

Suffixal complexes and semantic deletion

Ora Matushansky

SFL (CNRS/Université Paris-8/UPL)

M100, MIT, September 8-10, 2023

Russian agentive nominalizer *-tel/-*

Creates nouns denoting the external argument of the verbal event (agents, experiencers, instruments...), obeys the **External Argument Generalization** of Levin and Rappaport Hovav 1988 and Rappaport Hovav and Levin 1992:

- (1) a. *ľubí-tʹ* ‘love-IMPV’ → *ľubí-telʹ* ‘an amateur’
b. *vikľuč-á-tʹ* ‘turn off.IMPV-IMPV’ → *vikľučá-telʹ* ‘a light switch’

No non-EA *tel/-* nouns like *diner* (restaurant) or *sleeper* (car) in Russian
Idiomatic *-tel/-* nouns are very few (e.g., *nastojátelʹ* ‘abbot’ ← *nastojáti* ‘to insist, persist’) and all animate
Animacy is a grammatical feature in Russian, hence can be supplied by a separate node:

- (2)
- 
- NB: “V-TH” because the suffix *-tel/-* combines only with verbal stems containing a thematic suffix

n_1 corresponds to inanimate EA interpretations, n_2 encodes the animate ones

The adjectivizing suffixal complex *-telʹ-ĭn-*

Very productive way of forming deverbal adjectives, but **problematic for the iterative suffixation hypothesis**

The intermediate noun can be missing:

- (3) a. *sravnítʹ* ‘to compare’ → **sravnítelʹ* → *sravnítelʹnĭj* ‘comparative’
b. *poznaváti* ‘cognize.IMPV-IMPV’ → **poznavátelʹ* → *poznavátelʹnĭj* ‘cognitive’

The adjective may be derived not from the intermediate noun:

- (4) *starátʹsʹa* ‘to try’ → *#starátelʹ* ‘prospector’ → *stará-telʹn-ĭj* ‘assiduous’

This is why traditional Russian grammars, as well as some researchers (Haspelmath 1995, Stump 2019, 2022, etc.), have been postulating **complex suffixes**: either as constituents formed by the two suffixes or as a reanalyzed single suffix

Proposal: the suffixal complex *-telʹ-ĭn-* forms a constituent (a complex suffix)

- (5) a.
- 
- b.
- 

The adjectivizing suffix *-ĭn-* is...

- A “pure categorizer” in the terms of Marantz 2013 (like *-al*, unlike *-able*). I hypothesize that this translates into the semantics of a property somehow related to the event of the verbal base
- Productive only denominally (if combined with a thematic verb, yields a PPP at best)
- Contains a (front) yer that can be detected in the short form (the purely predicative one)
- Found in many suffixal complexes (*-nik-*, *-niča-*, *-nic-*, *-enʹk-*, etc.)

[–lexical insertion] vs. a suffixal complex:

The need to explain missing words or semantically distinct intermediate steps is not new
Halle 1973, Marantz 2023: [–lexical insertion] (also for things like *admissal*)

The fact that the n-node in the iterative suffixation structure in (3) does not correspond to an entry in the Encyclopedia is accidental

Complex suffixes are not needed

Allosemy inside a derived stem

The **meaning of the adjective may be derived from the verb** rather than the noun:

- (6) a. *izbirátʹ* ‘to elect’ → *izbirátelʹ* ‘elector, voter’ → *izbirátelʹnĭj* ‘electoral, voting, election (attr.)’
b. *predoxranítʹ* ‘to protect, preserve’ → *predoxranítelʹ* ‘electrical fuse, safety device’ → *predoxranítelʹnĭj* ‘preservative, preventive, protective’

An appeal to **contextual allosemy**—the choice among the meanings of a morpheme that is conditioned by the context (Marantz 2013, Wood 2015)—seems in order

So far we have seen **two allosemes of *-tel/-***: the underspecified EA-nominalization and its derived animate counterpart. The latter is not used in derived adjectives

Animacy clash

Instrumental (a) or idiomatic (b) adjectives with an **animate intermediate noun**:

- (7) a. *izbirátʹ* ‘to elect’ → *izbirátelʹ* ‘elector, voter’ → *izbirátelʹnĭj* ‘electoral, voting, election (attr.)’
b. *poslédovati* ‘to follow’ → *poslédovatelʹ* ‘follower’ → *poslédovatelʹnĭj* ‘successive, consecutive; consistent, logical’

The animate noun cannot be the intermediate step: the suffix *-ĭn-* does not combine with animate nouns (Vinogradov 1952:346, Bobkova 2022):

- (8) a. *diréktorskij/*direktornĭj* ← *diréktor* ‘manager’
b. *načálʹničeskij/*načalʹničnĭj* ← *načálʹnik* ‘supervisor’
c. *gráfskij/*grafnĭj* ← *graf* ‘count’

The derivation of these adjectives involves not the full animate structure in (2) but the inanimate n_1 it contains

Exceptional *-telʹ-ĭn-* adjectives that look like they have been derived from animate nouns are expected to be based on verbs with volitional or rational external arguments

The ABA pattern

Instrument noun, stem-based adjective (the **ABA pattern**, Haspelmath’s *conglutination*):

- (9) *nosítʹ* ‘to carry, wear, bear’ → *nosítelʹ* ‘carrier’ (rocket carrier, information bearer) → *nosítelʹnĭj* ‘wearable, transportable’

The meaning of the adjective is derived from the stem rather than the base

Answer: radical **allosemy** sensitive both outwards and inwards: **the suffix *-tel/-* needs to become semantically null in the context of the suffix *-ĭn-* and certain stems**

The bleached alloseme of *-tel/-*

Bleaching of a contentful morpheme (e.g., a diminutive) towards a pure categorizer (e.g., a nominalizer, see Jurafsky 1996) is attested

But the suffix *-tel/-* can only become bleached inside *-telʹ-ĭn-* adjectives

What prevents the use of the null alloseme of *-tel/-* in nouns?

