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Studies on the Polisch verbal prefix prze-

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0 INTRODUCTION

Verbal prefixes are fascinating; as important carriers of meaning affixed to verbs, the main part of the sentence, they hold key positions in most languages of the Indo-European family, influencing as they do verbal meaning and meaning structure, grammar and syntax. In Slavic languages there is the added complication of verbal aspect in which prefixes also play a part. Studies of prefixes usually concentrate on a single aspect of their multifaceted nature, often the description of prefix meaning. Actually, that is wise, but, to a certain extent, it also leaves the complexity of the functioning of prefixes under- or even unexposed.

So we decided to approach the matter somewhat differently: a single prefix in a single Slavic language in an attempt to deal with some, not even all, of the vast array of different aspects that concern verbal prefixes in Slavic languages. This is then essentially a case study, and a modest one at that, of the Polish prefix *prze-*, its meaning(s), its terminativising and presumed aspectual properties as well as a little bit of syntax.

In the following we aim to introduce the topics in general terms and explain the structure of the book as well as some of the conventions adhered to. A choice was made to also declare, right from the outset, our own position about certain matters, at this stage necessarily, in quite general terms. After that we will set out the chief areas of our prefix research, which is followed by the briefest of discussions of the main literature and a description of the structure of this dissertation.

1 About views and opinions

Before we even start with the actual work we would like to reveal where our allegiances lie. This is important, as there is a myriad of different opinions as well as a huge amount of different models for example for aspect, perfectivity and imperfectivity but also prefix meaning and function, terminativity, telicity and the whole array of topics that one encounters when one is occupied with the study of verbal prefixes. In the body of this dissertation we will deal in detail with some of the positions and opinions the various authors on our subject as well as some related ones have taken and we will of course also develop and underpin the otherwise possibly strong statements posited in this section. We also confess that, since our own last publication on this subject (2003), our views have somewhat altered, certainly with respect to the derivational process involved with prefixation and aspect. But we shall begin at the beginning.

Our alma mater is the University of Amsterdam. Professor Carl Ebeling, who never taught the present author, ran the linguistic section of the Slavic department for a considerable amount of years. He did in many ways lay the foundation of what was to come. In his latest publication, the vast and in our opinion monumentally important *Semiotaxis, over theoretische en Nederlandse syntaxis* (2006), he acknowledges to have been raised in the structuralist tradition but confesses to have progressed away from that (2006: 13).

De semantische definities van de Europese structuralisten ... waren te globaal om te kunnen voorspellen hoe de hoorder van een zin aan de hand van de gedefinieerde betekenissen enerzijds en de in de spreek situatie aanwezige kennis anderzijds tot zijn interpretatie van die zin komt, en dit is een eis waaraan de betekenisdefinitie naar mijn mening moet voldoen.

(The semantic definitions of the European structuralists ... were too broad to be able to predict how the listener of a sentence could come to a [correct] interpretation of that sentence by means of on the one hand the defined meanings, and on the other the knowledge that is present within the speech situation. In my opinion this is a requirement that the definition of meaning should meet.)

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One important principle, though, the Saussurian premise “one form, one meaning” was not given up, and it is this that returns in the work of Adrie Barentsen, whom we consider to be our main teacher. The linguistic section of our department nowadays flirts with the framework presented by Cognitivism and this has been our staple diet at home, but also in Warsaw through Professor Krystyna Waszakowa, who already during our early studies introduced us to the writings of Langacker. So much for the general basis, which consists then of a bit of a mixture of what we hope is the best of both Structuralism and Cognitivism.

As for the theory of aspect and especially aspect meaning we are part of a school of thought that is strongly Maslov-Bondarko-Barentsen oriented. What does this mean? Well, in this school of thought the notion of terminativity is essential and so is the principle that perfective verbs are always terminative whilst imperfective verbs are either terminative or aterminative. Terminativity is then primarily connected with perfectivity since for perfectivity a base characteristic is terminativity: perfective verbs are always terminative. So, it is not surprising that prefixes, as markers of terminativity, go together with a primary notion of perfectivity as well.

