

## SLAVIC DEADJECTIVAL UNCAUSATIVES AND DECAUSATIVES

Syntax Interface Lectures, Utrecht University, May 30, 2026

### 1 INTRODUCTION: SLAVIC MEETS DEGREE ACHIEVEMENTS

Slavic degree achievements are often discussed through the prism of **thematic vowel contrast**: Medová 2013, Caha & De Clercq & Vanden Wyngaerd 2023 for Czech, Jabłońska 2007 for Polish, Arsenijević & Milosavljević 2021, Milosavljević & Arsenijević 2022, Kovačević & Milosavljević & Simonović 2024 for Serbo-Croatian (SC), Simonović & Mišmaš 2022 for Slovenian, Vyshnevska 2025 for Ukrainian, among others

- (1) a. *zjasnĕt* ‘to become clear’/*zjasnit* ‘to make clear’ Czech, Caha et al. 2023  
b. *głupieć* ‘to get stupid’/*głupić* ‘to make stupid’ Polish, Jabłońska 2007:109  
c. *piāneti* ‘to become drunk, intoxicated’, *piāniti* ‘to intoxicate’ Russian  
d. *otupeti* ‘to become blunt, numb’/*otupiti* ‘to make blunt’ Serbo-Croatian  
e. *rumeneti* ‘to become yellow’/*rumeniti* ‘to make yellow’ Slovenian, Marvin 2002:100

In all deadjectival verb pairs in (1):

- *e*-verbs are intransitive
- *i*-verbs are transitive

In Ukrainian a phonological change turned the former /i/ into /i̯/ and /e/, into /i̯/, but otherwise the facts are the same:

- (1) f. *veselity* ‘to become merrier’/*veselyty* ‘to make merrier’ Ukr., Vyshnevska 2025:174

Question: what is the derivational relation (if any), between *e*- and *i*-verbs?

Options (primarily from the non-Slavic literature):

1. Ramchand 2008:90–93, Wyngaerd & De Clercq & Caha 2022, Caha et al. 2023: the transitive is derived from the intransitive (by the addition of InitP introducing the initiator)
2. Chierchia 2004 (1989), Reinhart 1991, 2016, Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1994, 1995, etc.: the intransitive is derived from the transitive (via decausativization)
3. Harley 1995, 2008, 2012, Doron 2003a, b, Alexiadou +...: independent derivations from the same stem/root

Technical issue: the use of the notion of an “anticausative”:

- Koontz-Garboden 2009 +: unaccusative verb derived from an underlying transitive
- **Alexiadou +: verb with CAUSE semantics and lacking an external argument**

Proposal (cf. Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2004, Alexiadou 2010 for Greek, Labelle 1992, Labelle & Doron 2010, for French, see also Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou & Schäfer 2015): **minimally two underlying structures for intransitive deadjectival degree achievements:**

- uncausatives: **inchoatives** (*e*-verbs) and mutatives (imperfective *nu*-verbs)  
Not all *e*- and *nu*-verbs are degree achievements! But others do not concern us here
- causatives (unmarked) and **decausatives** (*se*-marked intransitives): *i*-verbs  
Again, *i*-verbs are not limited to deadjectival degree achievements

Hence we will provide evidence that deadjectival degree achievements need not be limited to only one structure

The structure of the talk:

- why deadjectival *i*-verbs are not derived from their intransitive *e*-counterparts
- how *se*-marked intransitive counterparts of deadjectival *i*-verbs are different
- why deadjectival *e*-verbs are not derived from their *i*-counterparts
- the role of *v* in *e*- and *i*-verbs

Takeaway messages:

- new evidence for two different structures that one-place change-of-state verbs may have
- the relevance of Slavic for the discussion of telicity
- pathways towards the creation of deadjectival change of state

## 2 NOTE ON THEMATIC SUFFIXES

We make no assumptions about the status of thematic suffixes, which have been argued to be verbalizers, ornamental vowels, or either (depending on the thematic suffix and language(s) under consideration)

The thematic suffix *-i-* is productive in both Russian and Serbo-Croatian

The thematic suffix *-e-* is productive in Russian only, and then only for intransitive change-of-state deadjectival verbs (and caritive verbs based on PPs headed by *bez* ‘without’ and requiring the prefix *o-*)

## 3 WHY *I*-VERBS ARE NOT CAUSATIVES OF *E*-VERBS

For Russian most of the points below were also made by Vadim Dyachkov; see also Tatevosov 2014a on *nu*-verbs  
Starting point: *i*-verbs do not have the semantics of causativized *e*-verbs (cf. Dyachkov 2021, 2023 for Russian):

