On certain Slavic and Baltic word-formation parallels (thematic verbal abstract nouns)

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Abstract

The Balto-Slavic deverbal abstract nouns as semantically open structures are PIE heritage. The general, constant opposition within the inherited deverbal system: abstractum verbae : adiectivum verbae. Some common properties and differences in the domain of thematic deverbatives in the languages of both groups. The common heritage (paradigmatic type with -o-, -â, -i-, -u-) and the common new features (paradigmatic type with iota-themes: -jö-, -jâ). The problem of so-called concretization of meaning, e.g. the tendency of abstracta to pass into the domain of the subject structures.

The principal topic of the present study are original verbal abstract nouns, which form part of the broadly conceived category of the onomatoidal type (Kotarbiński 1986), i.e. predicate structures of the type THE FACT THAT (Doroszewski 1962). They are among the most interesting categories because of their peculiar status within the naming system of languages. The onomasiological properties of all abstract nouns (both generally denominative and verbal – names of actions) stem from the originally empty semantic unit which indicates the closest environment (genus proximum) of the name (cf. the bipartite structure of the Indo-European word; Rozwadowski 1960). In this way, the abstract noun (in our case, the verbal abstract noun), though superficially remaining a noun, preserves verbal properties, including predicate-argument structure, in its internal structure. The so-called concretization of meaning, i.e. the tendency of abstracta to drift towards the
domain of the concrete and to adopt subject structures (THE ONE WHO, THAT WHICH), consists simply in the selection of one of the arguments from the deep structure of an abstract noun and its transformation into the core of the noun’s lexical meaning. The complete lexicalization of meaning takes place only when the word loses touch with its motivating verb, its origin becomes obscure and the word hardens into a lexical unit in its own right. As long as the link with the verb is maintained, however, the nominal formation remains a semantically OPEN entity. Its meaning gets established individually for every utterance by its speech act, which is a unit superior to the sentence and sentential context.

Verbal abstract nouns, being superficially nominalized verbs, are perfectly suited for naming initially the SITUATION, the EVENT, and later on, its particular elements. They stand in a constant complementary opposition with regard to verbal adjectives, which, in turn, are carriers of activity or dynamism of someone (agent) or something (focus of the event).

This onomasiological principle constitutes a linguistic application of more general epistemological processes: the encounter of cognitive powers of the mind with a certain SITUATION, in which by means of repeated analytic acts man is able to identify individual elements, relations (first of all, subject and object relations), and the focus of events.

This character of cognitive processes is confirmed by the most general IE naming model, which reduces to the opposition “verbal abstract nouns: verbal adjectives (> nomen agentis)”, and is best characterized by the simple relation between the Greek words τόμος ‘a cut’: τομάς ‘cutting’ (participle) : τόμυμω ‘I cut’. This is naturally a general principle, which in individual IE languages may turn out to vary.

IE languages possess an immense number of morphologically different types of verbal abstract nouns. This state of affairs can also be observed in Slavic and Baltic. In the abundance of types, forms with -ος, -ιος, -ας, -ιας, -ι, and, in Slavic, with -υ and -υς as well, have achieved a particularly prominent position. Even though genetically different, they make up a fairly uniform, typical group, due to their peculiar way of functioning and equally peculiar history within the word-formation system of both language groups.

All the forms, except those with -ιος, have more or less salient counterparts in other IE languages, and thus are part of the Proto–IE heritage. Nonetheless, they have clearly developed their proper typological form only in the Balto–Slavic environment. It was when the entire morpho-phonological system of those languages was being transformed as a result of the development of the palatalization correlation that the above-mentioned word-formation types underwent thematicization, i.e., their membership in one inflectional paradigm (either hard or palatal) began to play a role in word formation.

A study of thematic verbal abstract nouns in the Balto–Slavic environment should always take into account a broader context of all thematic deverbal nouns as well as the fact that the latter derive from either original, proper abstract nouns or nominalized verbal adjectives. The development of the latter could proceed towards either nomen agentis or nomen acti (this was the case, e.g., in Greek), and thus was exactly the same as that of original abstract nouns, which were transformed by the concretization process. Therefore, only a detailed analysis of individual words is able to identify in the mass of thematic formations what initially belonged to the τόμος and τομάς types.

