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# Aspectual Competition and Iterative Contexts in Contemporary Upper Sorbian

Gary H. Toops

*Abstract.* In Upper Sorbian, as in the other contemporary West Slavic languages, iterative/habitual actions (acts or events) can be expressed by both imperfective and perfective verbs. Aspectual competition in iterative contexts is therefore complete. Based on the results of a questionnaire that incorporated a variety of iterative contexts and that was administered to native speakers of Upper Sorbian in July–August 2000, the article demonstrates that a number of lexical, stylistic, and morphosemantic factors condition aspect selection by today's native speakers of Upper Sorbian. This is shown to hold true across generational lines, whether today's speakers of Upper Sorbian instantiate verbal aspect as a strict imperfective-perfective opposition; or whether—in the case of prefixed verbs and their stem-suffixed (formerly imperfective) counterparts—they instantiate a quasi-aspectual indeterminate-determinate opposition. The article thus counters claims made by some Slavists that verbal aspect in contemporary Upper Sorbian is obsolete, functionally restricted, or subordinate to other grammatical categories such as tense.

## 1. Introduction

Like the verb systems of other contemporary Slavic languages, the verb system of Upper Sorbian (USo)—at least in its literary variant—is fundamentally characterized by a grammatical opposition of two aspects, perfective and imperfective. From the standpoint of literary USo (including the speech of older generations of Sorbs—see below), imperfective verbs are opposed to perfective ones by their ability to express continuous states and actions (acts or events) in concrete progress.<sup>1</sup> The aspectuo-temporal expression of such states and actions is termed *praesens actuale*. This can be an “actual” (i.e., eventive) present *sensu stricto* as well as a “continuous present in the past [or future]” (Lindstedt 1985: 122–26).<sup>2</sup> In a number of specific procedural contexts, however, verbs of either aspect can be used—to a large extent, indiscriminately (Fasske 1981: 182–83; Toops 1992: 18;

<sup>1</sup> According to Michałk (1959), perfective verbs are primarily distinguished from imperfective verbs by their ‘Präsensunfähigkeit’ (inability to denote an eventive present). Conversely—judging by his rejection of the present-tense forms of several basic imperfective verbs in USo stage directions—Michałk also maintains that imperfective verbs are distinguished from perfective ones by their inability to denote a ‘momentary’ action in the scenic or dramatic present (1959: 243).

<sup>2</sup> The terms *actual*, *eventive*, and *continuous (present)* are considered here and hereafter to be synonymous.

Toops 1998b: 283). The common occurrence of such contexts, combined with a relatively large number of both biaspectual verbs and *perfectiva* and *imperfectiva tantum* in USo (cf. Toops 1993a: 128–34) has helped to create the inexact impression among some Slavists that verbal aspect in contemporary USo is obsolete, functionally restricted (Breu 2000: 72), or “subordinate” to other grammatical categories such as tense (Werner 1996: 13). This impression, which the present article seeks to counter, is strengthened, moreover, by the frequent observation that younger generations of Upper Sorbs instantiate an “aspectual” opposition that deviates from the imperfective–perfective dichotomy by which Slavic aspectual systems in general are commonly defined.

The expression of iterativity—understood here as the repeated, habitual, or multiple performance or occurrence of an action—constitutes one of the procedural contexts contributing to the impression that aspect is not a systemic grammatical category in contemporary USo. Like other West Slavic languages, USo exhibits aspectual competition in such contexts, i.e., it admits the instantiation of either or both aspects, generally with no difference of procedural interpretation.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, as Dickey has extrapolated from relevant Czech textual samples, aspectual competition in iterative contexts in the non-Lechitic West Slavic languages (as well as Slovenian) hardly amounts to an “aspectual free-for-all” (2000: 164–65): a variety of non-aspectual factors—some grammatical, some lexical—intervene to influence or even determine a speaker’s choice of aspectual form.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> With respect to the expression of other non-eventive presents (i.e., in non-iterative contexts), USo aspectual competition is not necessarily complete, since only those verb forms that have not been derived by means of a stem suffix enjoy preference. In other words, in non-iterative contexts where aspectual competition is possible, only *basic* imperfective verbs actually compete with their (largely prefixal) perfective counterparts. See Fassek and Michalk 1981: 182–83 and Toops 1998: 283.

<sup>4</sup> As Kresin (2000) has noted for Russian, and Dickey (2000) for Bulgarian and the East Slavic languages in general, the instantiation of non-past-tense forms of perfective verbs to express iterative actions in these languages often proves to be infelicitous or results in the expression of a non-iterative future reading rather than an iterative present one. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that the East Slavic languages were once more like the contemporary West Slavic languages with respect to the use of perfective verbs to express non-eventive presents. Consider the following passage from the Russian Primary Chronicle (as cited in Bermel 1997: 251), which reflects Old Russian (Old East Slavic) as it existed at various stages from 1093 through ca. 1260: *Dněpr” bo poteče iz Okov’skago lě(sa) i potečet’ na pol”dne. a Dvina is togože lěsa potečet. a idet’ na polunošt’e i vnidet’ v more Varjaž’skoe. is togo že lěsa poteče Volga na v”stok”. i v”tečet’ sem’judesjat’ žerel” v more Xvalis’skoe* (‘for the Dniepr flows from the O[staš]kov forest and heads south, and from the same forest flows the Dvina and runs north and empties into the Varangian [=Baltic] Sea. From the same forest the Volga flows to the east and empties through seventy delta channels into the Caspian Sea’). Although Ul’janov (1895: 145) had tried to account for the Old Russian prefixed verbs *potečet(t’)*, *vnidet’*, and *v”tečet’* in this passage by describing them as imperfectives that are aspectually unaffected by prefixation (so, too, most re-

In a previous article, I sought to correlate aspect choice in USo iterative contexts with considerations of verbal tense and contextual time frames (for details see Toops 2001 and below).<sup>5</sup> Here my goal is to take into account additional factors that condition aspect choice by native speakers of USo in iterative contexts. While a variety of published works have heretofore explored non-aspectuo-temporal factors influencing aspect selection in other Slavic languages, no work, to my knowledge, has thus far examined similar factors in USo. For USo these can be summarized at the outset as including the following: a) potential lexical differences between opposing aspectual forms; b) presence vs. absence of temporal adverbial modifiers; c) ambiguity of temporal adverbials; d) temporal ambiguity of bi-aspectual verbs; e) stylistic markedness of one member of an aspectual pair; f) correlations between lexical aspect (aspectuality) and grammatical aspect; g) expression of Aktionsarten by increasingly lexical rather than grammatical means; and h) preference for non-stem-suffixed forms of *verba dicendi* and other performatives.