Aspect derivation is usually presented along the morphologically sound lines from perfective to imperfective via suffixation and from imperfective to perfective via prefixation. This is a view that is upheld strongly in a recent publication by Młynarczyk (2004). We too still thought along these lines when writing our 2003 article dealing with so-called “empty” prefixes. In such a model one would have to ascribe two functions to verbal prefixes: one lexical-semantic (the part of meaning that is purely lexical), the other grammatical-semantic (the prefix as marker of perfectivity). After the study necessary for this dissertation we have adopted a more semantically based approach in which terminativity is a basic semantic function of all prefixes, which has two “effects”:

1. lexical-semantic: meaning;
2. grammatical-semantic: perfectivity, aspect.

For terminative meaning, perfectivity is then obvious, and so it is not surprising that verbs derived from non-prefixed simplicia, when “provided” with a terminativising prefix are both terminative and perfective as well. As terminativity is a constant in perfectivity whilst in imperfectivity it is opposed with aterminativity, it makes semantic sense to think of aspectual derivation from perfective to imperfective. In imperfective terminative situations we find both prefixed as well as unprefixed imperfective verbs and so, in order to render a perfective predicate imperfective there are then two ways: either through deprefixation or by means of a rather unique and special facility of Slavic languages, imperfectivising suffixes. The first can only be employed in special circumstances in which terminativity is expressed otherwise than via the verb as it is then bereft of its marker of terminativity. The second, the so-called secondary imperfectives retain explicit verbally expressed terminativity as well as clear lexical semantic prefix meaning. The use of terminative imperfectives is of course quite different from that of aterminative imperfectives. Terminative imperfective verbs take up an important position in the Slavic verbal system. So, rather than going along the usually path of morphological derivation, we use semantic derivation as our basis. It is very convenient that for the morphological formation of secondary imperfectives the two kinds of derivation run beautifully parallel.

Perfective verbs with prefixes can be aspectually opposed to unprefixed imperfective simplicia. In such “pairs” the perfective member is often said to have a so-called “empty” prefix. Even when one takes “from perfective to imperfective” as a premise, the concept, indeed the need for “empty” prefixes for the system remains. We have maintained the concept and even the name as it is well established in this field of linguistics, but we found there was a need to fine-tune the concept, as well as its properties and its functioning for our own purposes.

2 About verbal prefixes

Our fascination with verbal prefixes was first aroused when confronted with the principles of the theory of verbal aspect as set out by amongst others Adrie Barentsen (Amsterdam) and Axel Holvoet (Warsaw, Vilnius). We have followed the model, first outlined by Maslov but later also developed by others, amongst whom especially Barentsen. It is based on the opposition terminative vs aterminative. In it, again, perfective verbs are always terminative whilst imperfective verbs can either be terminative or aterminative. It turns out that prefixes usually appear in terminative verbs. But this is better said the other way around: prefixes appear to provide verbs with terminativity if these verbs are not yet terminative themselves.

Terminative verbs present a verbal event within the framework of two situations, linked by the event of the verb. In the model we adopted, these three stages are referred to as “XYZ”. Essentially there is a passage from one situation, X, into the other, Z, via the event, Y. The “moment” of the achievement of situational change is called the “transitus” or “terminus”. We will of course go into this matter further, especially in chapter II, where we will also present some other thoughts on this issue. As the whole concept of terminativity was conceived around the problem of verbal aspect we will also have to devote a few words to this. We have not done so as a main focus, however, as in our opinion the main function of verbal prefixes is lexical rather than grammatical, although through their meaning they are of course also grammatically relevant.

