

## Truncated perfect in Serbian – a missing link in the evolution of the Slavic Perfect\*

Anastasia Meermann  
(a.meermann@slavistik.lmu.de)

### 0. Aim of the contribution

To trace the development of the Common Slavic (CS) perfect in the Slavic languages with particular attention to the role of the auxiliary

- showing that all Slavic languages followed the same evolutionary path, which might be defined as the change of the resultative perfect to preterit
  - cf. Fleischman (1983) for similar assumptions concerning the compound past in Romance languages, Lindstedt (2000) for a typological overview
- focusing on the role of auxiliary within this development
- challenging the traditional assumption that there are two different paths of development of the Common Slavic perfect
  - North Slavic (i.e. West and East Slavic):  
'resultative' perfect > preterit
  - Balkan Slavic:  
'resultative' perfect > evidential form
- Serbian 'truncated perfect' (i.e. without the auxiliary) as the link between the two paths since it shows parallels to both the North and Balkan Slavic

### 1. Starting point: The CS perfect in the modern Slavic languages

(1)	OCS	<i>obiděľŭ</i>	<i>esmъ</i>	'I have offended'
		offend.PTCP.M.SG	be.AUX.1.SG	

The CS resultative perfect is assumed to express the existence of a consequent state resulting from a past event at the moment of speech.

- past participle (so called *l*-participle) denotes the consequent state
- BE-auxiliary constitutes the link between the consequent state and the moment of speech

#### 1.1. North Slavic

CS perfect (further *l*-forms) has replaced the synthetic past forms, aorist and imperfect, and functions as a neutral preterit.

The auxiliary lost its original function and

- was retained as marker of the grammatical person in West Slavic
- was completely lost in East Slavic

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- (2) Cz a. *zpívala* *jsem* 'I sang'  
sing.PCTP.F.SG be.AUX.1.SG
- b. *zpívala*  $\emptyset$  'she sang'  
sing.PTCP.F.SG AUX.3.
- (3) Rus a. *ja* *pela* 'I sang'  
I sing.PTCP.F.SG
- b. *ona* *pela* 'she sang'  
she sing.PTCP.F.SG

## 1.2. Balkan Slavic

Aorist and imperfect

- definite past, marked for confirmativity by the speaker

*L*-forms: traditional analysis

- Macedonian
  - non-confirmative evidential forms (reportative, inferential, admirative meaning)
  - retain the auxiliary as marker of the grammatical person in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person; zero-marker in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person (cf. West Slavic)
- Bulgarian: auxiliary variation in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person
  - +aux: perfect
  - aux: non-confirmative evidential

- (4) Blg a. *pisal* *e* perfect  
write.PTCP.M.SG be.AUX.3.SG
- b. *pisal*  $\emptyset$  evidential  
write.PTCP.M.SG AUX.3.SG

The traditional distinction between perfect and evidential in Bulgarian is undermined by the actual use of the *l*-forms, cf. (5).

- (5) Blg *Imalo* *e* *edin* *pop*,  
had.PTCP.N.SG be.AUX.3.SG one priest  
*i* *go* *oženil*.  
and him married.PTCP.M.SG  
'There was a priest, and he married him (to her)' (Friedman 2004: 108)

*L*-forms: alternative analysis

- l*-forms constitute a generalized past both in Macedonian and in Bulgarian
  - unmarked for confirmativity
  - neutral and non-confirmative meaning (vs. confirmative synthetic past) (Friedman 2004)

- auxiliary variation in Bulgarian (Fielder 1995, 1996; Sonnenhauser 2012, 2014)
  - +aux: anchoring of the proposition with the speaker/narrator (backgrounding events)
  - –aux: no anchoring with the speaker/narrator (foregrounding events)

### 1.3. Serbian

With regards to its preterit system, Serbian can be seen as a transitional zone between the North Slavic and the Balkan Slavic.<sup>1</sup>

- the *l*-forms have replaced Aorist and Imperfect in most instances and function as a neutral past
- no grammaticalized evidential category assumed
- auxiliary variation in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> (rarely in the 2<sup>nd</sup>) person
  - –aux: is assumed to convey expressivity and to occur in vivid contexts as story telling