- (2) a. *crveneti* ‘to become red(der), blush’, *crveniti* ‘to color red’ Serbo-Croatian  
b. *crneti* ‘to become tanned’, *crniti* ‘to color black’  
c. *beleŭi* ‘to turn white(r); be white’, *beliti* ‘to whitewash, color white’ Russian  
d. *tolsteti* ‘to become fat(ter)’, *tolstiti* ‘to make look fat(ter)’

Different processes are generally evoked by *e*- and *i*-verbs:

- (3) a. Ada je crnila obrve. Serbo-Croatian  
Ada be.3SG black.TH<sub>I</sub>.PTCP.FSG eyebrows  
‘Ada was blackening her eyebrows.’  
b. Ada je crnela (od sunca).  
Ada be.3SG black.TH<sub>E</sub>.PTCP.FSG from sun  
‘Ada was becoming tanned.’  
c. \*Sunce je crnilo Adu.  
sun be.3SG black.TH<sub>I</sub>.PTCP.NSG Ada.ACC

Serbo-Croatian color *i*-verbs are typically agentive rather than merely causative (i.e., Natural Force causes are often dispreferred)

NB: *e*-verbs are non-productive in modern Serbo-Croatian, so focus on Russian, where both *e*- and *i*-verbs are

Possible objection: semantic drift

- plausible for Serbo-Croatian color *e*-verbs, with their very specialized meanings
- less so for *i*-verbs: they do not precisely mean ‘make X acquire the relevant color’

In other domains, too, *i*-verbs often do not describe the same change as *e*-verbs:

- (4) a. Ot tainstvennogo lekarstva on molodel/pomolodel/\*omolodel. Russian  
from mysterious medicine he Ø/PO-/O-young.THE.PAST.MSG  
'He was becoming/became young(er) from the mysterious drug.'
- b. Tainstvennoe lekarstvo molodilo/omolodilo/\*pomolodilo ego.  
mysterious medicine Ø/PO-/O-young.THE.PAST.MSG him  
'The mysterious drug rejuvenated him.'
- c. Korotkaja strižka molodila/\*omolodila/\*pomolodila ego. imperfective only  
short haircut Ø/PO-/O-young.THE.PAST.FSG him  
'Short hair was making him look younger.'

Note that the perfectivizing prefixes are not the same, and this is not accidental.

### 3.1 Perfectivizing prefixes

The default perfectivizing prefixes are not the same for *e*- and *i*-verbs (with caveats):  
Cf. Dyachkov 2021, 2023 for Russian

- in Russian, the preferred prefix choices for deadjectival *e*-verbs (maximally 170 in Zaliznjak) are *po-* (77), *o-/ob-* (64), *za-* (51) (with ca. 20 intersections for any two)
- for their *i*-counterparts (63, manual): *ob-* (24), *po-* (9–11), *za-* (4–5)

If a Russian deadjectival *i*-verb can combine with the prefix *po-* or *ob-*, its *e*-counterpart usually can too

The opposite is not true:

- (5) a. (o/pro/\*vĭ)trezvetĭ 'to sober up' Russian  
b. otrezvitĭ 'to sober up (fig.)', protrezvitĭ/vytrezvitĭ 'to sober up', \*trezvitĭ
- (6) a. (po)redetĭ 'to become sparse, rare, not dense'  
b. proreditĭ/izreditĭ 'to thin out', razreditĭ 'to thin out; rarefy', \*reditĭ

In Serbo-Croatian, where *e*- and *i*-verbs have undergone levelling (decoupling of morphology and semantics) due to reanalysis (see Marelj & Matushansky 2026a), prefix choice diagnoses inchoative vs. non-inchoative use

For a corpus of 177 manually annotated *e*- and *i*-verbs from MaCoCu Croatian Web V2:

- |  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| ➤ inchoative set (143 tokens)                            | ➤ non-inchoative set (34 tokens) |
| • <i>po-</i> : is dominant with 62 tokens (43.4%)        | • <i>o-</i> : 21 (62%)           |
| • <i>o-</i> : comes second with 43 tokens (30.1%)        | • <i>za-</i> : 13 (38%)          |
| • <i>za-</i> , <i>s-</i> , no prefix: (10% or less each) | • <i>po-</i> : zero tokens       |

Thus *po-* is exclusively inchoative in this dataset

For more details see Marelj & Matushansky 2026b

For the color-verb domain—the last locus where the historical *e*- vs *i*-contrast remains partially preserved, albeit under clear pressure from levelling—the most common prefix in Serbian for *i*-verbs is *na-*, while for *e*-verbs it is *po-*:

For *i*-verbs the prefix *na-* 'on' can be taken to naturally reflect their default interpretation of surface change only; on the interpretations of the prefix *po-* 'along' see Dickey 2007

- (7) a. Ada je nacnila obrve. Serbo-Croatian  
 Ada be.3SG NA.black.TH<sub>I</sub>.PTCP.FSG eyebrows  
 ‘Ada (has) blackened her eyebrows.’  
 b. Ada je pocrnela (od sunca).  
 Ada be.3SG PO.black.TH<sub>E</sub>.PTCP.FSG from sun  
 ‘Ada got tanned.’

