Explaining the quantitative distribution of deverbal -lac/-lec nominalizations in Western South Slavic

Boban Arsenijević[1], Katarina Gomboc Čeh[2], Franc Marušič[2], Petra Mišmaš[2], Stefan Milosavljević[1] and Rok Žaucer[2]

[1]University of Graz, [2]University of Nova Gorica

boban.arsenijevic@uni-graz.at, katarina.gomboc.ceh@ung.si, franc.marusic@ung.si, petra.mismas@ung.si, stefan.milosavljevic@uni-graz.at, rok.zaucer@ung.si

In this talk we focus on *-lac/-lec* nominalizations in Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian [BCS] (*-lac*), (1), and Slovenian (*-lec*), (2), i.e., deverbal event-participant nominalizations from *-l* participles.

(1) čit-a-ti,   čit-a-l,   čit-a-l-ac
(2) br-a-ti,   br-a-l,   br-a-l-ec
      read-TV-INF 'to read' read-TV-PTCP   read-TV-PTCP-AGENT 'reader'

Stramljič-Breznik (1992) and Marvin (2002) observe that agentive *-lec* nominalizations in Slovenian can only be derived from imperfective verbs, an observation corroborated for contemporary Slovenian in Marvin (2019), who finds that the SSKJ standard Slovenian dictionary lists 800 *-lec* nominalizations from imperfective and only 10 (i.e., ca. 1%) from perfective verbs. A similar, yet less strong, tendency is reported for Croatian in Babić (2002), who notes that only 13% of Croatian *-lac* nominalizations are derived from perfectives. Based on this, we expect BCS and Slovenian to behave similarly with respect to the derivation of *-lac/-lec* nominalizations. In this talk, we will show that this holds but can be further qualified: For both languages, not all imperfective verbs derive *-lac/-lec* nominalizations (as previously observed in, for example, Marvin 2002 for Slovenian), and the same share of perfectives do so (i.e., ca. 18%, see the table below). More importantly, however, we show that the data reveal previously unobserved systematic differences between the two languages. In the talk, we offer an account for these observed differences in which we argue that the properties relevant for this division are atomicity (BCS) and perfectivity (Slovenian).

The BCS set of *-lac* deverbal nominalizations includes the 98 items found in the hrWac corpus (min. freq. 5), while the Slovenian data include 794 deverbal *-lec* nominalizations recorded in the WeSoSlav database (Arsenijević et al. in prep; min. 1 hit in the Gigafida 2.0 corpus). While the difference in the two sets prima facie indicates that *-lec* nominalizations are more common in Slovenian, different extraction methods prevent us from making this claim.

Since (im)perfectivity of the verbal base has been established as a relevant factor for derivation of *-lac/-lec* nominalizations and since perfectivity is closely related to derivational complexity (i.e., simplex verbs tend to be imperfective, prefixed perfective, and prefixed-suffixed verbs again imperfective), the two sets of data were compared with respect to (im)perfectivity of the base and structure of the base. We compared the quantitative composition of the verbs deriving *-lac/-lec* nouns in terms of structure (simplex / prefixed / prefixed-suffixed) and (im)perfectivity to the baseline (i.e., to all verbs in the two languages, based on the data from the WeSoSlav database, which consists of 5300 most frequent BCS and 3000 most frequent Slovenian verbs). The results are summarized in the following table:

	BCS		Slovenian	
	All Vs (N=5300)	Vs deriving *-lac* nominals (N=98)	All Vs (N=3000)	Vs deriving *-lec* nominals (N=794)
Imperfectives, aggregate	51.5%	81.2%	46.3%	85.7 %
Simplex imperfectives (-prefix, -suffix)	15.0%	54.1%	15.4	28.2%
Suffixed imperfectives (-prefix)	13.4%	4.1%	2.8%	7.9%
Prefixed & suffixed imperfectives (SIs)	15.6%	12.2%	14.5%	40.4%
Perfectives, aggregate	48.5%	18.8%	53.4%	18.3%

Simplex perfectives (-prefix, -suffix)	0.8%	1.02%	1.9%	1.6%
Prefixed perfectives (-suffix)	40.9%	17.3%	45.3%	11.7%