The enumerated factors are illustrated below on the basis of grammaticality judgments that were elicited from native speakers of USo by means of a questionnaire administered to them in 2000. Where relevant, these factors are additionally illustrated with material from other, published sources. For the sake of completeness, however, it is necessary first to review some basic aspectual principles as they currently operate in both the literary and the colloquial variants of USo.

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cently Bermel 1997: 251–57), both Fortunatov (1897: 111–12) and Endzelins (1906: 118–19) maintained that these verbs are in fact prefixal perfectives and, as such, denote here a non-eventive present. The occurrence of perfective verbs in this passage is even to be expected in the light of the described actions' temporal sequentiality, a feature which Dickey (2000: 52–67) establishes as a concomitant of the perfective aspect's denotation of temporal definiteness in the contemporary East (and eastern South) Slavic languages. Finally, one should not overlook the fact that the one basic imperfective verb in the text—*idet'*—is a *determinate* verb of motion and that, to a large extent, the determinate-indeterminate opposition of basic verbs of motion morphosyntactically parallels the perfective-imperfective aspectual opposition (see Włodarczyk 1997: 192–203; cf. also Toops 1998b: 289).

<sup>5</sup> The data presented in Toops (2001) suggest that iterativity in contemporary USo is far more likely to be expressed with imperfective verb forms in present time frames than it is in non-present (i.e., past or future) time frames. There it is also suggested that this phenomenon may reflect a modern-day correlation between temporal boundedness and aspectual boundedness (i.e., actions expressed by present-tense verb forms are temporally unbounded, while actions expressed by imperfective verbs are aspectually unbounded). Correlations between 'temporal categories' (*Tempuskategorien*) and aspectual ones in literary USo are also described by Breu (2000: 47). For independent, yet parallel observations on the correlation between tense and aspect in Slavic iterative contexts generally, see Dickey (2000: 76–80).

## 2. Review of USo Aspect

Among the four lexical classes of verbs identified by Vendler—verbs of state, activity, achievement, and accomplishment (1967: 107–108)—it is those that denote accomplishments that generally occur in (lexically) synonymous pairs, such that one member of the pair is imperfective while the other is perfective (Toops 1993b).<sup>6</sup> As a rule, if the imperfective (I) form of an accomplishment verb is basic, then its perfective (P) counterpart is derived by the addition of a prefix (e.g., *pisać<sup>I</sup> - napisać<sup>P</sup>* ‘write’). In such cases, the prefix is said to be “lexically empty” or “purely aspectual”. In contrast, if a prefixed perfective verb is lexically distinct from the basic verb from which it derives, then its aspectual (imperfective) counterpart is formed by means of one of two possible stem suffixes (*-a/-e-* or *-owa-*, e.g., *zapisać<sup>P</sup> - zapisować<sup>I</sup>* ‘register’).<sup>7</sup> To this extent verbal aspect as a grammatical category in USo can be said to resemble the category of aspect that we find in the other contemporary Slavic languages. Nevertheless, the situation in USo today is complicated by the existence (or coexistence) of two distinct aspectual systems.

One aspectual system is characterized, as in other contemporary West Slavic languages, by a perfective-imperfective opposition. Within this system, the perfective aspect can be defined in Dickey’s (2000) terms as denoting totality, while the imperfective aspect can be defined as denoting quantitative temporal indefiniteness, understood as “the assignability of a situation to more than one point in time” (Dickey 2000: 124–25). This aspectual system appears by and large to characterize the usage of today’s USo-speaking population born and schooled prior to 1945. It is most notably distinguished from the aspectual system of younger generations of USo speakers by the fact that prefixation of a basic imperfective verb (with few exceptions) systematically yields an aspectually perfective verb form, and that only imperfective verbs can denote an eventive present (*praesens actuale*). It is this aspectual system that is described in the USo grammars of Schuster-Šewc (1968; 1984; 1996) and Fasske and Michalk (1981): it not

<sup>6</sup> As illustrated in Toops (1993b), USo verbs denoting states and activities are generally unpaired imperfectives (*imperfectiva tantum*), while those denoting achievements (e.g., *namakać<sup>P</sup>* ‘find’) are most often unpaired perfectives (*perfectiva tantum*—for examples, see Fasske and Michalk 1981: 191). Parallel descriptions of lexical verb class and Russian aspect can be found in Choi (1997: 23). For a more general characterization of potential correlations between lexical verb class and Slavic grammatical aspect, see Dickey (2000: 43ff.).