The analysis of the unauxiliated *l*-forms in colloquial Serbian reveals a broader use of these forms (Meermann forthcoming) (unauxiliated forms in italics):

- reportative meaning
 

(6) Pa sećam se Paule. Pričala je da je pala što nije znala neke podatke. Kaže! Ona ne zna kad su uhapsili Gavrila Principa, i kaže *oborili* je ispitu. (Savić und Polovina 1989, 93)  
 ‘And so I meet Paula. She told me that she failed [the exam], that she didn’t know some dates. So she says! She doesn’t know when they arrested Gavrilo Princip, and she says [they, the examiners] *flunked* her in the exam.’
- inferential meaning
 

(7) Znaš ti da su našem jednom profanu, ovaj se vraćao iz inostranstva i nosio knjige oдавde tamo, svoje, zato što je išao tamo duže, *trebale mu*. Dođe otuda na carinu, ovde mu naplate. [...] Zato što su na / valjda stranom jeziku. Znaš / recim “Englez” *išao* u Englesku... (Savić und Polovina 1989, 89)  
 ‘Do you know what they [did] to one of our professors, he was returning from abroad and carried some books from there, his own, because he went there for a long time, he [apparently] *needed* them. He comes from there to the customs, and there they made him pay. [...] Probably because they are in a foreign language. You know, let’s say ‘Englishman’ *went* to England...’
- expressivity: surprise, indignation, irony
 

(8) Jao! On *izmislio*? (Savić und Polovina 1989, 134)  
 ‘Oh! He *made it up*?’

<sup>1</sup> This also holds for Bosnian and Croatian, although there are some differences in the frequency of use of aorist and imperfect (cf. Belyavsky-Frank 1991).

- (9) U pet dolazi ovaj ... Kako se zove? Duvančić!  
 – Ja baš *tela* da kažem Krompirančić. (Savić and Polovina 1989: 164)  
 ‘At five arrives this one ... What is his name? Duvančić!  
 – I just *wanted* to say Krompirančić [=derisive nickname].’

- not explicitly evidential or expressive

- (10) at the beginning of a narrative sequence

Slušajte, ali gledajte! Sad kod mene / pre mesec dana / *bili* Jelkica i Miško, unučad moje sestre, i deca se igrala ovde, nisu mnogo skakala, kad ona zove telefonom: “Komšinice, meni se drma luster, deca skaču.” (Savić and Polovina 1989, 133)

‘S: Look, but listen! The other day at my place / one month ago / there *were* Jelkica and Miško, the grandchildren of my sister, and the children played here, didn’t bop around much, when she phones: ‘Hey neighbor, my luster is dangling, the children are bopping around.’

- (11) speaker is somehow less involved in the described situation

Pa da / ti se vratiš iz vojske. Ja nema me – u Americi. *Otišla* da se probijam. (Savić and Polovina 1989: 163)

‘So that / you will return from the army. I’m not there – in America. *Gone* to make a living.’

To sum up:

- parallels in the usage of unauxiliated *l*-forms in Bulgarian and Serbian
  - in both languages these forms can convey non-confirmative evidential meaning (reportative inferential, admirative) although a grammatical evidential category has been denied for Serbian
  - both languages also display not explicitly evidential usage of these forms

## 2. A conjoint analysis of the Bulgarian and Serbian unauxiliated *l*-forms

Based on Sonnenhauser (2012; 2014; forthcoming) for Bulgarian

- +aux: the ‘be’-auxiliary in the present tense constitutes the linking device, which anchors the utterance with the speaker or narrator as reference point
- –aux: the omission of auxiliary signals an omission (or at least an attenuation) of the anchoring of the situation with the speaker
  - some other (unspecified) reference point different from the speaker can be implied
  - the omission of the anchoring of the proposition with the speaker serves as semantic base for further discourse-pragmatic interpretation of the unauxiliated *l*-forms within the context as reportative, inferential etc.