If *i*-verbs are causatives of *e*-verbs, this variation in prefix choice is unexpected

The semantic connection between *e*-verbs and their corresponding *i*-verbs is non-transparent

The problem is, many *i*-verbs cannot be used without a prefix

- Most deadjectival *e*-verbs start out unprefixated (though there are exceptions)
- Dyachkov 2018:94: many Russian deadjectival *i*-verbs do not exist unprefixated

For Russian, computed on the basis of Zaliznjak 2010:

- < 9% *e*-verbs require a prefix
- 50% of their *i*-counterparts are obligatorily prefixated (and many of those that aren’t are non-causative, e.g., *grubiti* ‘to be rude to’)

And a prefix can (perhaps must) add lexical semantics:

- (8) a. (po)deševeti ‘to become cheaper’ Russian  
 b. udeševiti ‘to make cheaper’, prodeševiti ‘to make a bad bargain’ (??deševiti)  
 (9) a. (po)crneti ‘to get tanned’ Serbo-Croatian  
 b. nacniti ‘to color black’, ocrniti ‘to denigrate, besmirch, defame’ (??crniti)

Vey 1952, van Schooneveld 1958, Hana Filip’s work (1992–2026), Tatevosov 2014a, b, among others: prefixes have lexical import even when they are the default ones

Whatever the correct analysis is, the prefix facts do not support a derivational link between *e*- and *i*-verbs

### 3.2 Missing counterparts

Most *e*-verbs have no corresponding *i*-verbs (cf. Dyachkov 2018:107–108, 2023):

- (10) a. (po/ob)liseti ‘to become bald(er)’<sub>PFV/IPFV</sub>, \*lisiti Russian  
 b. zaxireti/xireti ‘to grow sickly, wither’<sub>PFV/IPFV</sub>, \*xiriti  
 c. ržaveti ‘to turn rusty(r)’, \*ržaviti  
 (11) vreti ‘simmer’, brideti ‘tingle’, svrbeti ‘itch’, zreti ‘ripen, mature’, Serbo-Croatian  
 trpeti ‘suffer’, prdeti ‘fart’, žudeti ‘long for’

Not all *i*-verbs have *e*-variants either, but this is not unexpected:

- (12) a. bodriti ‘to invigorate, encourage’ (from bodrij ‘cheerful, brisk’), \*bodreti Russian  
 b. uglubiti ‘to make deeper’<sub>PFV</sub> (from glubokij ‘deep’), \*glubeti/\*uglubet  
 (13) a. bodriti ‘to cheer up’, \*bodreti Serbo-Croatian  
 b. ljutiti ‘to make angry’ (from ljut ‘angry’), \*ljuteti  
 c. produbiti ‘to make deep(er)’ (from dubok ‘deep’), \*dubeti/\*produbeti

But transitive deadjectival *i*-verbs with the semantics of degree achievements may have (non-passive, non-reflexive) *se*-marked unaccusative counterparts

#### 4 DECAUSATIVES

Most deadjectival *i*-causatives have **explicitly marked unaccusative counterparts**, which are productive and transparent:

- (14) a. Tristram je osušio cveće. Serbo-Croatian  
 Tristram AUX dry.PFV.PTCP.MSG flowers.COLL.NSG  
 ‘Tristram dried up the flowers.’
- b. Cveće se osušilo.  
 flower.COLL.NSG SE dry.PFV.PTCP.NSG  
 ‘The flowers dried up’
- (15) a. Incident uglubil raskol između stranami. Russian  
 incident deepen.PFV.PAST.MSG rift.ACC between countries  
 ‘The incident deepened the rift between the countries.’
- b. Ètot raskol uglubils’ja blagodari’a novomu incidentu.  
 this rift.NOM deepen.PFV.PAST.FSG.SE thanks.to new incident  
 ‘This rift deepened because of the new incident.’

The *se*-morph also marks middles, passives, reflexives, impersonals, etc.