Unlike the English *-er*, which can become a pure nominalizer in the context of given stems only, *-tel/-* is also sensitive to the presence of the suffix *-ĭn-*

The two restrictors of the allosemic use might not have the same status: there are no stems that would alone trigger semantic deletion of the suffix/the choice of the vacuous alloseme

The suffixal complex *-nic-*

Human-denoting nouns in *-nik-* form femininities in *-nic-*:

- (10) a. *animéšnik/animéšnica* ‘animé lover.M/F’
b. *otstupítʹ* ‘to step back, to renounce’ → *otstúpnik/otstúpnica* ‘renegade’

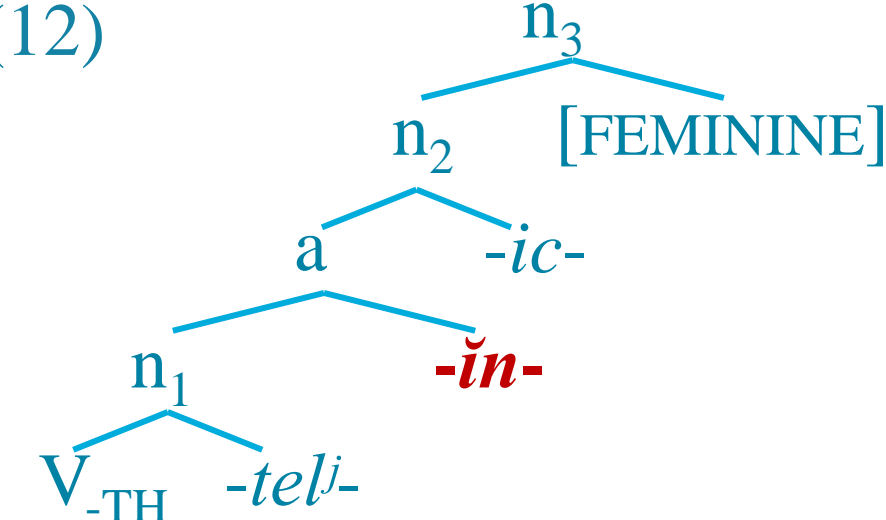
Both definitely are suffixal complexes containing the adjectivizing *-ĭn-*, the diminutive *-ik-* and potentially the [animate] feature. The feminine also contains the [feminine]

Nouns in *-tel/-* form femininities by the addition of *-nic-*:

- (11) *učítelʹ/učítelʹnica* ‘a teacher’, *vodítelʹ/vodítelʹnica* ‘a driver’, *voítelʹ/voítelʹnica* ‘a warrior’, *rodítelʹ/rodítelʹnica* ‘a parent’

The suffix *-ĭn-* is shared between the suffixal complexes *-telʹ-ĭn-* and *-ĭn-ic-*

And *-telʹ-ĭn-* adjectives do not have an [animate] component

- (12)
- 

The interpretation of the adjectival node cannot be agentive because *-ĭn-* does not combine with animate nouns, but this is not a problem: the underspecified EA interpretation would be enough

The main problem is created by the bleached ABA pattern in (9)

In the ABA pattern *-tel/-* loses its EA interpretation and the adjective is interpreted as very loosely linked to the stem (e.g., (6b), (9)). Two wrong predictions:

- ic-* femininities should have different interpretations in function of the meaning of the adjective
- The *-ic-* feminine from the bleached adjective should at least occasionally not mean “the feminine EA participant of the base event”

If *-telʹ-ĭn-* and *-ĭn-ic-* are complex suffixes, there is no problem

Conclusion

The iterative structure (12) entails that the feminine should be based on the adjective

The ABA pattern in *-telʹ-ĭn-* adjectives requires that the suffix *-tel/-* become semantically null in the context of *-ĭn-* (for those stems)

The consistent semantic relation between *-tel/-* masculines and *-telʹ-ĭn-ic-* femininities cannot be explained in the iterative structure

The complex suffixes *-telʹ-ĭn-* and *-ĭn-ic-* solve this problem and distinguish structurally between bleached and EA *-telʹn-* adjectives

Choice between structures:

iterative structure with the EA alloseme when an **instrumental** meaning is needed
complex suffix with the semantically null alloseme when the **stem** is adjectivized

The need for a semantically null *-tel/-* lies in the fact that *ĭn-* is non-deverbal (see h/o)

This one is also for Morris Halle

I have been doing syntax and semantics for a variety of reasons, but I only do morphophonology and morphosyntax because of Morris.

With undying gratitude.

For a detailed handout and references 📄