<sup>7</sup> USo prefixed perfective verbs of the fourth conjugation class (Trofimowicz 1974: 493) very often have two competing, suffixally derived imperfective counterparts, e.g., *přeložic<sup>P</sup> - přeložec<sup>I</sup> / přeložowac<sup>I</sup>* ‘translate’. The stem suffix *-e-* is a positional variant of *-a-* that occurs between soft (palatal or palatalized) consonants. In conjugation, the stem suffix *-owa-* occurs as *-uj-* in synthetic non-past tenses.

only constitutes the norm of the contemporary USo literary language, but also characterizes the usage of the authors of those grammars and the generation of USo speakers to which they belong (an important fact which is sometimes ignored).<sup>8</sup>

In essence, aspectual usage in the literary language and among older generations of USo speakers is as described above: given the basic, imperfective form of an accomplishment verb *pisać<sup>l</sup>* 'write', a perfective counterpart (aspectual partner) is derived by means of a lexically empty prefix—*napisać<sup>P</sup>*. Further, if a verb with a different lexical meaning is formed by means of some other ("lexical") prefix, then the resulting verb form is likewise perfective, e.g., *přepisać<sup>P</sup>* 'rewrite'. To express this meaning in the eventive present, therefore, the suffixally derived imperfective form *přepisowač<sup>l</sup>* is necessary. The aspectual pair signifying 'rewrite' is thus *přepisowač<sup>l</sup>*—*přepisáč<sup>P</sup>* (in contrast to *pisać<sup>l</sup>*—*napisać<sup>P</sup>* 'write'). Accordingly, the proposition 'I am writing a letter right now' is expressed as *Runje nětko list písam<sup>l</sup>*, while the proposition 'I am rewriting a letter right now' is expressed as *Runje nětko list přepisuju<sup>l</sup>*. If one were to use the corresponding perfective form *přepisam<sup>P</sup>* in a similar context, it would ordinarily denote a perfective future tense (e.g., *Nětko tón list přepisam<sup>P</sup>* 'I shall now rewrite that letter'). Use of the imperfective aspect is also obligatory in (continuous) past time frames of the type 'At that very moment I was still rewriting the letter', whether this proposition be expressed in the preterite—*W tym wokomiku runje hišće list přepisowach<sup>l</sup>*—or in the perfect tense—*W tym wokomiku sym runje hišće list přepisował(a)<sup>l</sup>*.<sup>9</sup>

Aspectual usage among the apparent majority of USo speakers born or schooled after 1945 (cf. Fasske and Michalk 1981: 27–28; Faska 1998: 141 ff.) is considerably different (see Werner 1996: 13, 59, 62). On the basis of personal interviews with younger speakers of USo, Breu (2000: 58ff.) has concluded that the older perfective-imperfective aspectual opposition has

<sup>8</sup> Both Michalk (who died in 1992) and Schuster-Šewc were born in 1927; Fasske was born in 1932. Breu (2000: 45) advances the uncorroborated proposition that "in view of earlier aspect use, a tendency to Slavicize or re-Slavicize the literary language even with regard to the category of aspect appears to be undeniable" (translation mine—GHT). Implicit in this statement is the curious notion that the grammars of Schuster-Šewc and Fasske and Michalk do not actually describe the aspect use of the native USo speakers who authored them.

<sup>9</sup> In the USo literary language and the speech of older USo speakers, the preterite is a largely narrative tense which can always be re-expressed by means of the perfect tense (see Trofimowič 1974: 492). In general, the distribution of the two tenses in USo parallels their distribution in German (however, the perfect is more common than the preterite in USo temporal clauses introduced by *hdyž* 'when' [German 'als']; only when the temporal clause is introduced by *jako* [a calque of German *als*] is the preterite more common, as it is in German).

been supplanted essentially by a “terminative”-“aterminative” opposition. Since the meaning of Breu’s terms is not immediately apparent outside the theoretical framework within which he operates, I propose to use the terms *determinate* and *indeterminate* instead. Indeed, the aspectual (or quasi-aspectual) system characteristic of the speech of younger Upper Sorbs can be seen as residing largely, albeit not exclusively, in an opposition of determinate (D) vs. indeterminate (ID) verb forms resembling that which characterizes both basic and even certain USo prefixed verbs of motion. In discussing determinate and indeterminate verbs of motion in Czech, Heim provides a description that is general enough to be applied as well to the determinate-indeterminate opposition realized in the speech of post-1945 generations of Upper Sorbs: “Determinate forms denote a goal-oriented action occurring either once or irregularly; indeterminate verbs lack this specific focus and may therefore connote undirected action, regular or habitual action, or the ability to perform the action” (1982: 102).<sup>10</sup>

The following characterizes the usage of an USo speaker who was born in 1954 and was raised in the Catholic (or Kamenz) dialect area northwest of Budyšin (Bautzen).<sup>11</sup> For this speaker, *писаć<sup>I</sup>-написаć<sup>P</sup>* ‘write’ constitute an aspectual pair in the traditional sense of an imperfective-perfective opposition. ‘I am writing a letter right now’, is accordingly expressed as *Runje nětko list písam<sup>I</sup>*, never as \**Runje nětko list napisam<sup>P</sup>*. However, when a verb is derived from *писаć* with a lexical prefix (e.g., *пře-*), then that prefixed verb (*пřеписаć* ‘rewrite’) functions as a determinate, not a perfective verb. Accordingly, ‘Right now I am rewriting a letter’ is expressed as *Runje nětko list přepisam<sup>D</sup>*; ‘At that very moment I was still rewriting a letter’ can be expressed in the preterite tense as *W tym wokomiku runje hišće list přepisach<sup>D</sup>* (cf. German *In dem Augenblick schrieb ich gerade noch einen Brief um.*).<sup>12</sup> The suffixally derived *пřеписоваć* functions as an indetermi-

<sup>10</sup> Unlike Breu, I view the newer, determinate-indeterminate opposition not as an “Abbau” (dissolution) of verbal aspect in USo (2000: 37), but rather as an *Umbau* (reconfiguration) of the earlier perfective-imperfective opposition, motivated intralinguistically by an *Ausbau* (extension or functional elaboration) of the determinate-indeterminate opposition that originally characterized only basic (imperfective) verbs of motion and later spread (in both literary and colloquial USo) to encompass a number of prefixed (perfective) verbs of motion as well (e.g., *wotlětować<sup>I</sup>* ‘fly away’ vs. determinate *wotlećeć<sup>P</sup>* and indeterminate *wotlětać<sup>P</sup>*; see Toops 1992: 33; Toops 1998b: 295–96).

<sup>11</sup> This individual speaks USo on a daily basis, both with his family and relatives and in his profession (broadcasting).