Hence in Slavic there are two **morphologically distinct** ways of deriving deadjectival degree achievements:

There’s also *nu*-verbs, aka mutatives, but these are unproductive for most Slavic languages (with the exception of Czech) and synchronically mostly non-deadjectival

- *e*-verbs, aka uncausatives
- *i*-verbs, causatives and decausatives

And there can be triplets, obviously with nuances in interpretation, cf. (4):

- (16) a. Nož je o-tup-e-o od upotrebe. Serbo-Croatian, inchoative  
 knife is PFX-blunt-TH<sub>E</sub>-PAST.MSG from use  
 ‘The knife got blunt from use.’
- b. Nož se o-tup-i-o od upotrebe. decausative  
 knife SE PFX-blunt-TH<sub>I</sub>-PTCP.MSG from use  
 ‘The knife got blunt from use.’
- c. O-tup-e-l-a sam od bola. uncausative  
 PFX-blunt-TH<sub>E</sub>-PTCP-FSG am from pain  
 ‘I became numb from pain.’
- d. \*O-tup-i-l-a sam (\*se) od bola. decausative  
 PFX-blunt-TH<sub>I</sub>-PTCP-FSG am SE from pain
- (17) a. veseletj ‘become merrier’ Russian, uncausative  
 b. veselitj ‘make merrier, amuse’ causative  
 c. veselit’sja ‘enjoy oneself, have fun’ decausative

Such minimal pairs are rare in Russian, because deadjectival *i*-verbs often require prefixes, which are different from those selected by *e*-verbs

Germanic languages do not have marked decausatives, but Romance and Greek do, we'll come back to this

#### 4.1 Why *e*-verbs are not decausatives of *i*-verbs

Possibility: there can be more than one type of decausativization, with *se*-marking and with the *e*-theme suffix

Unlikely: the lack of semantic transparency for uncausative *e*-verbs in contrast to decausative *i*-verbs; prefix (non)optionality; prefix choice

Also, the unaccusativity of uncausatives and decausatives is not identical

Evidence: Serbo-Croatian prenominal past participles

Hoekstra 1984, Ackema & Schoorlemmer 1995, Aljović 2000, Marelj 2004, a.o.: prenominal past participles as an unaccusativity diagnostic:

- (18) De dinerende taalkundigen/\*de gedineerde taalkundigen  
the dining linguists/\*the dined linguists Ackema & Schoorlemmer 1995, ex. 4a

Unaccusatives allow both participles preminally:

- (19) a. de stervende zwaan/de gestorven zwaan  
the dying swan/the died swan  
b. de vallende bladeren/de gevallen bladeren  
the falling leaves/the fallen leaves Ackema & Schoorlemmer 1995, ex. 5

Importantly for our discussion, past participle can modify the object of transitive verbs - those partaking in causative alternation (20a) and those not partaking in it alike (20b):

- (20) a. de gebroken vaas/het geopende boek  
the broken vase/opened book  
b. het gelezen boek/de gelezen auteur  
the widely read book/author
- (21) a. the fallen guests (unaccusative)  
b. broken window, written book, eaten meal, etc. (transitive)

The prenominal past participle can only track the internal argument:

- unaccusative: the prenominal past participle exists and can be used preminally
- transitive: likewise
- unergatives do not form past participles that can be used preminally

**Serbo-Croatian: different past-participle forms for transitives and unaccusatives:**

- unaccusatives: *l*-participles
- transitives: *n*-participles

- (22) a. pristig-l-i gosti (unaccusative)  
arrive-PTCP-MPL guests  
'arrived guests'

- b. razbij-en-i/\*razbi-l-i prozor (transitive)  
break-PTCP-MSG window  
'broken window'

Hence Serbo-Croatian tests not only for the status of the argument (internal vs. external), but also for the syntactic structure it is a part of:

- *l*-participles are for the internal arguments of one-place verbs
- *n*-participles are for the internal argument of transitive verbs

Only the *l*-participle is grammatical with the deadjectival *e*-verbs:

- (23) a. po-rumen-e-l-i/\*porumenj-e-n-i obrazi  
PO-blush-TH<sub>E</sub>-PTCP-MPL cheeks  
'cheeks that have blushed'
- b. po-žut-e-l-o/\*požuće-n-o lišće  
PO-yellow-TH<sub>E</sub>-PTCP-MPL leaves.COLL  
'leaves that have yellowed'

This implies that deadjectival *e*-verbs are one-place unaccusatives in Serbo-Croatian

On the other hand, deadjectival *i*-verbs allow only for *n*-participles to be used prenominally:

- (24) a. na-rumenj-en-i/\*na-rumen-i-l-i obrazi  
NA-blush.TH<sub>I</sub>-PTCP-MPL cheeks  
'cheeks that had been rouged'
- b. na-crnj-en-e/\*na-crn-e-l-e obrve  
NA-black.TH<sub>I</sub>-PTCP-FPL eyebrows  
'eyebrows that had been painted black'

Upshot: whereas *e*-verbs pattern with 'run-of-the-mill' unaccusatives like *stići* (arrive), *i*-verbs pattern with the 'run-of-the-mill' transitive verbs like *razbiti* (break).