Prefix meaning is closely connected to the transition, the transformation from X to Z, since it describes, often in spatial or spatially related (metaphoric) terms, what X and Z are about; also how X passes into Z. In chapter II we will explain this and introduce this notion firmly in the XYZ-scheme of terminativity. Actually, that was the easy bit, as the lexical meaning of prefixes is best set out as two situations that are connected by a trajector, all of which is placed against the backdrop of a landmark. The terminativity of prefixes is precisely

this “limitedness” or “discreteness” as captured by this two-part model of which one element correlates with X and the other with Z in the XYZ-scheme.

A somewhat underexposed issue seems to be the prefixed so-called secondary imperfectives in Slavic languages and their place in the system. That system has basically three oppositions if one takes terminativity and aspect as parameters:

1. Perfective terminativity is obvious as the situational change logically implies the two situations as well as the transitus (= the “moment” Y passes into Z).
2. Imperfective aterminativity is also obvious: no situational change, hence no transitus (and so immediate focus on the event itself, not to where it will lead).
3. Imperfective terminativity is less obvious: an ongoing or repeated event is rendered by a terminative verb. The notion of terminus is present and forms an integral part of the event. There are two readings: 1. repetition and 2. focus on Y.

Secondary imperfectives arose within the aspectual system of Slavic languages, in which combinations of base verb and prefix are usually perfective, because the possibility needed to be created to present the lexical semantic element(s) introduced by the prefixes within imperfective contexts. Is it really as obvious as this? If so, the notion introduced by the prefix must be quite prominent in secondary imperfectives. No such thing exists as an “empty” prefix in imperfective compounds. The two functions of these terminative imperfectives are discussed, both of which oppose aterminative imperfective meaning, which lacks the XYZ-scheme against which the event is projected. Although it could never be apparent from these few remarks, we think that secondary imperfectives form the crux of the aspectual system and, since they are strongly connected to prefixes and their meanings, our largest chapter (II) is devoted to problems relating to them.

We have already mentioned “prefix meaning” a number of times. Ultimately, everything stands or falls with this and so we have started our work with a description and organisation of as many meanings of our chosen prefix we could establish. Starting from this polysemy we worked “back” to what we

deem is the basic, underlying, omnipresent invariant meaning of this prefix. In chapter I then, we lay the foundation for the other chapters in this respect. We admit that this is no mean task as Polish *prze-* actually unites what in most Slavic languages is expressed by two prefixes.

The received view on so-called “empty” prefixes is that they are empty of lexical meaning and merely function as formative affix of perfectivity; terms such as perfectivising prefixes are employed by many authors to indicate that they perceive the derivation to be from imperfective verbs via prefixation to perfective verbs. Strictly morphologically speaking there is no apparent ground to object to this model. Along these lines, *czytać_i* ‘read’ and *przeczytać_p* ‘read [through]’ form an aspectual pair. In theory, once the lexical meaning(s) of a given prefix is/are made explicit (here in terms of variant and invariant meaning(s)) a more precise picture of this perceived “emptiness” could be established. When one does so, though, one soon realises that one must abandon the notion that prefixes are ever really entirely “empty” of lexical meaning. Moreover, one begins to realise that, when it comes to aspectual derivation, it makes more sense to think from perfective to imperfective rather than the other way around. This last matter is not extensively explored in this dissertation, as it is simply too large a subject to deal with in a single chapter. It would in fact suffice for a separate dissertation. In chapter III though, we will propose a preliminary argumentation for this.

Prefixes often have a different valency from the base verbs they are derived from. Compare for instance *jechać_i* ‘drive’, which is intransitive, with the transitive *przejechać_p dolinę* ‘drive through a/the valley’. The latter verb can, apart from this accusative object, also appear with an instrumental object as well as several prepositional complements, just like most so-called verbs of motion. Among the prepositional complements those with preposition *przez* ‘through’ are notable as they come very close in meaning to the usual accusative object and, to a lesser extent, the instrumental object. In chapter IV we discuss these various complements. We have chosen to deal with this matter concentrating

on verbs of motion, as (spatial) prefix meaning comes through most clearly with this class of verbs. We also needed to limit the scope, as otherwise this too would suffice for a separate dissertation.