<sup>12</sup> As in German, the preterite lends itself more easily than the perfect tense to the expression of progressive actions in past time frames. This being said, both German and colloquial USo are more likely to express progressive actions periphrastically: *In dem Augenblick war ich gerade noch dabei, einen Brief umzuschreiben/W tym wokomiku běch runje hišće při tym, list přepisać* ‘At that moment I was still [in the process of] rewriting a letter’.

nate verb. For the USo speaker under discussion, *Runje nětko list přepisuju*<sup>ID</sup> would be admissible if the letter in question were a relatively long one requiring a protracted period of time to rewrite.<sup>13</sup>

The members of the pair *přepisać<sup>D</sup>-přepisować<sup>ID</sup>* 'rewrite' are thus opposed to each other in much the same way as the determinate and indeterminate member of the pair signifying 'go'—*hić<sup>D</sup>-chodźić<sup>ID</sup>*. *Nětko do šule du<sup>D</sup>* 'I am now going to school', like *Nětko list přepisam<sup>D</sup>* 'I am now rewriting a letter' expresses a single, goal-oriented action in concrete progress, even if the goal of action in the former sentence is syntactically a prepositional phrase denoting destination while in the latter it is a direct object. In contrast, *Nětko do šule chodžu<sup>ID</sup>* 'I now go to school', like *Nětko listy přepisuju* 'I now rewrite letters', expresses a regular or habitual action, the former connoting 'I now attend (or am enrolled in) school', the latter 'I now rewrite letters as part of my normal activities or responsibilities'.

For younger speakers a determinate verb results not only from the addition of a lexical prefix to a basic imperfective verb, but also from the addition of any other prefix that produces a radical change of lexical meaning, e.g., *pokazać<sup>D</sup>* 'show' (the basic verb *kazać<sup>I</sup>* means 'order, demand; to invite'; *pokazować*, in turn, is the indeterminate, rather than imperfective, partner to *pokazać<sup>D</sup>*—see Toops 1998a: 525; Toops 1998b: 292). Moreover, if an originally empty prefix (e.g., *na-* in *napisać<sup>P</sup>* 'write') is lexicalized, usually as the result of German influence, then the resulting verb form is likewise determinate. Thus, *napisać<sup>D</sup>* in the sense of German *aufschreiben* 'write down' or *anschreiben* 'chalk up, charge to an account', unlike the homonymous aspectual partner to *pisać<sup>I</sup>* 'write', is a determinate, not a perfective verb. As such, it is freely used by younger Sorbs in the eventive present (see Breu 2000: 55 for examples).<sup>14</sup> (USo speakers who adhere to the older aspectual system either forgo this German morphological calque or resort to paraphrase by means of a directional adverb, e.g., *horje pisać<sup>I</sup>* 'write down'. However, such use of directional adverbs does not conform to the prescriptive norms of the USo literary lan-

<sup>13</sup> Werner (1996: 59) cites the following example of an USo translation offered by a younger speaker for the German sentence 'Ich wische gerade den Tisch ab' ('Right now I am wiping off the table'): *Ja runje blido wottrěju*. (The traditional imperfective-perfective aspect pair being *wottrěwać<sup>I</sup>—wottrěć<sup>P</sup>* 'wipe off', older USo speakers would say instead *Ja runje blido wottrěwam<sup>I</sup>*). With respect to the indeterminate *přepisuju* exemplified here, we note that a similar connotation of protracted length or duration is achieved by English formulations of the type 'Right now I am working on getting a letter rewritten'. On the basis of examples containing the verb "*šedawać*" (= *przedawać*) 'sell', Breu (2000: 58–60) notes that younger USo speakers often use derived imperfectives (like *přepisować* 'rewrite') with plural or mass noun objects to denote habitual activities, e.g., *Nětko listy přepisuju<sup>ID</sup>* 'Now I rewrite letters (for people, as part of my job)', 'Now I spend my time rewriting letters'.

<sup>14</sup> Breu (2000: 55) conflates *napisać<sup>D</sup>* 'write down' and *pisać<sup>I</sup>-napisać<sup>P</sup>* 'write'.

guage [see Toops 1992/93: 15–16].<sup>15</sup> Unlike *pokazać<sup>D</sup>* ‘show’, *napisać<sup>D</sup>* has no indeterminate counterpart, i.e., *\*napisować<sup>ID</sup>* does not exist. This is because USo (in a way similar to Russian and Czech) has never had a corresponding, secondarily derived imperfective form *\*napisować* that could have otherwise been reinterpreted by younger USo speakers as indeterminate (but see Toops 1998b: 286–87). This poses no problem for younger generations of USo speakers, however, since, as with verbs of motion in USo and other Slavic languages, determinate forms can often be used in place of indeterminate ones (albeit not *vice versa*—cf. Toops 1998b: 294; Breu 2000: 68–69). In this regard, Werner (1996: 149) notes, for example, that nowadays even indeterminate *chodźić* ‘go’ (see above) can be replaced by its determinate counterpart *hić*; cf. his example *Wón hižo pjate lěto do šule dže (=chodži)* ‘He is going to (=attending) school for his fifth year already’.

The very possibility that even an original prefixal perfective like *přepisać* ‘rewrite’ could develop into a verb capable of denoting an eventive present among younger generations of USo speakers is no doubt connected with the fact that the perfective future had long been expressed periphrastically in the spoken language prior to 1945. In other words, since a perfective future like ‘I shall rewrite’ was already commonly expressed as *budu přepisać<sup>P</sup>* rather than synthetically as *přepisam<sup>P</sup>* even by early generations, synthetic non-past forms like *přepisam<sup>P</sup>* ultimately became prone to misconstrual or reinterpretation by later generations of Upper Sorbs as forms denoting a present tense generally, eventive as well as non-eventive.<sup>16</sup>

Table 1 below summarizes the aspectual systems of contemporary USo as described above. It illustrates (in the shaded areas) that verbal aspect is realized as a perfective-imperfective opposition in the USo literary language and by older generations of USo speakers. Aspect is also realized as such by younger generations, but only insofar as the lexicon provides lexically synonymous prefixal derivatives of basic verbs. Otherwise verbal aspect is reinterpreted and realized among younger generations of USo speakers as a determinate-indeterminate opposition.