From the most general analysis of Baltic and Proto–Slavic thematic deverbatives the conclusion could be drawn that they combine very archaic proto–IE properties and new features, which came into existence owing to the modification of the entire morpho-phonological system in the Balto–Slavic epoch, and later development of the already independent language groups.

1. The comparison of both groups (the representative of the Baltic group will be Lithuanian) in the area of thematic deverbatives shows many common properties, but also a wide spectrum of differences. Lithuanian is apparently an example of a more archaic state. Thus, if we look at -ος themes, Lithuanian has better preserved old verbal adjectives (of the τομάς type) with a semantic range which is broad, but largely reducible to the active or passive basic participial value, cf. trākas ‘frenzied, fierce’: trēkti, trēkia ‘to spoil, to foul’, paikus ‘stupid’: peikti ‘to scold’ (Otrębski 1963:30, henceforth: Otrębski). In the Slavic material verbal adjectives with -ς (-ς < -*ς-ς) are recognizable either directly or in nominalized formations, but it is plausible that they had ceased to be a productive category already in the Proto–Slavic epoch. In any case, in the individual Slavic languages they are a relic from the epoch of the Proto–Slavic community, cf. the type *lęks ‘curved, bent’: *lękšti ‘to bend’, *lęgš ‘flexible, supple’: *łęg ‘to bend’, *rągs ‘flexible, slender’: *rągšati šę ‘to sway, to shake’ (Boryś 1981:10); *grobš, gṛbš ‘a grave
that masculine nouns with \(-o-\), derived deverbally in the paradigmatic mode, were exclusively abstract nouns \(>\) nomina rei.

The abstract nouns derived in this way turned out to be extremely productive in Slavic languages, esp. in the area of prefixed bases, which expressed various spatio-temporal relations, e. g., \(\ast\)dogons, \(\ast\)zagons, \(\ast\)ogons, \(\ast\)ergons, \(\ast\)progons, \(\ast\)vygons, \(\ast\)zagons, etc.

In Baltic such an explosion of productivity is not to be observed.

2. With regard to \(-io-\) stems, to which we will now turn, there is a considerable divergence between Baltic (Lithuanian) and Slavic, although there is no doubt that verbal abstracts of this type must have emerged in the epoch of the Balto-Slavic community under the simultaneous influence of two principal factors:

- the formation of a palatal masculine noun paradigm with \(-io-\) (parallel to \(-o-\));
- the absorption by them of part of the old neuter abstract nouns with \(-i\)om.

The abstracts with \(-io-\) don't have clear counterparts in other IE languages. It is well known that iota-initial suffixes occur in the IE word-formation systems as indicators of adjectivity. Since for them it is a primary function, they have been incorporated into the lexical repertoire of particular IE language families as having that function.

In deverbal derivation (through verbal adjectives) the forms with \(-io-\) may obviously yield agent nouns, which historically have behaved similarly to those with \(-o-\). Adjectives (and agent nouns) of this type are abundant in Lithuanian, although not productive, cf. \(\varepsilon\rho\nu\varphi\nu\varsigma\) 'flowing fast': \(\varepsilon\rho\nu\varphi\nu\varsigma\) 'to flow, to trickle', \(\varepsilon\lambda\lambda\varsigma\) 'green': \(\varepsilon\lambda\lambda\varsigma\) 'to grow, to yield greenery'; agent nouns - \(\gamma\alpha\nu\nu\delta\varsigma\) 'cock, rooster': \(\gamma\alpha\nu\nu\delta\varsigma\) 'to sing (\(\omicron\rho\tau\varepsilon\rho\beta\varsigma\)). In Slavic languages similar adjectives and agent nouns do occur, though rarely, cf. PSI. \(\ast\)\(\varepsilon\zeta\varsigma\) 'having the inclination to lie': \(\lambda\gamma\alpha\tau\iota\) 'to lie', \(\ast\)\(\rho\varsigma\) 'buck, he-goat': \(\ast\)\(\rho\varsigma\) 'towards the abode' (Wojtyła-Świerżowska 1974:27).

Action nouns with \(-io-\) can be distinguished as a separate type, with their own vocalic and prosodic patterns, only in Lithuanian. They are again abundant but no longer productive there. In Slavic languages, however, they are very rare, they lack their own typological characteristics, and thus are better treated as a morphological variant of \(-o-\) types. In Proto-Slavic the reconstructible forms are, e. g., \(\ast\)\(\ell\o\nu\varsigma\varsigma\) 'hunger, want of food': \(\ast\)\(\ell\o\nu\varsigma\varsigma\) 'to be
hungry' = Lith. ālėis 'hunger' and *plačės 'a loud, mournful cry, weeping': IE *plāk-, pleg- 'to beat, to hit'.

