

On Slavic semelfactives and secondary imperfectives: implications for the split ‘AspP’

The Data The Russian semelfactive suffix *nu* [1] (*nou* in Czech, *na* in Polish), rarely discussed in the rich literature on Slavic aspect (Forsyth 1970, Fowler 1994, Borik 2002, Svenonius 2004a,b,c, Filip 2000, 2003, Ramchand 2003, 2004, Romanova 2004, inter alia) is problematic as it shows striking differences from other perfective operators and unexpected, previously unobserved similarities to the secondary imperfective suffix *iv* [2]. At first *iv* and *nu* seem different: *nu* is perfective, while *iv* is imperfective, as seen from the following perfectivity tests (Borik 2002): *nu*-verbs unlike *iv*-verbs can’t get an ongoing present tense reading: *pryg-nu-t* = they *(will) jump vs. *otpryg-iv-ajut* = they’re jumping; they cannot be complements of *begin*: **nachal pryg-nu-t* vs. *nachal podpryg-iv-at* = began to jump; or form present participles: **pryg-nu-juschij* vs. *podpryg-iv-ajuschij* = jumping. Despite the differences, *nu*, like *iv*, is highly regular and attaches to any semantically compatible stem [cf1,2], unlike the idiosyncratic low perfective prefixes [3] (Romanova 2004). Second, like *iv*, *nu* can appear with telicizing low perfective prefixes [4a,b] that cannot occur with each other [5a] (Svenonius 2004c, Filip 2003) or with underived perfective verbs [5b]. Third, though *iv* appears with other perfectives [7a,b], it is crucially impossible with *nu* [6a,b]. Semantically, a combination of a *nu* and *iv* is not problematic: [6a,b] could mean to repetitively or continuously wink/ jump. It is also possible phonologically. Finally, *nu* is the only perfective suffix in Russian, which in isolation may seem accidental, but becomes significant taken with the above facts.

The Proposal. I argue that *nu* / *iv* are two realizations of a single VP-selecting light *v* (Butt 2003, Adger 2003:34; Filip 2003, Levin 2000) that denotes an atelic event and is merged above the low perfective prefix analyzed as *P*, (see Svenonius 2004a,b,c, Fowler 1994, among others). Whether the *v* is realized as *nu* or *iv* depends on whether it has features [+Inst] or [+Prog]/[+Hab] respectively. Since *nu*/*iv* spell-out a single *v* head, they cannot occur together. [8a] is the initial structure of [4a,b] representing first-phase (I-syntax) (Ramchand 2003), with the derivation in [8b,c]. First, the PP moves to spec VP [8b], then the object is moved, after which the VP moves to spec vP [8c] (a la Svenonius 2004a,b), stranding the object. The external argument (not shown) is introduced by *Voi(tr)* (Kratzer 1996) that is separate from the event-denoting light *v* (Pylkkanen 2002, Collins 2005). Without the low PP, we get [9]. That *nu*-verbs, despite being perfective, are atelic, like *iv*-verbs is supported by their inability to be modified with ‘in X time’ [10a vs. b], their inability to form passive participles unlike telic perfectives [11a vs. b] (Schoorlemmer 1995 for arguments), and their ability to combine with telicizing prefixes (Filip 2003) [cf4a] vs. [5a,b]. Importantly, *nu* / *iv* pattern with other light verbs (Butt 2003, Butt & Ramchand 2002, Diesing 1998). They affect the aspectuality of the predicate by adding different semantic ‘flavors’ to the *V* -- instantaneous (*nu*) vs. iterative/progressive (*iv*) -- but are not independent predictors, (ibid). This is analogous to Hindi where light *v*’s add benefactive or inceptive meanings to the verb [12a,b] (Butt 2003, Ramchand 2003, Butt & Ramchand 2002). Stacking two light *v*’s of the same kind is not possible in Hindi (Butt & Ramchand 2002), much like what we see with *nu*/*iv* [cf6a,b]. Finally, the light *v* need not be separate, but can be suffixed to the verb, as independently argued for Japanese causatives (Harley 1995).

Implications. Together with the view of perfective prefixes as high and low *Ps* advanced in Svenonius 2004b,c, Matushansky 2002, Fowler 1994, the above analysis of *nu*/*iv* suggests that grammatical aspect in Slavic is generally reducible to *Ps* and *v*. Furthermore, building on parallels between verbal and nominal domains (Bach 1986, Ramchand 2004), simplex imperfectives and underived perfectives [13a,b] can be treated as bare *Vs* that encode events’ aktionsart and are structurally analogous to bare *NPs* (Chierchia 1995). Hence, simplex imperfectives are morphologically ‘underived’ and compatible with *nu* [14], low and high perfectives [15,16] (Filip 2003), and sometimes with *iv* [17]. Finally, high (quantificational) perfectives (Filip 2000) also do not require *Asp*: on the current proposal they are adjoined to VP [18] or light vP [19], as seen from their separability from the stem [20a], unlike what we see with low *Ps* [20b].

Conclusion. Thus, the proposal unifies the seemingly distant semelfactives and secondary imperfectives by treating them as two realizations of a light *v* and links them to light *v*’s in Hindi/ Urdu (Butt 2003) and Japanese (Harley 1995). Furthermore, the analysis offers a way to reduce aspect to the independently motivated *P*, *v*, and *V* heads. In Slavic, and arguably, universally, *Asp*, like *C* or *Infl* is a collocation of syntactic heads (Rizzi 1997, Pollock 1989), but is not itself a head.

