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A PROBLEM IN THE MORPHOLOGY OF RUSSIAN VERBAL ASPECT.

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CONTEMPORARY RUSSIAN VERB STEMS ENDING IN "I" HAVE TWO VARIANT NONFINAL SUFFIXES TO MARK IMPERFECTIVE ASPECT, "IVAJ" AND "AJ." PURELY PHONOLOGICAL FACTORS DO NOT SEEM TO DETERMINE WHICH PREFIX IS USED AND THERE IS LITTLE EVIDENCE FOR A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A PARTICULAR PREFIX AND A PREFERRED SUFFIX. IN MANY CASES THE "IVAJ" SUFFIX IS FOUND WITH THE EAST SLAVIC POLNOGLASIE VERB ROOT AND THE "AJ" SUFFIX WITH THE CORRESPONDING SOUTH SLAVIC/CHURCH SLAVIC FORM. HOWEVER, THIS TREND HAS EXCEPTIONS AND DOES NOT APPLY TO ALL VERBS IN THE SUBCLASS. A WORD COUNT OF ITEMS IN THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES DICTIONARY SHOWS THAT 48 PERCENT OF THE ITEMS TAKE "IVAJ," 42 PERCENT TAKE "AJ," AND 10 PERCENT TAKE EITHER. ASSUMING THESE FIGURES ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE WHOLE SUBCLASS, THE SUFFIX "IVAJ" IS THE PRODUCTIVE IMPERFECTIVIZER AND MAY BE GRADUALLY REPLACING "AJ." ON A PRACTICAL LEVEL, HOWEVER, BOTH ARE IN FREQUENT USE AND NO RULE FOR FORMING THE IMPERFECTIVE OF VERBS IN "I" CAN YET BE DRAWN UP. (JD)

A Problem in the Morphology of Russian Verbal Aspect

On sober second thought, the title of this paper should perhaps be "a problem in the derivation of imperfective verb forms". And it should be noted immediately that the problem is one for which I can present no elegant solution.

As you may very well know, there exists in contemporary Russian a sub-class of verbs whose basic stems end in the suffix *-i-* and whose conjugational paradigm (present/future) exhibits the following pattern:

Singular	XXXXX Plural	
-u	-im	1st person
-is'	-ite	2nd "
-it	-at	3rd "

The familiar verb *govorit'* (speak, talk) is an example of the group. Traditionally these verbs have been known as the productive part of the Second Conjugation.

It is also well known that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, if such a verb possesses a prefix, it belongs to the perfective aspect. For most such prefixed, perfective verbs there exist (at least potentially) corresponding imperfectives derived from them in such a way that the derived form contains the same prefix(es) as the perfective, the same root, of course, but a quite different non-final suffix. The imperfectivizing suffixes of concern to us here are two, *-ivaj-* and *-aj-*. The problem involved is this: How can one predict which suffix will be used in any given case?

The problem usually arises in the classroom. At some time in his studies a student of Russian encounters the verb *ugovorit'* (persuade) and its imperfective *ugovarivajut*. He may also have at hand another item, say, *uglubit'* (deepen)/ *uglubljajut*. Juxtaposing the two sets,

he may well question the lack of uniformity in the formation of the imperfectives.

By presenting the student's question first, however, I do not wish to imply that the problem has interest only for the learner of the language. It seems reasonable that compact settling of the problem would be preferable from almost any point of view to a mere listing of a large number of lexical items. Scholars have in the past noted the existence of the two imperfectivizing suffixes, but no one, to my knowledge, has suggested any elegant solution to the problem which the two suffixes cause.

One might seek the solution in the realm of purely phonological factors, perhaps in a hypothetical state of affairs in which the form of the suffix is determined by the immediately preceding consonant, or by the place of stress in the perfective verb. A cursory examination of the data is sufficient, however, to prove that neither item is pertinent. For example,

vyjavit'/vyjavljájut compared with výlovit'/vylávlivajut
ustávit'/ustavljájut " " uslovit'sja/uslóvlivajutsja

Next we might posit some relationship between the particular prefix(es) and a preferred suffix. And indeed a faint glimmering of hopeful pattern does appear; the prefixes pred-, pre-, and voz- occur almost exclusively* with the suffix -aj-, while the compound prefix o-bez- is found only with the suffix -ivaj-. I should note parenthetically that the former prefixes are associated with a

* - - - - -

* The three exceptions found were:
preuveličit'/preuveličivajut, vozveličit'/vozveličivajut,
vosstanovit'/vosstanavlivajut.