3. A large separate group is formed by deverbal feminine nouns with -ā. Characteristically bi-functional (they indicate the grammatical feminin gender as well as abstractness), they constitute, in Baltic and Slavic, the direct continuation of an IE heritage (cf. the Greek type ἄρπαγγ 'a cut'), including their most characteristic property - the oxytone accent and the apophony of the root vowel. Nonetheless, similarly as in the case of the -ā-type, they manifest the already proto-IE tendency to duplicate the shape of the base in the derived form. In both language groups we could also identify the tendency, inherited from the epoch of the IE community, to withdraw the accent on the root syllable. This process accompanies the concretization of meaning, cf. Greek ἄρπαγγ 'a scratch': ἄρπαγγ 'grapnel, a rake'; Lith. dągą: dąga ‘cover’, ‘roof, thatched roof’, ‘overcoat’ = PSi. *d̄g̣la: *d̄l̄g̣ 'a bend, curve, curvature' and 'rainbow': IE *d̄ngh- 'to press, to bend, to curve', ‘to cover’ (Kuryłowicz 1958:116, 185, 238–9).

In Lithuanian there are not too many examples of this phenomenon. The majority of concrete nouns which derive from earlier abstracts have preserved the accent unchanged (Otrębski: 39). What is worth noting, however, is that in Lithuanian the withdrawal of the stress in original oxytones has been adopted as a characteristic feature of the class of pejorative agent nouns of the type dyglą 'a bore': dilti 'to waste time, to bore', which are precisely original action nouns, but with personal denotation.

The change of semantic value from feminine abstract noun > masculine or common gender agent is both predictable and widespread in IE languages. It may bring about an additional formal indicator of change (like the masculinization in Greek which takes place by the attachment of final sigma, cf. the type with -yγς), but not necessary (as in Slavic, cf. the *sjevoda, *sluga type; Wojtyla-Świeżewska 1974:31–4). The Slavic material (particularly the dialects), however, seems to display a fairly well preserved tendency towards the polarization of meanings by means of accentuation differences: the abstract = oxytone, the concrete = accent withdrawal, cf. above *d̄g̣la: *d̄l̄g̣, *moṛła 'difficulty, breathing, torture': *ml̄ora 'nightmare' (Wojtyla-Świeżewska 1992:119).

The loss of abstract value and consequently the passage into the domain of the concrete, which are so typical of all abstracts and at the same time are correlated with the loss of an active link with the motivating verb, cause the continuous need for the renewal of abstract structures. The thematic derivation both in Baltic and Slavic shows the tendency to link abstract meaning with the feminine grammatical gender. In Lithuanian the morpheme -i-, which has taken over the function of forming feminines, have also started serving the category of action nouns. In Slavic deverbatives the general feminine noun paradigm (i.e. -ā-, -i-; -u-) has incorporated abstractions, i.e. in the deverbal derivation mode of feminines, derivatives are automatically classified as action nouns.

4. The feminines with -iā and -i- proved particularly productive. The abstract nouns with -iā, although they have various counterparts in other IE languages (Gr. ἐκιόνιμα, Lat. fúria, Old Indian ityā 'gait'), probably did not come into being as a type until the epoch of the Balto-Slavic community. In their history, it was not unimportant that the secondary abstract with -iā preserved a typological continuity (cf. Lith. kalėid, -ios 'guilt': kaltaš 'guilty', PSi. *susā 'draught': *sūsā 'dry') and that they behaved analogously to the themes with -ā, where the opposition "hard: palatal" (so evident in masculine themes with -o-/jo-) exerts a symmetrizing influence, particularly in the post-verbual system.

In this case, as well as in the cases discussed so far, the peculiar vocal qualities, which make the derivative differ still further from the base, are relics of older processes and not an active phenomenon, cf. Lith. (with apophony and a circumflex): kloja, -oš, kloja 'season and place of laying out flax': kloči 'to lay out', lojā, -oš, lōja 'slander': lōti 'to bark, to scold' (Otrębski: 70); Slavic languages with relics of apophony and sometimes the oxytone accent: *sol'wa: *sešlėti 'to order', *švěl 'a candle': *švěnti. Normally, derivatives duplicate the form of the base.