And that is how far the present work will reach. Each section of this study could have been expanded to a separate dissertation, especially if one would look at other prefixes as well as *prze-*. We have left it at this, though, and we humbly believe that it does live up to the promise to expose this single prefix in more than just one of the subjects one could raise around verbal prefixes. For example, in this dissertation there was no room to study prefixes as a complete set in which each member fulfils its own separate functions, which border onto each other. Furthermore, although we touched this very slightly in chapter III, the study of prefixes in historical or rather diachronic perspective could also not be dealt with here.

3 About relevant research

The truth is that for the matter(s) at hand, Polish, as compared to Russian and even Czech, has remained somewhat behind. Aspectual studies as well as those on prefix meaning and syntax do however exist and some publications are very important. We can only hope to make a small contribution to the dissemination of the vast knowledge these works display by including them in our present discussions.

Most Polish publications about verbal prefixes deal with prefix meaning. Important studies concerning *prze-* include those by Aptacy (1975), Grochowska (1979), Śmiech (1986), Pasich-Piasecka (1993) and Przybylska (2006). Most noteworthy are the article by Pasich-Piasecka and the book by Przybylska. The former uses a cognitive framework to describe the polysemy of this prefix whilst taking into account the preposition *przez* as a semantic basis. The book by Przybylska, exemplary in many respects, reached us somewhat late and although the text is highly interesting it did not yield insights that would have changed our model nor indeed our thinking. Her approach establishes

image schemes for the various variant meanings of several prefixes, amongst which *prze-*. Apart from these specific publications, dictionaries from earliest times to the most recent were employed. These dictionaries also offer descriptions of the variant meanings of the prefixes. In their treatment, they all aim to describe as many variant meanings as possible, which is the obvious approach for dictionaries. They show considerable variety in this, as well as with regards to the so-called “empty” prefixes (see chapter III). Our own approach was rather to analyse the different meanings and to establish a model for the invariant.

Far less rich is the Polish or Polish based literature on terminativity. The most important publications we utilised are Łaziński & Wiemer (1996a) and (1996b).

The topic of so-called “empty” prefixes is never discussed entirely around prefix *prze-*. It crops up in some publications mentioned above for prefix meaning, e.g. by Aptacy (1975), Grochowska (1979) and Śmiech (1986). Młynarczyk (2004) goes into the subject extensively as she needs it for her unconventional, but in our view rather problem ridden model for aspectual derivation and indeed the whole gamma of Polish verbal aspect.

Studies concerning syntactic properties involving verbal prefixes finally are rare and the only one we are aware of and that includes our present prefix is that of Kudra (1993). Of course, Przybylska (2006) also goes into this matter.

Most other works we have used are however not Polish in origin or even about Polish. Russian authors, most notably Maslov (1948, 1959ab, 1977, 1978, 1984) and others writing on Russian, Barentsen (1973ab, 1985, 1995, 2003), Holvoet (1989, 1991abcd, 1993ab), Schlegel (1999), Nübler (1993) and Proeme (1980, 1981) formed the core of our studies as well as Comrie (1976) who does not write specifically about a Slavic language.

It is a striking feature of the literature related to the subject of prefixes that most authors employ sometimes greatly diverging definitions for the otherwise rather limited body of key terms: telicity, terminativity, aspect, imperfectivity, perfectivity etc. Especially the topic of terminativity is complex because of the

amount of different models and definitions proposed by the various authors. Most agree in their descriptions of the lingual phenomena, but there is a great variation in the treatment and, again, the terminology used. In our work we have tried to include as many views as possible and we have come to the conclusion that there is also a lot of hidden agreement. It proved impossible to include all views in this dissertation in their entirety and so we have selected key parts for discussion here.

4 About our sources

As the base material for our research we have used our own text corpus consisting of 20th-century literary and newspaper texts rather extensively. Over the last 10 years or so this corpus has been built for use by the editors of the forthcoming Polish-Dutch dictionary *Pegasus*.