<sup>15</sup> As stated in Toops (1992: 33), “adverbialization and prefixation are not mutually exclusive.” For USo speakers who adhere to the traditional perfective-imperfective aspectual opposition, *horje pisac<sup>I</sup>* ‘write down’ may be aspectually paired with *horje napisac<sup>P</sup>* (cf. Faska 1998: 142). For illustrations of this lexical operation in the Schleife (Slepo/Slěpe) dialect, see Brijnen (2000: 69), whose infelicitous reference to Toops (1992/93: 12) resides in her misconstrual of the English description of this phenomenon that I provide there.

<sup>16</sup> See Schuster-Šewc (1996: 169): “The non-past form of a perfective verb is ambiguous. It can express a non-continuous (non-eventive) present as well as a completed future action.”

**Table 1.** Coexisting aspectual systems in contemporary Upper Sorbian (illustrated with accomplishment verbs signifying 'write', 'rewrite', and 'write down').

Aspectual (quasi-aspectual) opposition:	Post-1945 generations of Upper Sorbian speakers	USo literary language and speech of older generations
perf.-imperf. →	<i>pisac<sup>I</sup>—napisac<sup>P</sup></i>	<i>pisac<sup>I</sup>—napisac<sup>P</sup></i>
det.-indet.	<i>přepisac<sup>D</sup>—přepisowac<sup>ID</sup></i>	<i>přepisac<sup>P</sup>—přepisowac<sup>I</sup></i>
	<i>napisac<sup>D</sup></i> ('aufschreiben')	<i>(horje) pisac<sup>I</sup>—napisac<sup>P</sup></i>

In view of the existence of two aspectual systems in use among today's native speakers of USo, the question arises whether differences in the way older and younger speakers interpret a given verb form have any significant effect on speakers' choices between competing verb forms in iterative contexts. In other words, to the extent that speakers are prone to choose the stem-suffixed form of a prefixed verb in a given iterative context, will a speaker who interprets the verb as an imperfective form do so for essentially the same reasons as a speaker who interprets it instead as an indeterminate form? Contemporary grammars of USo suggest that the answer to this question is yes, inasmuch as the functional distribution of perfective and imperfective verbs in iterative contexts respectively parallels that of determinate and indeterminate (motion) verbs. With regard to aspect use in iterative contexts, Fasske and Michalk (1981: 183), for example, state that "in various types of sentences that express a general, temporally unspecified, habitual action" *imperfective verbs are "preferred* for the expression of a temporally unspecified, indefinite, habitual action" even though "[s]entences with this meaning do not [necessarily] preclude [the use of] ... a perfective verb" (emphasis added; translation mine—GHT).<sup>17</sup> The

<sup>17</sup> When Fasske and Michalk speak of forms being "preferred," they regard preference from the standpoint of the USo literary language. Moreover, when referring to actions that are "temporally unspecified" ("zeitlich nicht festgelegt"), "indeterminate" ("unbestimmt"), and "habitual" ("usuell"), they do not mean to suggest only those actions that are expressed by verbs occurring with absolutely no temporal modifiers. This

same authors describe the use of determinate and indeterminate verbs (of motion) in iterative contexts in virtually parallel fashion: "Determinate and indeterminate verbs compete with each other when habitual actions occurring in one direction are expressed and the habitualness is sufficiently conveyed by lexical means or is evident from the broader context. Both verb forms can be used, but *the indeterminate verb is preferred*" (Fasske and Michalk 1981: 106–107, thus cited in Toops 1998b: 288; emphasis added). In other words, with respect to iterativity, literary USo "prefers" the use of indeterminate forms of motion verbs in the same way as it "prefers" the imperfective forms of all other types of verbs.

From another perspective, we may recall Heim's definition of determinacy cited above: "Determinate forms denote a goal-oriented action occurring either *once* or irregularly" (emphasis added). The basic meaning of the perfective aspect, by comparison, is that of *one-time*, completed action. As stated above, iterativity is understood as the repeated, habitual, or multiple performance or occurrence of an action. Thus, the very notion of iterativity presupposes the iteration of an action's completion.<sup>18</sup> In iterative contexts, therefore, the "completive" semantics of a verb form which some speakers might interpret as perfective (rather than determinate) are essentially moot. Relevant from the standpoint of iterativity is the question whether iteration *is encoded* by a given (indeterminate/derived imperfective) verb form, or whether iteration *is not encoded* by a given (determinate/perfective) verb form and therefore conveyed solely by other, lexical means.

Generational differences in selecting specific ([im]perfective/[in]determinate) verb forms in published texts, moreover, are even less likely in view of Brey's observation (2000: 23) that a certain diglossia characterizes the USo speech community, especially among its younger generations, who more or less apply the norms of the literary language to their school studies, literature, and formal writing, but use colloquial USo as a written and oral medium of communication in other spheres of activity (including e-mail). Thus, even USo speakers who instantiate the perfec-

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is clear from the examples that they cite in this regard (1981: 183): *Husto zetykowach ducy do šule tolsteho komercneho radu Waneku* 'On the way to school I often met the fat economist ("Kommerzienrat") Wanneke', *Tajkich bě sej Józef přeco ludži předstajał, kiž sej něšto cyle wulke a nowe wumysluja* 'Joseph had always imagined people who think up something really great and new'.

<sup>18</sup> Bondarko (1995: 48) notes that even when an imperfective verb occurs in a Russian iterative context, ambiguity may still exist with respect to successful completion of the action vs. repeated *attempts* at successfully completing the action. For example, *On wsegda sdawal ěkzameny* may signify 'He always passed his exams' or may simply receive a conative reading, 'He was always taking (=trying to pass) exams'. Bondarko notes that the adverb *uspešno* 'successfully' may therefore be necessary to underscore iteration of a *successfully completed* action: *On wsegda uspešno sdawal ěkzameny* 'He always passed his exams'.

tive-imperfective dichotomy as a determinate-indeterminate opposition in their own speech, are able to recognize distinctions between perfective and imperfective verbs when confronted with texts written in the literary language, including periodicals.