Among Lithuanian derivates of this group (as well as the form with -a), there is a category of pejorative names of agents of the type edžia 'oppressor': ėštį 'to eat'. In Slavic languages, on the other hand, the use of abstracts with -iā with reference to individuals has yielded the ordinary, completely non-producer abstract nouns: *dervôdēľa 'woodcutter' (by analogy to the hard type *sluga).

To express the pejorative function, Slavic languages also use feminine abstracts, but those of the suffixal type, with the special element -g: -oga,
5. Both language groups which are of interest here have inherited from proto-IE the deverbal type with \(-i\). With the exception of Old Indian, it is not particularly productive anywhere (the Greek type \(\varphi\omega\nu\varsigma\) f. 'common sense', \(\delta\iota\nu\varsigma\) f. 'war, combat', Lat. *scōbīs* f. 'shavings, saw dust').

In Slavic there are traces of the ancient division into feminine abstract nouns and verbal adjectives (masc. > agent nouns), cf. *bolī* f. 'suffering, illness', *bolēti* masc. 'ill': *bolēti* 'to fall ill' (SP 1974:315), *molo* f. 'st. small, fine' < 'grinding' (gerund): *molo* masc. 'tine' < *'grinding' (participle): *meltī* 'to grind' (Wojtyla-Swiernowska 1974:41).

The Balto-Slavic contrastive analysis of action nouns has shown the existence of certain structurally identical properties, such as the tendency towards apophonic or quantitative variation of the vocalism of the derivative in relation to the base: Lith. *dalis*, -iēs (PSI. *dolō* 'pars') 'part': *dīti, dīga* (dial. *dēla*) 'to wear off, to decrease, to disappear', *suōdys* 'soot': *sēti* 'to sit' = PSI. *sās* 'orchard'; PSL. *tars* 'face': *toritī* 'to form', *sēsī* 'cutting down' (gerund), 'st. cut down': *sekīti* 'to cut down', *žalī* 'regret, sadness': *zēl-. There are only few such examples. Here as well as in other cases, the apophonic and prosodic relations belong already to the past. The large majority of derivatives are not dissimilar in their form to their bases. However, in contrast to Baltic (Lithuanian), where the type is no longer productive, Slavic has delegated the function of the principal indicator of general abstract sense, both in the primary and secondary derivation mode, to the formant \(-i\). A word possessing the property \(-i\) f. is automatically attributed an abstract sense. Notably, a great number, if not the majority, of complex suffixes which have specialized in forming abstracts work on the basis of feminine themes with \(-i\): -ēs, -ēs, -ēs, -ēs, -ēs, -ēs, -ēs, -ēs, -ēs, -ēs. The abstractness of those forms, which stems from both the function of their suffixes and their belonging to particular themes, is so strong that the process of its attestation to the advantage of concreteness does not take place so easily. With regard to this very property of categorial clarity, the abstracts with \(-i\) are comparable only to the above-mentioned type with \(-jā-\).

6. Finally, let us pass to themes with \(-u-\). As it is generally known, Slavic has abandoned the \(-u-\) paradigm, which was incorporated into the masculine forms with \(-o-\), but not without im printing them with a peculiar

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Bibliography


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Zu den südslavisch–baltischen lexikalischen Verknüpfungen

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Abstract

The article presents an analysis of a South Slavic word family e. g. Slovenian vég 'bent, uneven', Serbo-Croatian věgav 'crooked', Bulgarian vēg, vēg, Macedonian vēgaf 'cross-eyed'. These words are continuations of Proto-Slavic *vegъ 'crooked' (an adjective found only in South Slavic languages) cognate to Lithuanian vėgti 'avoid, by-pass' and its word family. The Slavic and Baltic words analysed belong to the Indo-European heritage, continuing IE *seng(h)- 'to bend'. The adjective *yeng-ro- may be considered a Balto-Slavic innovation, as indicated by Lithuanian vingras 'winding, twisting, clever', Latvian vīgres 'elastic, strong, quick, agile', Slovenian vēgrast 'swaying, uneven' and the Old Ukrainian hydronym Vysgr (> Polish Wiar).