

Title: Russian Aspectual System: Why Do Triplets Not Compromise Pairs?

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The paper considers the genesis and the status of so-called aspectual triplets within the Russian aspectual system. We claim that, far from being marginal, the triplets represent a highly productive and common phenomenon for this system. Indeed, they are generated by the same mechanisms (suffixation or deprefixation) that generate aspectual correlates for virtually any perfective verb.

However, recognizing the existence of aspectual triplets does not imply rejecting aspectual pairs: On the contrary, the latter should be considered as constitutive for the Russian grammar of aspect.

The term “aspectual triplets” applies to a chain of morphologically related verbs such as *komkat'*_{impf1} – *skomkat'*_{pf} – *skomkivat'*_{impf2} where: 1) IMPF1 is a simple imperfective verb; PF is a prefixed perfective verb formed on IMPF1; IMPF2 is an imperfective verb formed by suffixation on the perfective, and 2) both IMPF1 and IMPF2 can function as aspectual correlates of the prefixed perfective verb thus representing more or less close synonyms.

Actual status of a given triplet within the aspectual system is determined by two parameters, both of which represent a scale: The first is the more or less important semantic contribution of the prefix to the meaning of the verb. The second is the more or less high frequency of use of IMPF2. The following table illustrates how different values of the two parameters correspond to different status of IMPF1 and IMPF2 with respect to the aspectual correlation.

| | IMPF1 | PF | IMPF2 |
|--|---|---|---|
| 1. Exemplary suffixed pairs | — | <i>переписать</i> <i>открыть</i> <i>исключить</i> | <i>переписывать</i> <i>открывать</i> <i>исключать</i> |
| 2. Suffixed pairs with a potential IMPF1 | [<i>лезть</i> (на дерево)] [<i>рвать</i> (зуб)] [<i>капать</i> (в нос)] | <i>залезть</i> <i>вырвать</i> <i>закапать</i> | <i>залезать</i> <i>вырывать</i> <i>закапывать</i> |
| 3. Exemplary triplets | <i>есть</i> <i>читать</i> <i>гибнуть</i> <i>делить</i> <i>хватать</i> <i>комкать</i> | <i>съесть</i> <i>прочитать</i> <i>погибнуть</i> <i>разделить</i> <i>схватить</i> <i>скомкать</i> | <i>съедать</i> <i>прочитывать</i> <i>погибать</i> <i>разделять</i> <i>схватывать</i> <i>скомкивать</i> |
| 4. Prefixed pairs with a potential IMPF2 | <i>ломать</i> (ветку) <i>рисовать</i> | <i>слопать</i> <i>нарисовать</i> | [<i>слапывать</i>] [? <i>нарисовывать</i>] |
| 5. Exemplary prefixed pairs | <i>делать</i> <i>строить</i> | <i>сделать</i> <i>построить</i> | [? <i>сделывать</i>] [? <i>постраивать</i>] |