Nevertheless, generational differences have been noted with respect to the so-called “iterative preterite” tense. This tense (which exists as well in Serbo-Croatian) is formally identical to the conditional mood; it occurs mostly in fairy tales, legends, and casual narratives (or reminiscences—Fasske and Michalk 1981: 266). It is formed with verbs of either aspect (albeit more often with perfective verbs—Breu 2000: 47), but younger USo speakers are largely unaware of its iterative meaning and generally (mis)interpret the form only as an unreal conditional (Werner 1996: 146).<sup>19</sup> However, since the data considered below exhibited no occurrences of the iterative preterite, this tense form need not concern us further.<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Aspectual Competition in Iterative Contexts

The data presented below were collected in July–August 2000 by means of a written questionnaire. The questionnaire was completed by twelve native speakers of USo whose dates of birth ranged over a period of 30 years, from 1950 to 1980.<sup>21</sup> It consisted of iterative contexts excerpted from news items that had appeared four years earlier in the USo newspaper *Serbske Nowiny*. The verbs that had actually appeared in the newspaper were jux-

<sup>19</sup> We find the following example of a sentence formulated with the iterative preterite in Faska (1998: 149), where it is observed that this tense does not occur in the Hoyerswerda (Wojerecy) and Spreewitz (Sprjejcy) dialects of USo, nor in the transitional Schleife (Slepo) and Bad Muskau (Mužakow) dialects, nor in the northern transitional dialect spoken between the villages of Sabrodt (Zabrod) and Großpartwitz (Parcow) west of Spremberg (Grodtk): *Hdyž smy džěci byli, by nam mać kóždu sobotu plincy napjekta* ‘When we were children, Mother would make (‘bake’) us pancakes every Saturday’.

<sup>20</sup> Despite the numerous habitual actions detailed in A. S. Puškin’s tale “Vystrel” (‘The Shot’ in his *Tales of the Late Ivan Petrovič Belkin* [*Povesti pokojnogo Ivana Petroviča Belkina*]), a 1958 USo translation exhibits the iterative preterite at only two points in the narrative. One of these corresponds specifically to an isolated occurrence of *byvalo* constructions in the original Russian; see “Wutřěl” in Brycka (1958: 22).

<sup>21</sup> The twelve respondents to this questionnaire were born in the following years and were born or raised in the following places: 1950 – Šunow (Schönau, Kreis Kamenz), 1951 – Slepo (Schleife, Kreis Weißwasser), 1952 – Worklecy (Räckelwitz, Kreis Kamenz), 1954 – Chelno (Cölln, Kreis Bautzen), 1956 – Bad Dübén, 1958 – Worklecy (Räckelwitz, Kreis Kamenz), 1959 – Worklecy (Räckelwitz, Kreis Kamenz), 1960 – Budyšin (Bautzen), 1968 – Kašecy (Kaschwitz, Kreis Kamenz), 1978 – Lipsk (Leipzig), 1979 – Worklecy (Räckelwitz, Kreis Kamenz), 1980 – Worklecy (Räckelwitz, Kreis Kamenz). This information suggests that the respondents’ overall preferences or rejections of competing verb forms can be correlated neither with differences in their ages or dialects, nor with any single age group or dialect.

taped with alternate, albeit lexically synonymous, aspectual and aspectuo-temporal (including some suppletive) forms of the same verb. The respondents, who remained unaware which verb forms had actually appeared in the USo press, were given the following written instructions:

Please write next to each sentence (verb) variant—  
 the number “1” if in your opinion it is the best variant;  
 the number “2” if in your opinion it is the next-best or acceptable variant;  
 the letter “X” if the variant is unusual, unacceptable, or archaic.

In 1996 a similarly constructed questionnaire had been administered to a different group of twelve USo speakers. Their dates of birth had ranged over a period of 40 years, from 1936 to 1976.<sup>22</sup> An analysis of the results of that questionnaire—which had not focused on iterative contexts—revealed that: a) aspect use in the newspaper and among the respondents to the questionnaire coincided where distinctions between eventive and non-eventive action were involved—specifically, between *praesens actuale* and *praesens historicum*; but that b) aspect use in the USo press, compared to that of the respondents, reflected a somewhat “puristic” or more conservative norm in the instantiation of imperfective verbs in contexts where habitualness or iterativity was lexically expressed (see Toops 1997: 23). In view of the literary language’s aforementioned “preference” for imperfective verbs, it is worth observing that in present time frames *Serbske Nowiny* was more likely to use imperfective verbs to express iterative actions by a ratio of almost 3: 2 (58.33% imperfective vs. 41.67% perfective), while its readers, regardless of their age or dialect, were almost evenly inclined to use verbs of either aspect (49.65% imperfective vs. 50.35% perfective). However, the results of the questionnaire administered in 2000 failed to reveal or corroborate any significant disparity in aspect choice between the respondents to the questionnaire and the USo press: on both sides *perfective* verbs were now preferred to imperfective verbs—by a ratio of almost 3: 2—for expressing iterative actions in present time frames (58.93%

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<sup>22</sup> The twelve respondents to the 1996 questionnaire were born in the following years and were born or raised in the following places: 1936 – Pančicy (Panschwitz, Kreis Kamenz), 1937 – Nowy Łusč (Neulauske, Kreis Bautzen), 1941 – Koslow (Casslau, Kreis Bautzen), 1942 – Drježdžany (Dresden), 1943 – Róžant (Rosenthal, Kreis Kamenz), 1951 – Slepó (Schleife, Kreis Weißwasser), 1954 – Chelno (Cölln, Kreis Bautzen), 1959 – Worklecý (Räckelwitz, Kreis Kamenz), 1964 – Smječkecý (Schmeckwitz, Kreis Kamenz), 1964 – Budyšin (Bautzen), 1968 – Kašecý (Kaschwitz, Kreis Kamenz), and 1976 – Budyšin (Bautzen).

