Unraveling morphological competition: derivational properties of loan markers

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Keywords: morphological competition, Russian, loan words, corpus analysis, allomorphs

Morphological competition in Slavic languages has gained attention in a number of recent cognitive linguistic studies: see Bermel & Knittl 2012, Lečić 2016 on allomorphy in nominal endings; Janda et al. 2013, Olsson 2021 on allomorphy and synonymy in verbal prefixes; Nesset & Janda 2010, Kuznetsova & Makarova 2012 on variation in Russian verbal suffixes *–a-/-aj-*, *–nu-/-anu-*. However, for the verbal domain, the main focus of such research is usually placed on prefixes rather than suffixes, without regard to loan stems. This brings forth several theoretical questions: are there suffixes that serve as loan verb markers in Slavic languages, what accounts for their distribution, and how are loan verbs with these suffixes integrated into the system of Slavic verbal word-formation?

In Russian, loan verbs can be introduced by a handful of suffixes: *-ova-*, *-eva-*, *-irova-*, *-stvova-* (which are often treated as allomorphs, Švedova et al. 1980); *-i-*; *-a-*; *-niča-*; *-e-*; *-nu-/-anu-*. We adopt a usage-based perspective (Kemmer & Barlow 1999) and, based on corpus data, approach these suffixes and the stems they combine with as derivational clusters. We collect the data from two resources: a database of 6,241 verbs that have an ipm > 4 in Lyashevskaya & Sharov (2009: http://dict.ruslang.ru/freq.php, based on the frequencies from the Russian National Corpus), and all corresponding verbs from the Russian web corpus RuTenTen11 (2011, https://www.sketchengine.eu/rutenten-russian-corpus/).The first database allows us to investigate the patterns that are well-established in the language, whereas the web corpus provides a better insight into more recent productive patterns.

In the derivational cluster, we are interested in two properties of the suffix + stem combination: 1) how many times each derivative type is attested in the derivational cluster, as well as how many members the cluster contains; 2) how many derivational extensions can both Slavic and loan verbs with each suffix have (i.e., for each combination, what is the "longest" derivative attested in the database). Thus, for each suffix, we define what kind of clusters are typical, how sizable they are, and what kind of derivatives they include, and present a comparative analysis of clusters associated with different suffixes.

Our results show that Slavic and loan verbs often have different properties: e.g. prefix stacking is only attested in Slavic verbs. Different suffixes, even the ones that are considered to be allomorphs, behave differently both in terms of their frequency with loan stems and ability to have multiple derivational extensions. *-Irova-* is a purely loan verb marker with rare exceptions (*skladirovat'* 'put into storage; stock.IPF'); *-ova-* is widely used with both loan and Slavic stems and shows a more even distribution of different derivational patterns, whereas *-stvova-* is used only with Slavic stems. While *-nu-* is compatible with longer derivatives (*vyplesnut'-sja < vy- plesnut' < plesnut' < pleskat'* 'splash'), *-anu-* tends to be the end of the derivational path (*rez-anu-t' < rezat'* 'cut') and can be regarded a separate suffix. The corpus data allow us to establish derivational properties of loan markers and investigate how loan elements contribute to morphological competition.

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