Reduplication as a derivational mechanism for Russian secondary imperfectives and long adjectives

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0. In this paper¹, I propose a unification of Russian imperfectives ending with -ivaj (s-prəs-i-t 'ask') and the long adjectives (nəv-a → nəv-aja 'new'). My aim is to bring a new morpho-phonological argument to show the proximity of verbal and adjectival morphological derivations.

1. Following Coats (1974) and Feinberg (1980), I assume that suffixes -aj and -ivaj are in complementary distribution: -ivaj is a reduplication of a suffix -aj (1)². This analysis is particularly interesting if we compare Russian -ivaj and its Bulgarian equivalent -avaj (rus. za-igr-iva-t 'flirt' / bul. za-igr-ava-m 'enjoy'). Bulgarian still shows a succession of two vowels /a/, while Russian implies a change in the vowel quality of the first suffix -aj (i.e. /aj-aj/ → /av-aj/ → [-ivaj]).

2. However, the analysis proposed by Coats and Feinberg does not satisfactorily account for this change: both authors assume a reduction from /a/ to /i/ (realized as [i, ɨ]), which is not observed elsewhere in Russian. Following an analysis proposed by Faust (2011) for Modern Hebrew, I propose that the vowel /i/ of -ivaj is the realisation of an expletive root the presence of which licences a succession of two identical v heads (van Riemsdijk, 1998, 2008) (2a). In other words, the reduplication of the suffix -aj can surface only if an intervening zero ‘morpheme’ /-i/ prevents the adjacency of identical heads. The advantage of this analysis is that it motivates the change of /a/ into /i/ (-aj-aj → -iva). I assume, following Cyran (2010) for Polish, that /i/ in -ivaj is floating. In order to be realized, /i/ shifts to the nearest vowel on its left (i.e. the position of /a/ in the first -aj), and removes it (2b).

3. The question of course is: how to verify this analysis. Are there some other reduplications

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¹ Examples are transcribed in their phonological form, without vowel reduction not contrast between [i] and [ɨ]. Stressed vowels are underlined.

² The hypothesis that -aj and -ivaj have the same root is already given in Mazon (1908), Meillet (1924) and Kuznecov (1959).
in Russian that could show the same intervening expletive root /-i/? I show that long adjectives (ex: нёв-а ~ нёв-aja ‘new’) show a very similar phenomenon. These are marked by a repetition of the gender suffix (recognizable especially in feminine because it alternes with -у in the accusative form: нёв-у ~ нёв-уju). Most interesting: this reduplication of the gender suffix involves an intervening fixed segment: /j/. The glide /j/ is the consonantal equivalent of the vowel /i/ mentioned above. I thus propose that these two fixed segments found in reduplications are realizations of the same expletive root (3a), which surfaces as a consonant [j] between two vowels (it is linked to an empty onset preceding the second suffix -a) (3b).

(3)a. representation of -aja
   √  a
   √  -a [u-v]
   √  a
   √  i [u-xP]
   ROOT -a [u-v]

b. derivation de -aja
   ROOT... a + i + a
   | .  | .  |

As a conclusion, this analysis shows, from a morpho-phonological point of view, the correlation between aspectual derivation and adjectival derivation in Russian. Semantics is not addressed, but it complements with semantic and morpho-syntactic analyses that have been proposed on this topic (Geist, 2010; among others).

Références