No comparable argument can be constructed for Russian because it has active past participles, which always track the nominative subject

Other syntactic unaccusativity tests do not distinguish derived and underived unaccusatives  
Doron & Labelle 2011: in the Jewish Neo-Aramaic dialect of Urmi the ergative and absolutive agreement marking on the anticausative verb depends on process vs. result interpretation (checked for the verb *break*)

## 4.2 Romance uncausatives and decausatives

Zribi-Hertz 1987, Labelle 1992, Legendre & Smolensky 2009, Labelle & Doron 2010, among others: SE-marked and unmarked anticausatives in French:

- (25) a. Le vent a cassé la branche. transitive  
the wind has broken the branch  
'The wind broke the branch.'
- b. La branche a cassé. active  
the branch has broken  
'The branch broke.'
- c. La branche s'est cassée. middle  
the branch SE.is broken  
'The branch broke.'

The parallel existence of SE-marked and unmarked anticausatives is only possible for a subset of verbs:

Lists (incomplete) are from Legendre & Smolensky 2009, with some verbs in III from Zribi-Hertz 1987, Labelle 1992, Labelle & Doron 2010

(26) a. **Class I: SE-marked intransitives**

Punctual: *se briser* ‘break’

Durative: *s’améliorer* ‘get better’, *se calcifier* ‘become chalky’, *se détériorer* ‘get worse’, *se gâter* ‘go bad’, *s’alléger* ‘get lighter’, *s’assécher* ‘dry out’, *s’agrandir* ‘get larger’, *s’amaigrir* ‘get thinner’, *s’alourdir* ‘get heavier’

b. **Class II: unmarked intransitives**

Punctual: *crever* ‘burst’, *claquer* ‘slam’

Durative: *moisir* ‘grow moldy’, *flétrir* ‘wither’, *grossir* ‘put on weight’, *grandir* ‘grow up’, *maigrir* ‘lose weight’, *vieillir* ‘age’, *durcir* ‘harden’, *sécher* ‘dry’

c. **Class III: variably marked intransitives: non-obligatory SE-marking**

Punctual: (se) *casser* ‘break’, (se) *rompre* ‘break up’

Durative: (s’) *aigrir* ‘turn sour’, (se) *cailler* ‘curdle’, (se) *caraméliser* ‘caramelize’, (se) *cristalliser* ‘crystallize’, (s’) *enfler* ‘swell’, (s’) *élargir* ‘widen’, (s’) *épaissir* ‘thicken’, (se) *filer* ‘run (of a stocking)’, (se) *glisser* ‘slide’, (se) *gonfler* ‘swell (up)’, (se) *guérir* ‘heal’, (se) *moisir* ‘become moldy’, (se) *muer* ‘molt’, (se) *noircir* ‘blacken’, (se) *pourrir* ‘spoil’, (se) *ramollir* ‘soften’, (se) *refroidir* ‘cool (down)’, (se) *rétrécir* ‘shrink’, (se) *rougir* ‘redden’, (se) *rouiller* ‘rust’, (se) *rouler* ‘roll’, (se) *tarir* ‘dry up’, (se) *ternir* ‘tarnish, dull’, etc.

Semantic distinction (Labelle 1992, Legendre & Smolensky 2009):

- active anticausative: asserts the autonomy of the **process**
- middle anticausative: focuses on the attainment of a **result state**

The question whether the unmarked ones are unergative or unaccusative remains open
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Zribi-Hertz 1987, Labelle & Doron 2010: both anticausatives are unaccusative

Labelle 1992: unmarked anticausatives (uncausatives) are unergative

Legendre & Smolensky 2009: undetermined

While the unmarked, traditionally labelled “internally caused verbs” may surface as either unergative or unaccusative (with cross- and intra-linguistic variation), this issue is orthogonal to the present discussion. We therefore set it aside and focus on distinguishing two types of unaccusatives: decausatives and (as set of) unmarked internally caused verbs we label here uncausatives.

Same issues raised for **Italian** (Centineo 1995, Folli 2001, 2002, 2014, Cennamo & Jezek 2011, Alexiadou et al. 2015:82–88, Bentley 2024, among others):

- (27) a. Maria ha fuso il cioccolato. Folli 2014  
Maria has melted the chocolate.  
'Maria melted the chocolate.'
- b. Il cioccolato (si) è fuso.  
the chocolate (SE) is melted.  
'The chocolate melted.'