We make the following observations: (i) as expected based on the literature, both BCS and Slovenian tend avoid making *-lac/-lec* nominalizations from (prefixed) perfectives, (3b) and (4b), (ii) BCS *-lac* nominalizations have a stronger tendency for simplex bases than Slovenian, (3a) and (4a), and in turn (iii) Slovenian *-lec* nominalizations show a stronger tendency for suffixed bases. The difference becomes especially striking when we focus on secondary imperfective [SI] forms, since (iv) BCS avoids *-lac* nominalizations from SIs, while Slovenian shows no such tendency, (3c) and (4c). In fact, while SIs represent 16.6% of all Slovenian verbs in WeSoSlav, 40.4% of *-lec* nominalizations are derived from SIs. BCS, on the other hand, has a comparable share of SIs (15.6%), but only 12.2% of *-lac* nominalizations derived from SI. Moreover, we also find several *-lec* nominalizations that do not correspond to an attested SI form in Slovenian, (5), see also Simonović (2020).

(3)a. znati,   znalac   b.   poznati, *poznalac   c.   poznavati, poznavalac
    know.IPFV, knower   know.PFV   know.IPFV   knower

(4)a. gledati,   gledalec   b.   ogledati, *ogledalec   c.   ogledovati, ogledovalec
    watch.IPFV, watcher   watch.PFV   watch.IPFV, watcher

(5)a. okusiti   b.   * okuševati / okušati   c.   okuševalec
    taste.PFV 'to taste'   taste.IPFV   taste.IPFV   taster (regularly)

We argue that the quantitative distribution is mainly explained by two factors. (i) Perfective verbs derive only episodic nominalizations (these refer to someone who did something in a specific event), and imperfective verbs both episodic and generic (dispositional, refer to someone who generally does something) nominalizations. The default nature and semantic versatility make generic nominalizations more frequent. This explains why perfective verbs derive fewer nominalizations with the suffix in question than imperfectives. (ii) The property relevant for this division in BCS is atomicity and in Slovenian perfectivity: perfective verbal predicates in Slovenian and atomic ones in BCS derive episodic nomina agentis. As perfective verbs are atomized and simple imperfectives are non-atomized, they behave the same in the two languages. Secondary imperfectives are atomized but not perfective. Hence, they easily derive *-lec* nominalizations (both generic and episodic for a series of events) in Slovenian, but not in BCS (where they target only the latter meaning). This view is corroborated by independent observations of different aspectual semantics of Slovenian verbs compared to BCS and more generally Slavic languages of the eastern aspectual type (e.g., Dickey 2000).

In addition, the two languages have different inventories of agentive suffixes, and the suffix *-lec/-lac* establishes different competition with other agentive suffixes. In particular, the BCS *-lac* derives nouns denoting sentient subjects of events described by the verb which are not necessarily agentive (cf. the strictly agentive suffix *-ač*, unrestricted for sentience), while in Slovenian the derived nouns are not even restricted by sentience. This was also noted for Slovenian in Marvin (2019) for some *-lec* nominalizations from perfective bases (e.g. *rešiti* 'to save.PFV', *reši-lec* 'ambulance'), but can also be observed in *-lec* nominalizations from imperfective verbs (e.g. *ločevati* 'to separate.IPFV', *ločeva-lec* 'separator'; *trditi* 'to harden.IPFV', *trdi-lec* 'thickening agent').

References: Arsenijević, Boban. et al. in prep. *WeSoSlaV: Database of the Western South Slavic verbal system*. Babić, Stjepan. 2002. *Tvorba rijeci u hrvatskome književnome jeziku*. Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti. Dickey, Stephen M. 2000. *Parameters of Slavic Aspect: A Cognitive Approach*. Stanford: CSLI Publications. Marvin, Tatjana. 2002. *Topics in the Stress and Syntax of Words*. PhD Thesis: MIT. Marvin, Tatjana. 2019. On aspect in eventive and agentive nominalizations in Slovenian. *Philological Studies* 17.2. 251–267. *SSKJ*. Dictionary of the Slovenian Standard Language. Fran.si. Simonović, Marko. 2020. Categories, Root Complexes

and Default Stress. *Linguistica* 60.1. 103–117. Stramljič Breznik, Irena. 1992. Izglagolske izpeljanke s pomenom vršilca dejanja. *Slavistična revija*, 40.4. 411–427.