perfective vs. 41.07% imperfective among the respondents; 57.14% perfective vs. 42.86% imperfective in *Serbske Nowiny*).<sup>23</sup>

Neither the questionnaire administered in 1996 nor the one administered in 2000 revealed any variations in aspect use that could be attributed to generational or dialectal differences among the USo-speaking respondents. On initial reflection, this fact may seem incongruous. However, as indicated above, the language of USo periodicals (including newspapers<sup>24</sup>) is essentially the USo literary language. As such, it constitutes a supradialectal norm that is assimilated to varying degrees by Sorbs more or less irrespective of their age or dialect. For this reason, the lack of any discernible correlation between a Sorbian respondent's verb choices and his/her age or dialect is not particularly surprising.

In the newspaper passages that follow, the verb forms under consideration have been italicized. The forms that actually occurred in *Serbske Nowiny* are preceded by a raised check mark (✓). Other verb forms were added in the formulation of the questionnaire. In each case, the forms are arranged in a specific order: basic imperfective verbs appear first, followed by prefixal perfectives. These in turn are followed by derived imperfectives, those with the stem suffix *-a/-e-* preceding those with the stem suffix *-owa-* (*-uj-*). Verbs are identified only as perfective (P) and imperfective (I), even if, as stated above, some (particularly the younger) respondents may have interpreted certain prefixal perfectives as determinates and the derived imperfectives as indeterminates.<sup>25</sup>

Passage (1) on the following page is instructive for several reasons. It suggests that contemporary speakers of USo are not only sensitive to aspectual distinctions in iterative contexts, but also alert to distinctions between iterated and non-iterated actions.

<sup>23</sup> The percentages reported here for the respondents are based only on those verb forms that were marked on the completed questionnaires as their primary choices (i.e., with the number "1").

<sup>24</sup> USo newspapers include not only *Serbske Nowiny* but also the Protestant religious tabloid *Pomhaj Bóh* and its Catholic homologue *Katolski Posoł* (cf. Faska 1998: 293).

<sup>25</sup> Again, an underlying premise of this examination is that different interpretations of competing verb forms—as perfective/imperfective or as determinate/indeterminate—have no significant effect on any given speaker's preference of verb form in iterative contexts. We are reminded, moreover, that *all* speakers of USo instantiate the same aspectual opposition when confronted with the choice between a basic imperfective verb and its prefixed perfective counterpart.

- (1) W hali, kotraž je so lětdžesatki za předžžětanje kórkow wužiła<sup>P</sup>/<sup>√</sup>wužiwała<sup>I</sup>, je nastał Kórkowy muzej. Přichodnu sobotu ... jón w 11.00 hodž. swjatočnje <sup>√</sup>wotewru<sup>P</sup>/wotewrja<sup>P</sup>/wotewěraja<sup>I</sup>/budž(ej)a jón w 11.00 hodž. swjatočnje wotewěrač<sup>I</sup>. Wopytowarjam pokazaja so<sup>P</sup>/<sup>√</sup>pokazuja so<sup>I</sup> tam ratarske graty k plahowanju woblubowaneje zeleniny, nastroje k jeje předžžětanju a wězo předstaja so<sup>P</sup>/<sup>√</sup>předstajeja so<sup>I</sup>/předstajuja so<sup>I</sup> tež wotpowědne recepty, štož budže snano wosebje hospozy zajimować. (SN 6, no. 143 [25.7.1996]: 4)

'A Pickle Museum has been created in the room that *was used* for decades to process cucumbers. Next Saturday ... *they will* ceremoniously *open* it at 11:00 o'clock. There visitors *will be* ("are being") *shown* agricultural implements for growing the popular vegetable [and] devices for processing it, and, of course, related recipes *will also be* ("are also being") *presented*, which will perhaps interest housewives in particular.'

Lest the apparent "evenness" of the aspectual competition observed in iterative contexts (based on the percentages cited above) lead one to the premature conclusion that aspectual oppositions in contemporary USo are absent altogether, we note that passage (1) opens with the sentence *W hali, kotraž je so lětdžesatki za předžžětanje kórkow wužiwała<sup>I</sup>, je nastał Kórkowy muzej* 'A Pickle Museum has been created in the room that *was used* for decades to process cucumbers'. Here 'was used' denotes a continuous event or even a state rather than an iterative act, since the room in question was not used and re-used for processing cucumbers but for decades remained *in use* for this purpose. As the norms of the USo literary language prescribe, the imperfective *je so wužiwała* is the form that actually occurred in the newspaper; moreover, it is also the verb form designated as their first choice by all twelve respondents to the questionnaire. Seven of those respondents even marked the perfective verb form here as being "unusual" or "unacceptable".<sup>26</sup>

In the next sentence, *Přichodnu sobotu ... jón w 11.00 hodž. swjatočnje wotewru<sup>P</sup>* 'Next Saturday ... *they will* ceremoniously *open* it at 11:00 o'clock', *wotewru* occurs as a perfective future. Belonging to an unproductive subclass of Class 1 verbs, *wotewru<sup>P</sup>* coexists with newer *wotewrja<sup>P</sup>* of productive Class 4 (cf. Trofimowič 1974: 493; Jakubaš 1954: 431). Thus,

<sup>26</sup> Breu (2000: 65) claims that the two members of the (original) aspect pair *wužič<sup>P</sup>-wužiwač<sup>I</sup>* are now distinct lexemes, the former meaning 'make use of, take advantage of' (e.g., time or an opportunity), the latter meaning 'use, employ, utilize' (e.g., paper or some other concrete object). Unlike Breu, I view this semantic development as a concomitant of the perfective-imperfective aspectual opposition. One need only consider in this regard the semantic distinction that accompanies the analogous aspectual opposition represented by Russian *wopol'zovat' sja<sup>P</sup>-pol'zovat' sja<sup>I</sup>*.