Same three classes (non-exhaustive lists from Folli 2014):

- (28) a. Class I ([+si])  
rompere (break), alterare (alter), svegliare (wake up), aprire (open), chiudere (close), estendere (extend), capovolgere (turn upside down), sbriciolare (crumble), dividere (divide), sfilacciare (fray)
- b. Class II ([–si])  
diminuire (decrease), aumentare (increase), invecchiare (age), cambiare (change), allungare (lengthen), guarire (heal), migliorare (improve), maturare (mature), affondare (sink), bollire (boil)
- c. Class III ([±si])  
fondere (melt), cuocere (cook), raffreddare (cool), riscaldare (heat), asciugare (dry), gelare (freeze), congelare (freeze), bruciare (burn), sgonfiare (deflate), ingrandire (enlarge)

Jezek 2003, Cennamo & Jezek 2011: gradual-completion verbs may also have unergative alternants (diagnosed by the auxiliary *have*), e.g., *bruciare* 'to burn' allows a decausative (SE-marked) and two uncausatives (unmarked): one taking the auxiliary *have*, and the other one, *be*)

Both French and Italian causative alternations have been argued to be linked to the emphasis on process vs. result (in various terms: result prominence, telicity, perfectivity... see Alexiadou et al. 2015, Bentley 2024 for objections). Slavic languages suggest a similar connection

Aspect-linking analyses: Folli 2001, 2002, 2014, Cennamo & Jezek 2011, Cennamo 2012, etc.

Argument-structure linking analyses: Centineo 1995, Bentley 2006, Alexiadou et al. 2015, etc.

Same distinctions drawn for **Spanish** (Cuervo 2014, Vivanco 2021)

And for **Modern Greek** (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2004, Alexiadou 2010, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou & Schäfer 2006, 2015)

## 5 INTERMEDIATE SUMMARY

Slavic provides evidence for two types of one-place change-of-state verbs:

- derived from their transitive counterparts (decausative *i*-verbs)
- not derived from transitives (uncausative *e*-verbs)

The fact that the two types choose different prefixes strongly suggests **different event types**

As does the fact that *i*-(de)causatives can need to be prefixed in Russian, unlike *e*-uncausatives

Uncausatives and causatives derived from the same stem are not derivationally linked, in clear contrast with causatives and decausatives

Hence, **some one-place change-of-state verbs are not derived from underlying transitives** (contra Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1994, Chierchia 2004)

Our observations join the growing body of literature suggesting that one-place change-of-state verbs come in more than one syntactic structure (see Alexiadou et al. 2015 for cross-linguistic coverage)

The distinction between morphologically marked (*se*-marked, our *decausative*) and unmarked (our *uncausative*) one-place change-of-state verbs has been observed for many languages

Unlike elsewhere, **in Slavic the two types of anticausatives are distinguished not only by *se*-marking but also by their thematic (or verbalizing) suffix**

And morphologically distinct anticausatives generally do not have the same semantics

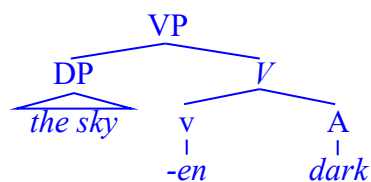
Composition vs. decomposition: what does *v* combine with?

## 6 TOWARDS A PROPOSAL

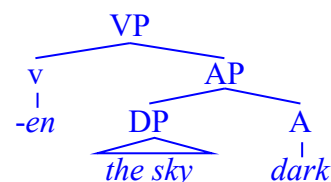
What is the internal argument of an unaccusative (the undergoer) an argument of?

**Two views on the structure of deadjectival degree achievements** attested in the literature:

(29) a. direct composition



b. complex event formation



Alexiadou et al. 2006, Alexiadou 2010:183: direct verbalization

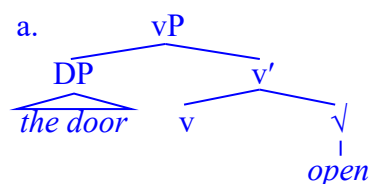
As the *v*-A constituent is a complex head, its argument is still internal

Harley 2008, 2012, 2017, Ramchand 2008:91: underlying small-clause structure (syntactically represented result state) for change-of-state verbs

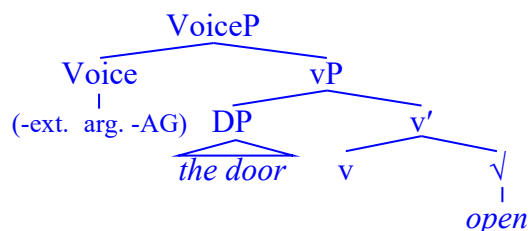
Both proposals include VoiceP in causatives and remove it to derive decausatives:

Trees from Alexiadou 2010:183, two types of unaccusatives (her “anticausatives”)

(30) a.



b.



