Grammatical integration of \( n/t \)-participles of secondary imperfectives in Polish and Russian

On the basis of a query from the RNC, Borik/Gehrke (2018) found that, in Russian, \( n/t \)-participles of ipfv. verbs cannot be dismissed as rare or haphazard, nor are they in toto to be characterized as lexicalized forms (adjectives). Instead, their meanings are often compositional and they do occur in constructions that can only be analyzed as true, event-oriented passives. However, ipfv. \( n/t \)-participles seem to be restricted to general-factual meanings, progressive readings are practically unattested (cf. also Knjazev 1989: 57ff.; 2007: 489), and such participles derive mainly from a restricted set of ipfv. verbs, most of them related to speech acts or with incremental objects. In comparison to compositional pfv. \( n/t \)-participles, their overall type and token frequency in passives seems to be low, after all. The authors also confirm impressions concerning differences in productivity in comparison to Czech, and they confirm the virtual absence of \( n/t \)-participles from secondary ipfv. stems (henceforth IPFV2) in Russian.

Tatevosov (2015: 288-292), in turn, claims that Russian \( n/t \)-participles of non-prefixed ipfv. stems (henceforth IPFV1) are void of a component that binds a resultative subevent. Such subevents are involved in pfv. stems with lexical prefixes. This asymmetry also explains why ipfv. \( n/t \)-participles in passives usually require event modifiers (as confirmed by Borik/Gehrke 2018); compare Russ. Pis’mo pisano *(na tonkoj bumage) ‘The letter is written *(on thin paper)’ vs Pis’mo napisano *(i ležit na stole) ‘The letter has been [lit. is] written (and is lying on the table)’. Tatevosov’s morpheme-centric derivational analysis would imply that the additional subevent remains with IPFV2 stems, but these are not considered, and the theory leaves unclear which consequences are to follow for \( n/t \)-participles of IPFV2 stems in passives if they occur (e.g., shouldn’t progressive readings be blocked altogether and plurational readings be strongly preferred?). Such participles (also with progressive readings) do occur in West Slavic languages (cf. Wiemer 2017: 135-138), and Polish has completely integrated \( n/t \)-participles of both IPFV1 and IPFV2 stems into the aspect system (Lehmann 1992, Górski 2008). However, we do not know much about their productivity and semantics in Slavic languages from at least a diachronic perspective. Moreover, one may ask to which extent the ability of ipfv. \( n/t \)-participles to function as full-fledged members on the aspect-voice interface correlates with the overall frequencies (for all grammatical forms) of their stems.

Our talk addresses these empirical questions. We present findings of the first part of a larger investigation in which the aspectual behavior of \( n/t \)-participles from IPFV1 and IPFV2 stems is compared, primarily on the basis of a comprehensive database containing potential aspect triplets (e.g., Pol. tworzyć\(^{\text{IPFV1}} \)-stworzyć\(^{\text{PFV}} \)-stwarzać\(^{\text{IPFV2}} \)‘create’, Russ. пахать\(^{\text{IPFV1}} \)-vspakhать\(^{\text{PFV}} \)-vspashivat’\(^{\text{IPFV2}} \)‘plough’) covering the period 1750-2018 in Russian and Polish. Triplets have the advantage that the meanings and behavior of IPFV1 and IPFV2 can be compared directly.

At the workshop we discuss how widespread the use of \( n/t \)-participles of IPFV2 has been in Russian and Polish since 1730 and whether we can discern any remarkable changes of their employment in passive constructions and their interpretation in terms of generally acknowledged aspect functions. As indicators of the degree of integration we assume (a) type frequency (percentage of IPFV2 stems with at least one \( n/t \)-participle token), (b) token frequency of \( n/t \)-participles (for each IPFV2 and the average for all IPFV2), and (c) variability of aspect functions (for \( n/t \)-participles of each IPFV2 stem and their entirety in a corpus). These
indicators must be compared for a sequence of periods. We distinguish the following parameters:

(i) syntactic functions: predicative vs attributive;
(ii) aspect functions generally ascribed to ipfv. stems: (event-external) pluractional, progressive, general-factual, stative.

From our database we first sort out the IPFV2 stems for which n/t-participles have been attested and compare their set with an analogous set for the IPFV1 stems in the database. This allows for a rough assessment of how widespread n/t-participles of IPFV2 stems have at all been in terms of type frequency among triplets (see indicator (a)). Subsequently, we establish the token frequencies of these n/t-participles for each IPFV2 stem and for each of the following periods: 1730-1780, 1801-1850, 1890-1918, 1946-1980, 1990-2020. The ranges of these frequencies will be compared to the general frequency ranges of their stems. For each period we expect Zipfian distributions for both kind of ranges and a rather strong correlation between them. Moreover, for IPFV2 stems and their n/t-participles we will check whether the sets of IPFV2, if grouped according to frequency ranges, changed. Such changes would be indicative of fluctuation, but indirectly also of productivity (the set of stems that serve as input for rules varies, some drop out, others become more common).

Furthermore, we will compose random samples for n/t-participles of selected high-frequency IPFV2 stems for the aforementioned periods. These samples will be manually annotated for the functions listed in (i) and (ii) above in order to see whether changes have occurred in their distributions and, if yes, whether such changes are related to changes in the sets of IPFV2 stems with frequent n/t-participles.

Our main hypotheses are:

1. There is a steady increase in both type and token frequency for Polish IPFV2 n/t-participles. The background for this assumption is that n/t-participles of either aspect have become the sole means of marking the passive in Polish since the turn from the 19th to the 20th century; they have practically ousted the reflexive-marked passive and their aspect is a main contributor to the fact that the aspsectual functions in the passive “copy” the aspeectual functions of the active.

2. In Russian, to the contrary, n/t-participles of IPFV2 have been considerably less widespread as an option of the passive. Since 1730 they have never risen much above those restrictions which we find today (cf. Borik/Gehrke 2018). The tendency toward lexicalization is much stronger than in Polish, and their marginal function in the voice system has been stable for that period.

The results of this study will afterwards be employed for a comparison with changes in the aspsectual functions of IPFV1 n/t-participles and in the active voice of the relevant IPFV1 and IPFV2 stems. Only after such matters are settled can we ask for the event structure of IPFV1 and IPFV2 stems and their interaction with grammatical operations.

References


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