

On the Semelfactives in Bosnian/ Croatian/ Serbian: Suffix *-nu-* as the Atelic Marker and Orphan Semelfactives

Marija Brašić, University of Nova Gorica
marija.brasic@student.ung.si, marija.brasic@gmail.com

Semelfactive verbs are morphologically marked in Bosnian/ Croatian/ Serbian (BCS) with the suffix *-nu-*, and considered as instantaneous, single act perfectives (1).

(1) *Kucnuo je čas.*
*knock*_{3M SG PERF AUX} *time*_{ACC SG}
'The time has come.'

Dispute is present whether they are telic or atelic. Building on work of Markman (2008), I argue that the suffix *-nu-* is the atelic marker and discuss semelfactives as atelic perfectives. Considering Aktionsart, namely telicity, semelfactives are treated as a separate class (Smith, 1997), as opposed to the literature that makes no mention of semelfactives as a separate class (Vendler, 1967). I explain how semelfactives are determined by applying diagnostic telicity (Rothstein, 2004) and perfectivity (Markman, 2008) tests. According to Markman (2008), the suffix *-nu-* occupies the place of light *v* with the following initial structure:

[**nu** [pref [root]]]

I adopt this proposal. Collected corpus data were analyzed. Three corpora were used: local verb data base BHS baza Aspekt and web corpuses, hrWac and srWac. Corpus included the following occurrences and frequencies for the purpose of the research:

1. Query. **nuti** 931,752 (666.60 per million) in hrWac 50% of the results were looked into
2. Query. **nuti** 182,460 (328.98 per million) in srWac 60% of the results were looked into
3. BHS baza Aspekt (local verb data base) 1001 occurrences

Through the analysis of data it was found that the suffix *-nu-* in BCS is productive not only for deriving semelfactives, but also derive activities/ stative (2).

(2) <i>istrunu-ti</i> > ¹ <i>trunu-ti</i>	'rot'
<i>pokisnu-ti</i> > <i>kisnu-ti</i>	'moisten'
<i>uvenu-ti</i> > <i>venu-ti</i>	'wither'
<i>zabrinu-ti</i> (se) > <i>brinu-ti</i> (se)	'worry'
<i>poginu-ti</i> / <i>izginu-ti</i> / <i>uginu-ti</i> > <i>ginu-ti</i>	'die'
<i>utrnu-ti</i> > <i>trnu-ti</i>	'numb'
<i>potonu-ti</i> / <i>utonu-ti</i> > <i>tonu-ti</i>	'sink'

Corpus data analysis shows that *-nu-* in semelfactives is in complementary distribution with *-iva-* / *-ava-* for secondary imperfectives in BCS, shown in (4), supporting the proposal of Markman (2008), that they occupy the same slot.

1 The sign > is used to mark perfect > imperfect/ secondary imperfective aspectual pairs

(4) *skoknuti* 'come by' > *skočiti* > *poskočiti* > *skakati* > *poskakivati* 'bounce'
pokleknuti 'give up' > *kleknuti* > *poklekivati* > *naklečati (se)* > *klečati* 'to kneel' / 'surrender'
smognuti 'gain' > *domoći se* > *moći* > *domogavati se* 'can' / 'grab, get hold of, seize, get at'
okrznuti 'scratch' > *iskrzati* > *krzati (se)* > *iskrzavati (se)* 'frazzle' 'chip'
držnuti se 'dare' > *uzdržati (se)* > *držati* > *uzdržavati (se)* 'hold' / 'refrain'
čeznuti 'longe' > *izčeznuti* > *izčezavati* 'dissepear' / 'fade'
pobrinuti (se) 'provide/ ensure' > *zbrinuti* > *brinuti* > *zbrinjavati* 'look after'
otisnuti 'sale away' > *utisnuti* 'impress, embed' > *otiskivati* 'imprint' > *tiskati* 'printing'
(only Croatian, not used in Serbian; however derived words from '*tiskati*' are used in Serbian)
trknuti 'quckly go' > *pretrčati* > *trčati* > *pretrčavati* 'cross' / 'run'
natuknuti 'suggest' > *natucati* > *tucati* > *natucavati* 'smattering' / 'barely pronouncing'

The claim that in *zbrinjavati* both *n(u)* and *-ava* is noticed, but no *-nu-* found in colloquially *brigati* (as in *ne brigaj*), imposes the question: are we talking about one or two different suffixes *-nu-* and are they related from synchronic perspective?

Beside the functional role of the suffix *-nu-*, I also discuss its lexical role. Analyzed corpus data above in (4) includes semelfactives with the different meaning from their expected imperfective pair, therefore orphan. In (5) are listed semelfactives found without their aspectual pair in BCS. Further research in the light of contribution to the change in meaning requires diachronic analysis of the orphan semelfactives.

(5) <i>svisnuti</i>	'pine away'
<i>klonuti</i>	'droop'
<i>prenuti se</i>	'startle'
<i>planuti</i>	'burst'
<i>skrajnuti</i>	'neglect/ abandon'
<i>preminuti</i>	'pass away'
<i>vinuti</i>	'rise'
<i>laknuti</i>	'relieve'
<i>sinuti</i>	'flash'
<i>jeknuti</i>	'cry loudly'
<i>uskliknuti</i>	'exclaim'

References • Chierchia, G. 1998. Plurality of Mass Nouns and the Notion of 'Semantic Parameter' • Kiss, K. 2011. Remarks on semelfactive verbs in English and Hungarian • Markman, Vita G. 2008. On Slavic semelfactives and secondary imperfectives: Implications for the split 'AspP' • Miličević, N. 2004. The lexical and superlexical verbal prefix *iz-* and its role in the stacking of prefixes • Milin, P., Kuperman, V., Kostić, A., Baayen, R. Harald. 2009. Words and paradigms bit by bit: An information-theoretic approach to the processing of inflection and derivation • Nelson, Lynn C. 2018. Internal Structure of Semelfactive Predicates in English • Polančec, J. 2018. Osamostaljeni izvedeni nesvršeni glagoli u hrvatskom jeziku • Rothstein, S. 2004. Structuring Events: A Study in the Semantics of Aspect (Explorations in Semantics 2) • Slioussar, N. & Chuprina, A. 2015. Grouping morphologically complex words in the mental lexicon: Evidence from Russian verbs and nouns • Smith, Carlota S. 1997. The Parameter of Aspect • Vendler, Z. 1967. Verbs and Times