Proposal: different vP structure for uncausatives and decausatives

Hypothesis: the structure underlying *e*-verbs is that of motion verbs rather than causatives, with the adjectival stem (i.e., the scale) supplying the path:

The notion of the semantic primitive GO introducing the THEME and the PATH comes from Jackendoff 1983 et seq., what we need to assume is that the PATH can be supplied by the adjectival scale



While a motion event might have a cause, it is not coded in the structure of the verb:

- (32) a. [GO IDENT ([PAGES], [TO IDENT ([PROPERTY YELLOW]])]) J1983:195  
 b. λe . GO(e) & THEME (*the pages*, e) & PATH (scale YELLOW, e) slightly fancier

Causatives (and decausatives) are more likely to have the SC structure:

Important: the exponent *-i-* does not encode causation (given that *i*-verbs can involve any Vendlerian event-type), this representation is a simplification



This syntactic and semantic representation **entails bieventive telicity**

Yet **the presence of a result state in the semantics of a verb does not entail culmination**

See Minor 2025 on telic verbal roots encoded as imperfectives in Russian

We have come closer to understanding why deadjectival degree achievement causatives prefer prefixes in Russian, but nothing we know forces the specification of a result state (i.e., we still don't know why for some *i*-verbs prefixation is obligatory)

And the syntax of prefixation in both structures remains an issue

## 7 CONCLUSION AND SOME ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

The minimal outcome: **two types of anticausative deadjectival degree achievements**

Two morphosyntactically distinct anticausative structures (in accordance with previous work):

- uncausatives: the *e*-thematic suffix, active syntax
- decausatives: the *i*-thematic suffix, *se*-marking

They are also semantically distinct:

- uncausatives: unpredictable relation to transitive *i*-verbs
- decausatives: transparent relation to transitive *i*-verbs (modulo object choice)

Tentative conclusions:

- neither the SC syntax nor direct v+A composition provide an account of prefixation if the adjectival stem and the prefix are taken to denote the resultant state
- the distinction between the two types of anticausatives is irreducible to the presence (or absence) of Voice
- *e*-verbs might have the morphosyntax of GO rather than CAUSE verbs

Not discussed today, alas:

- the behavior of *e-* and *i-*verbs in Serbo-Croatian, where the distinction between the two has been being neutralized (Marelj & Matushansky 2026a)
- two different uncausative verbalizers, *-e-* and *-nu-* (but see Tatevosov 2014a and section 7.3)

More work to be done!

## 7.1 INCREASE as a primitive

Hay & Kennedy & Levin 1999, Kennedy & Levin 2008: adjectival stems denote functions from individuals and times to degrees:

(34)  $[[\text{bel-}]] = \lambda x. \lambda t. \text{white}(x)(t)$

This lexical entry contributes the following:

- a gradable property (whiteness) measured on a **scale**
- a way to get a degree value for an individual at a time.

The verbalizer INCREASE  $\langle\langle e, \langle t, d \rangle\rangle, \langle e, \langle d, \langle v, t \rangle \rangle\rangle$  combines with an adjectival stem, an individual and a degree (i.e., a differential) to yield a set of events:

(35)  $[[\text{INCREASE}]](\varphi)(x)(d)(e) = 1$  iff  $\varphi(x)(\text{SPO}(e)) + d = \varphi(x)(\text{EPO}(e))$   
where SPO (e) is the starting point of the event & EPO(e), the end point of the event

The differential can be realized as an adverbial (*whitened a bit*) or a PP (*widened by 2cm*)

This argument ordering requires the verbalizer to compose first with the adjectival stem ( $\varphi$ ) in the direct composition structure in (31), but can be easily adjusted for the SC structure in (33)

## 7.2 Restitutive *again* and the elusive result state

Motivation for the underlying SC: restitutive reading of *again*:

(36) John opened the door again. Harley 2012  
a. Restitutive: The door had been open before, and John reopened it.  
b. Repetitive: John had opened the door before, and he did it again.

The restitutive reading in (36a) can be explained if the adverbial is adjoined to the SC

Horvath & Sioni 2011, citing Chierchia & McConnell-Ginet 1990: not all deadjectival degree achievement verbs permit the restitutive reading of *again* (e.g., *clean* does not), and this reading is harder for speakers to achieve anyway

Which is not a strong counterargument, since the lack of the restitutive reading may be due to pragmatic factors

Conversely, restitutive *again* may provide a reading that does not appear to be compatible with the semantics of the verb

(37) Scenario (based on Olshanetsky 2023): Reish Lakish has sold himself to a lanista. His friends, appalled by this, decide: We'll work hard and save money and eventually...

My (vy)kupim ego snova!  
we PFX.buy.1PL him again  
'We will buy him (back) again!'

