expressing valency and person/number; 4) systematic expression of deixis by preverbs; 5) lack of productive delimitative Aktionsarten and secondary imperfectivization; 6) imperfective use of prefixed motion verbs; 7) inflectional Aorist and Imperfect. Other languages show divergent values of these parameters with similarities and differences with respect to both of the two clusters.

This suggests that though apparently prefixal perfectives in the languages of Eastern Europe and the Caucasus are an "areal" phenomenon, their distribution should be attributed to at least two mutually independent centers of development rather than to a single center of innovation.

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