### 3. Auxiliary variation in the all-Slavic evolution of the OCS perfect

Functional auxiliary variation can be seen as a ‘collateral’ phenomenon within the development of the perfect to a preterit.

Stages of the development of the *l*-forms from resultative to a perfect proper to a preterit (Dickey 2013; Fielder 2003; Fleischman 1983; Lindstedt 2000):

Stage I: Common Slavic resultative

- *l*-participle (adjectival): resultant state from a past situation
- auxiliary (deictic): connects the resultant state with the time of utterance

Stage II: ‘current relevance’<sup>2</sup>-perfect

- *l*-participle: adjectival > eventive form
  - denotes not only to resultant state but also the past situation
- auxiliary: deictic > subjective marker
  - connects the situation denoted by the participle with the speaker’s domain of experience as reference point

Stage III: from ‘current relevance’-perfect to preterit

- *l*-participle: situations anterior to the present
  - can convey preterit meaning by itself
- a. omission of auxiliary in certain contexts (cf. Bulgarian and Serbian)
  - +aux = unmarked: [± current relevance]
  - –aux = marked: [– current relevance], i.e. explicit absence of the anchoring with the speaker
- b. expansion of –aux
  - –aux = unmarked: all past contexts
  - +aux = marked: [+ current relevance], i.e. emphasis on the anchoring with the speaker

Stage IV: completed change process (cf. North Slavic and Macedonian)

- auxiliary lost its primary function and is either completely lost or is retained as a marker for the grammatical person

Interim conclusions:

- With respect to the evolution of the *l*-forms, the Balkan Slavic languages seem to follow the same path as the other Slavic languages.
  - vs. the widespread assumption of a separate development of the *l*-forms in Balkan Slavic, i.e. from perfect to evidential
- The retention of the synthetic (confirmative) past rather than the development of a non-confirmative evidential category can be seen as the distinct feature of Balkan Slavic.
  - In contrast to these confirmative forms the neutral *l*-forms are perceived as ‘less confirmative’.

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<sup>2</sup> ‘Current relevance’ is understood as broad term referring to various possibilities of the anchoring with the speaker. Dahl and Hedin (2000: 398) define ‘current relevance’ as “a condition on the discourse, in that the speaker portrays the consequences of an event as somehow essential to the point of what he is saying.”

#### 4. Evidence from the history of the Slavic languages

Displaying Stage III:

Old Church Slavic and Pre-modern Bulgarian (Fielder 1998)

- synthetic past as the main narrative form
- *l*-forms are used for past situations outside the main narrative
  - +aux = statal perfect: backgrounded events connected with the narrator
  - -aux = actional perfect: foregrounded events outside the main narrative, 'distance' of the narrator to the event

Old Russian (Ivanov 1982)

- ongoing to complete loss of the synthetic past
- *l*-forms as the main narrative form
  - -aux: neutral past, dominant form
  - +aux: perfect meaning, particularly denoting actions of eternal importance

Old and Middle Czech (Dickey 2013)

- ongoing to complete loss of the synthetic past
- *l*-forms -aux: neutral preterit, dominant form
- *l*-forms +aux: 'current relevance'-perfect or emphasis

Some further traces:

Old Polish (Andersen 1987)

- the reduction of the simple past is completed before the date of the oldest preserved texts although they contain aorist and imperfect as relics
- auxiliary as the marker of the grammatical person, 'traces' of functional auxiliary variation: neutral [-aux] vs. emphatic [+aux] predication

Sorbian (Brankačević 2014)

- *l*-forms have replaced the synthetic past in colloquial speech
- initial tendency of auxiliary drop could not be established; probably due to the influence of German

#### 5. Concluding remarks

- the CS resultative followed more or less the same development in all Slavic languages: resultative > 'current relevance' > preterit
- reinterpretation of both components of the construction
  - *l*-participle as verbal form
  - ± auxiliary as marker of the reference point: speaker/narrator vs. other
- utilization of auxiliary variation on the discourse-pragmatic level
  - non-confirmativity, point of view, text structuring as possible interpretations

A further investigation of the historic and dialectal data is needed to draw a more precise, overall picture of the development of the perfect in Slavic.

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