The result state of the verb *buy* is either that of having been bought or that of being owned

Could (37) evoke the reading of abstract possession (*my daughter*)? If yes, can one *sell* it as well? We think not  
 But even if we're just talking about restoring possession, **possession is only part of the result state of the verb *buy***: the set of things *bought* is not identical to the set of things *gifted/given*

(38) *Mary really liked that brooch she had to sell. #Let's give or sell it to her again.*

Potential problem: non-structural accounts of *again* (e.g., Fabricius-Hansen 2001, Klein 2001) would not predict its interaction with word order

Yet Slavic *again* can be preverbal, which is not obviously compatible with structural accounts

### 7.3 Backgrounded CAUSE (non-compositional)

Tatevosov 2014a: uncausatives differ from decausatives in their event structure (detectable in the imperfective):

NB: As his focus is on the contrast between unmarked and *se*-marked unaccusatives, Tatevosov is not limited to *e*-uncausatives or to stems that are fully identical segmentally, allomorphy is allowed

(39) *Belije uže celyj čas suši-t-s'ja, no sovršenno ne soxn-et.*  
 linen already whole hour dry-PRES.3SG-SE but at all NEG dry-PRES.3SG  
 'The linen has been drying for a whole hour, but it is not getting drier.'

Crucial: in the perfective, the uncausative and the decausative do entail each other

Explanation: different semantics:

(40) a.  $[[_{VP} \dots \textit{soxn} \dots]] = \lambda e \dots \exists e' [\dots \text{CAUSE}(e)(e') \wedge \text{BECOME DRY}(e) \dots]$  uncausative  
 b.  $[[_{VP} \dots \textit{suši} \dots]] = \lambda e \dots \exists e' [\dots \text{CAUSE}(e')(e) \wedge \text{BECOME DRY}(e') \dots]$  decausative

The decausative is about events that cause the drying, the uncausative is about (caused) events of becoming dry

Tatevosov's intuition: the causing event may involve stages preceding the causation

But in principle the causing event may also be homomorphic with the caused event, explaining why this observation may fail to extend to other cases:

Two native speakers we asked reported the judgment below, one said it was a contradiction

(41) a. *Sasha starel, no ne starils'ja.*  
 Sasha grow.old.THE.PAST.MSG but NEG grow.old.THI.PAST.MSG  
 'Sasha is growing old but doesn't seem older.'  
 b. *Sasha starils'ja, no ne starel.*  
 Sasha grow.old.THI.PAST.MSG but NEG grow.old.THE.PAST.MSG  
 'Sasha is growing old but doesn't seem older.'

Tentative explanation: the two verbs, the *e*-verb *stareti* and the *i*-verb *staritis'ja*, both mean 'to become older'; the interpretation 'to look older' probably results from coercion

It is readily available for the perfectives *postareti* and *sostaritis'ja* when combined with *za god* 'in a year'

Unresolved issues:

- the CAUSE component in uncausatives (CAUSE introduces an external argument)
- identical event structure (no explanation for differences in prefixation if the prefix is taken to specify the result state (DRY))  
 But perhaps the result states are not the same? If so, there must be non-trivial syntactic distinctions between the two verb types
- the degree-achievement core is either non-decomposable (BECOME DRY) or predicts three eventualities in both uncausatives and decausatives

Important: the analysis of the distinct perfective/imperfective entailments

#### 7.4 Stative (essive) readings of Slavic deadjectival verbs

In both languages color *e*-verbs give rise to stative readings:

- (42) a. Vdali zelenel les. Russian, RNC  
in.the.distance green.PAST.MSG forest  
'Far away the forest shone green.'
- b. On byl černym kak smola, beleli tol'ko zuby.  
he was black.INS as tar whiten.PAST.PL only teeth  
'He was pitch-black, only his teeth shone white.'
- (43) a. Dan se beleo. Serbo-Croatian  
day SE whiten.PCPL.MSG  
'The day was glisteningly white.'
- b. Šuma se zelenela. Serbo-Croatian  
forest SE green.PCPL.FSG  
'The forest was beamingly green.'

Important: it is *only* color *e*-verbs that give rise to the stative readings

#### In Serbo-Croatian stative readings require *se*-marking

In Russian *se*-marking used to be possible, remains marginally possible:

- (44) a. lužok zelenels'ja, točno vymytyj RNC, up to the 19<sup>th</sup> c.  
meadow green.PAST.MSG.SE as.if washed  
'The meadow shone green, as if freshly washed.'
- b. Inej belels'ja na ee šubke. RNC, up to the 20<sup>th</sup> c.  
hoarfrost whiten.PAST.MSG.SE on her fur coat  
'Hoarfrost glistened white on her fur coat.'

#### Stative readings are derived from transformative (inchoative) ones:

- possible for color (and suchlike: *light*, *dark*, etc.) verbs only
- take the prefix *za-* to form perfectives in Russian and Serbo-Croatian.
- require overt *SE*-marking in Serbo-Croatian

By the same reasoning as before, **the inchoative reading should not be derived as causation of a state**

Essive readings of change-of-state color verbs also attested in Hebrew, Catalan (Oltra-Massuet & Castroviejo 2013, 2014, Acedo-Matellán & Gibert-Sotelo 2022), Spanish (Oltra-Massuet & Castroviejo 2013, 2014), Italian (M. Rasia 2023), and French (Joüon 1930)

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