The electronic body of that dictionary was also employed for this dissertation and it yielded a fair amount of data, especially by way of examples but also, more particularly, in the study of “empty” prefixes.

We also were lucky to have access to what now is called the “Amsterdam Slavic Parallel Aligned Corpus” (ASPAC) of Adrie Barentsen. It is under permanent construction as texts are added regularly and aligned to facilitate multi-lingual research.

In addition to all of this we used the internet for further input.

Native informants took a special place in our research; obviously, as we are not Polish ourselves. All text fragments and examples in Polish were checked by a minimum of three native speakers.

5 About this book

This book is divided into four chapters, each focussing on a different problem concerning verbal prefixes, each taking *prze-* as a case in point. The four sections then, the chapters, are numbered in roman numerals to indicate that they are really perceived as separate.

Each section has its own separate paragraph numbers and its own separate discussion of previous literature and state of research as well as concluding remarks. We could easily be accused of not writing a full proper thesis but rather a collection of articles, which of course is also an accepted format for PhD purposes. Maybe it is true that the separateness of the problems presented as well as the actual presentation would more adequately be described as a collection of articles and, in truth, two sections are in fact based albeit loosely, on earlier, separate publications. Chapter I, on the meaning variants and invariant of *prze-* constitutes a rather extensive reworking of our earlier paper (Genis 1997) whilst chapter III is a highly altered version of another earlier paper (Genis 2003). The unifying element *prze-* is however omnipresent in all chapters and so we could also easily maintain that this is an integral study.

6 About the special markings

Throughout chapters II, III and IV of this book we have provided subscript _i and _p at the tail end of each verb to indicate ‘imperfective’ and ‘perfective’ respectively, both in examples as well as when mentioned in passing in the main body of the text. We have even introduced these markings in most quotations from other publications. As matters aspectual have no bearing on the discussion in chapter I, these markings were not made there.

A further convention concerns the translations of examples. We have provided these for every example. The translation of infinitives is usually without the particle ‘to’, except in quotations from other publications.

7 About the glosses

Throughout this book we have glossed the examples. An attempt is made to convey as much grammatical information as possible in the forms of the translated lexemes themselves. This means that often number and person need not be indicated in the glosses. The following is a list of signs and abbreviations employed in the glosses.

In the glosses themselves the following signs were used:

- between prefix and base-verb (single-unit orthography). Also, when a translation is rendered with more elements than the original (so: *obok* is glossed as: next-to);
- _ between members of a nominal group sharing the same case and number (plural-unit orthography).

The subscripts employed to indicate inflections are:

NOM	Nominative	IMP	Imperative
GEN	Genitive	PRES	Present
DAT	Dative	PRET	Preterite
ACC	Accusative	SG	Singular
INSTR	Instrumental	PL	Plural
LOC	Locative	FEM	feminine
P	Perfective verb	MASC	masculine
I	Imperfective verb	NEUTR	neuter
1, 2, 3	Person	-	separator between subscript
INF	Infinitive		markings

The fact that in the examples subscript aspect markings are doubled in the glosses is taken for granted.

A special note should be added concerning the rendition of the prefix *prze-* in the glosses as its treatment varies in the different chapters. In chapter I, prefix *prze-* is glossed as PRZE- as the meaning of the prefix is actually under discussion and we did not want to confuse matters by providing a standard translation in the glosses. In the remaining chapters we have chosen always to render it as "through-", which is very close to the invariant meaning. We believe that this constant rendition will signal the presence and location of the prefix, so adding extra clarity.

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Other prefixes are translated in all chapters. These translations are not always very elegant; we thought it more important to actually indicate the presence of a prefix than to provide outstanding translations in the glosses. Underneath the glosses, the actual translations are usually more eloquent, or so we hope.

Particles, such as the question particle *czy* cannot be individually translated and are therefore rendered in small capitals, usually: PART.

We hope that the glosses as well as the other conventions used in this book facilitate the reading by people with a linguistic interest but with limited or even no knowledge of Polish.

