Prefixed vs. base verbs in Croatian – how prefixes affect argument structure

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In this paper, we discuss correlations between valency-changing operations and grammatical categories in Croatian, a Slavic language with rich derivational processes and morphosyntactic marking of verbal complements.

Croatian verbs are marked for aspect – they are either perfectives or imperfectives. Perfectives are mostly formed from imperfectives via 19 different prefixes, e.g. *hodati* 'to walk $_{imperf.}$' – *prehodati* 'to walk (a distance), to cover by walking $_{pf.}$'. Each prefix can either change the aspect of base verbs without adding new meaning components (e.g. *pisati* 'to write $_{imperf.}$' – *napisati* 'to write $_{perf.}$'), add a new, specific semantic component to base verbs (e.g. *skočiti* 'to jump $_{perf.}$'- *preskočiti* 'to jump over something $_{perf.}$') or both change the aspect and add a new semantic component (e.g. *pisati* 'to write $_{imperf.}$' – *prepisati* 'to copy by writing $_{perf.}$').

Although prefixes developed from prepositions and their primary meaning is locational, their semantic structure is polysemous and they differently affect the meaning of base forms. In numerous cases, they add temporal, quantitative or modal semantic components to base forms. In terms of compositionality, the meaning of derived forms can also be idiosyncratic (e.g. *teći* 'to flow $_{imperf.}$' – *preteći* 'to outrun, to overtake $_{perf.}$').

For the purpose of this paper, we focus on valency-changing operations triggered by prefixation of verbs, i.e. on systematic change in valency caused by specific prefixal meanings. The analysis is based on previous research of prefixal meanings and their division into various groups (Šojat et al. 2012, Šojat and Srebačić 2014). Derivational spans of selected base forms were extracted from CroDeriV, a large database of Croatian verbs (Šojat et al. 2014, http://croderiv.ffzg.hr). Valency change refers to a) increase or decrease of the number of arguments and b) change of their morphosyntactic features (Haspelmath, Muller-Bardey 2004, Samardžija 1994). For example, the prefix *pre-* can add one of the following components to the meaning of base verbs and consequently alter the valency of derivatives:

1. locational
    a. over – *skočiti* 'to jump $_{perf.}$' – *preskočiti* 'to jump over something $_{perf.}$'
    b. re-location – *sipati* 'to pour $_{imperf.}$' – *presipati* 'to empty from one into another container $_{perf.}$'
2. temporal
    a. completion – *noćiti* 'to spend the night $_{imperf.}$' – *prenoćiti* 'to spend the night $_{perf.}$'
3. quantitative
    a. intensity – *jesti* 'to eat $_{imperf.}$' – *prejesti se* 'to overeat oneself $_{perf.}$'
    b. exceeding – *rasti* 'to grow $_{imperf.}$' – *prerasti* 'to outgrow $_{perf.}$'
4. modal
    a. change of property – *odjenuti se* 'to dress oneself $_{perf.}$' – *preodjenuti se* 'to dress oneself in other clothes $_{perf.}$'

The component of *exceeding* in the prefixal meaning (cf. 3.b. above) regularly changes intransitive base forms into transitive derivatives, e.g. *rasti* 'to grow $_{imperf.}$' + ø vs. *prerasti* 'to outgrow $_{perf.}$' + Acc.; *trčati* 'to run $_{imperf.}$' + ø / Acc. – *pretrčati* 'to outrun $_{perf.}$' + Acc.; *glasati* 'to vote $_{imperf.}$' + ø – *preglasati* 'to outvote $_{perf.}$' + Acc. Although *rasti*, *trčati* and *glasati* belong to different semantic fields, shifts from intransitive to transitive verb triggered by a specific prefixal meaning occurs in all cases. Similar patterns are observed with other prefixes. Therefore, we argue that particular meaning components of Croatian verbal prefixes cause systematic changes of valency in terms of argument structure and / or morphological marking of arguments.

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