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certain layer of vocabulary often referred to as the Church Slavic layer, i.e., derived from the ecclesiastical, learned tradition, while the latter, compound, prefix is purely East Slavic. The other twenty prefixes show no affinity for one prefix over the other. So, our hypothesis turns out to be of only marginal value.

Still in search of a simple solution one might next examine the root of the verb, paying particular attention to the phenomenon of East Slavic polnoglasie - pleophony. A respectable number of items do occur where the polnoglasie form is found with the imperfectivizing suffix -ivaj-, and the corresponding South Slavic/Church Slavic form has the suffix -aj-. (See Appendix A for examples.) However, the pattern is not without exception (also Appendix A), and, of course, the polnoglasie criterion does not apply to anywhere near all the verbs in the subclass in question. Thus, one must regretfully conclude that while an interesting trend is apparent here, it is again only marginal to our problem.

The next attack on the problem might be to find out approximately what percentage of the verb items possess the one imperfectivizing suffix as compared with those having the other. I resorted to just such counting of items in the Slovar' russkogo jazyka v četyrex tomax, the Academy of Sciences dictionary; certain of the verbs were checked informally with native speakers of Russian. Some 48% of the items take the suffix -ivaj-, about 42% take -aj-, and 10% approximately form the imperfective either way, without apparent distinction in usage (see Appendix B).

If these figures can be taken as representative of the state of affairs within the whole subclass as it exists in the language (and

that's a large 'if'), then perhaps one could say that the suffix -ivaj- is the productive imperfectivizer and may be gradually replacing its rival. Some slight support for part of that statement is found in comments from native speakers to the effect that while they personally might consistently use, say, odolzajut as the imperfective of odolzit', they know that they have heard other Russians use odalzivajut. Yet in making drawing any tentative conclusion, one must not forget that the two alternants have existed side by side for hundreds of years at least and that the suffix -aj- is still stable in a rather large vocabulary, some of it very high-frequency vocabulary. On a theoretical level, of course, the problem is easily resolved at the appropriate point in the grammar by formulating a rule that perfectives in -i- give rise to imperfectives in -ivaj-, all exceptions simply being listed. Yet on a practical level such a rule would yield slightly better than a 50/50 chance of success with any given item, and moreover the list of exceptions would obviously be unwieldy.

It would seem that I have run out of 'formal' points of attack upon the problem. Any suggestions from my listeners as to a new approach would be greatly appreciated.

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Appendix A

Representative polnoglasiе forms compared with others:

заворотить / заворачивают	•	отвратить / отворачивают
загородить / загораживают	•	заградить / заграждают
околотить / околачивают		
укоротить / укорачивают	•	сократить / сокращают
омолодить / омолаживают		
		отстранить / отстраняют
прохолодить / прохоложивают	•	охладить / охлаждают

Counter-examples:

опередить / опережают		упредить / упреждают
оздоровить / оздоравливают		поздравить / поздравляют

Appendix B

List of verbs containing -ivaj- or -aj- without apparent distinction in usage:

подбадривают (ся)	подбодряют (ся)
прибедниваются	прибедняются
закатажижк	
заготавливают	заготавливают
из- "	из- "
под- "	под- "
перепод- "	перепод- "
при- "	при- "
у- "	у- "
приу- "	приу- "
преду- "	преду- "
одаривают	одаряют
удабривают	удобряют
одалживают	одолжают
наезживают	наезжают
закачивают	закаляют
на- "	на- "
книж	
пере- "	пере- "
накапливают	накапливают
вкрапливают	вкрапливают
приукрашивают	приукрашают
улещивают	улещают
облепливают	облепляют
вылупливают	вылупляют
подменивают	подменяют
вымеривают	вымеряют
за- "	за- "
на- "	на- "
об- "	об- "
от- "	от- "
пере- "	пере- "
при- "	при- "
про- "	про- "
книж переиначивают	перемечают
раз- "	раз- "
умаливают	умоляют
приноравливают	приноравляют
обособливают	обособляют
опаливают	опалают
проплавливают	проплавливают
опоражнивают	опорожнивают

опыливают
нарапливают
при- "

обрушивают
осаживают
присваивают
осмысливают
засеривают
припособливают
настуживают
обсуживают
присучивают
натравливают
про- "
рас- "

подтапливают
отучивают
под- "

захламливают

опыляют
наращают
при- "

обрушают
осаждают
присвоят
осмысляют
засоряют
приспособляют
настужают
обсуждают
присучают
натравляют
про- "
рас- "

подтопляют
отучают
под- "

захламляют