

Title: Are There Inherent Weak Points in Paradigms? Evidence from Slavic Verbs
Author: Brian Joseph, The Ohio State University

In several Slavic languages, changes in verb endings occur that provide important insights into the kinds of relationships verbal forms in a paradigm enter into. They are thus of considerable interest for linguistic theory, regarding the theory of the paradigm, and for historical linguistics, concerning the nature of productivity (analogy).

For instance, Macedonian and Bulgarian dialectally show a first person plural (1PL) ending *-ne* (e.g. *sne* 'we are'), vs. more usual *-me* (cf. standard Macedonian *sme*), that shows influence from the free pronoun *nie* 'we'. Similarly, early Church Slavic shows a 1PL verbal ending *-my* for expected *-mb*, e.g. *pobyxomy* (vs. expected *pobyxomb*) (b = back jer) where influence of the 1PL nominative pronoun *my* seems to be responsible. And, elsewhere in early Slavic, the first person dual ending *-vE* (E = jat) for expected *-va* shows influence from the dual pronoun *vE*.

These examples raise the interesting question of why pronouns should affect verb endings in the first place, but even importantly why first person forms should be vulnerable. The precarious place of first person forms, vis-a-vis related pronouns, is bolstered further by two cases outside of Slavic: the innovative 1PL ending *-nos* in New Mexican Spanish for more widespread *-mos* based on the free pronoun *nos(otros)*, to later (Middle and Modern) Greek *-maste* based on the accusative/genitive pronoun *mas*.

This Greek example, coupled with several other changes in Greek mediopassive endings, suggests that the answer may lie with frequency. That is, the relative infrequency of the mediopassive makes it a likely "target" for linguistic change, and so also for the Slavic dual reshaping. While perhaps less intuitively applicable to 1PL forms, the data suggests otherwise, so we can recognize inherent weak points in grammatical paradigms, as revealed through language change.