while only two respondents selected the form that had actually occurred in the newspaper, the remaining ten chose its newer variant; therefore, the perfective verb was in effect rated best by all twelve respondents. At the same time, however, two of the respondents considered the imperfective future *budu ... wotewěrać* to be equally felicitous. Still, despite this variation, these selections all conform to the aspectual norms of the literary language.<sup>27</sup>

The final sentence of passage (1) above is problematic from a temporal standpoint. That the entire sentence is to be understood with reference to the future is underscored not only by the sentence which precedes it (*Přichodnu sobotu ... jón w 11.00 hodź. swjatočnje wotewru* 'Next Saturday ... they will ceremoniously open it at 11:00 o'clock'), but also by the terminal relative clause, which is explicitly formulated with the future auxiliary *budže* (... *štož budže snano wosebje hospozny zajimować* '... which will perhaps interest housewives in particular'). Nevertheless, the main clause of this sentence is formulated in the present tense. This phenomenon can only be understood as a German morphosemantic calque.<sup>28</sup> In German passive constructions, the future tense is very often expressed in the same way as the present tense. This is done for the sake of euphony, since the future-tense auxiliary *werden* is completely homonymous with the passive-voice auxiliary. Thus, an explicit future passive construction in German exhibits an often undesirable twofold occurrence of the auxiliary *werden*; cf. the following German translation of the USo sentence in question: 'Den Besuchern *werden* dort landwirtschaftliche Geräte zum Anbau des beliebten Gemüses sowie Werkzeuge zu seiner Verarbeitung *gezeigt* (*werden*) und natürlich *werden* auch entsprechende Rezepte *vorge stellt* (*werden*), was vielleicht die Hausfrauen insbesondere interessieren wird.'

Even though from a temporal standpoint this sentence proves to be a German morphosemantic calque, the twelve respondents to the questionnaire were practically evenly divided between the perfective and the

<sup>27</sup> According to Fasske and Michalk (1981: 184), "[t]he imperfective member is unmarked. Independent of context, it can express actions and states in concrete progress as well as complete events. The unmarked imperfective verb form can therefore be used in any position" (translation and emphasis mine—GHT).

<sup>28</sup> In literary USo reflexive morphology (a finite verb accompanied by the "reflexive" morpheme *so*) encodes both passive meaning and reflexive/reciprocal meaning proper. Only in the preterite tense does USo exhibit a passive construction consisting of an auxiliary verb (a special preterite form of the verb *być* 'be', corresponding to German *wurde*) and a past passive participle. Thus, the proposition 'A new house was built' can be formulated in the preterite tense either as *Nowa chěža so natwari* or as *Nowa chěža bu natwarjena* (see Schuster-Šewc 1996: 196–98 for details). In contrast, 'A new house has been built' can be formulated in the perfect tense only with "reflexive-like" morphology: *Nowa chěža je so natwarila* (accordingly, this is the morphosemantic equivalent of German *Ein neues Haus ist gebaut worden*).

imperfective verb forms as their primary choices (*pokazuja so<sup>I</sup>* ‘will be [“are being”] shown’, *předstajeja so<sup>I</sup>* ‘will be [“are being”] presented’).<sup>29</sup> This division, however, was due not only to the iterative nature of the action, on the one hand, and to German influence in the formulation of the future passive, on the other, but also to a real aspectual distinction connected with two possible readings of the sentence. According to marginal comments from one respondent (born in 1956), for example, the perfective verb forms *pokazaja so<sup>P</sup>* and *předstaja so<sup>P</sup>* would be preferred if the acts of showing and presenting were confined to the museum’s opening day, but the imperfective verb forms *pokazuja so<sup>I</sup>* and *předstajeja so<sup>I</sup>* would be preferred if showing and presenting were meant to be “permanent” (events).<sup>30</sup>

Passages (2) and (3), below, reveal that within the same iterative context aspectual distinctions are also possible, depending on the definiteness or indefiniteness of a temporal adverbial modifier:

- (2) Nimale kóždy wječor <sup>√</sup>*zetkaja so<sup>P</sup>* / *zekawaja so<sup>I</sup>* młodostni w Nukničan barace. W njej maja stwu, swoju młodžinsku klubownju, kotruž tuchwilu sami renowěruja... (SN 6, no. 144 [26.7.1996]: 1)

‘Almost every evening the young people *get together* in the Nucknitz barrack. In it they have a room, their own young people’s club, which they are currently renovating by themselves...’

<sup>29</sup> Because some respondents rated competing verb forms as being equally felicitous, *pokazaja so<sup>P</sup>* was the first choice of “5.5” respondents, *pokazuja so<sup>I</sup>* the first choice of “6.5” respondents. With respect to *předstaja so<sup>P</sup>* and *předstajeja so<sup>I</sup>*, the numbers were exactly reversed (i.e., 6.5 and 5.5, resp.).

<sup>30</sup> Note that the respondent’s reasoning here accords well with the instantiation of either aspectual opposition, perfective-imperfective or determinate-indeterminate.—According to Fasske and Michalk (1981: 192–93), the verb *postajic<sup>P</sup>* (and, by extension, any prefixed form of *-stajic*) finds its imperfective counterpart optionally in either *postajec<sup>I</sup>* or *postajowac<sup>I</sup>*. Nevertheless, when confronted with another newspaper passage—*Mamy pak sej wuwědomić, zo swětowe wiki trend ekonomije wobwliwuja a płaćizny postaja<sup>P</sup> / <sup>√</sup>postajeja<sup>I</sup> / postajuja<sup>I</sup>* ‘We ought to be aware that the world market influences the direction of the economy and sets prices’, no respondent selected *postajuja* (< *postajowac*) and eight respondents actually rated it “unusual” or “unacceptable”. The form *předstajuja so<sup>I</sup>* (< *předstajowac so*) in passage 1 was also not selected, and ten respondents even rated it “unusual” or “unacceptable”. The same fate also befell this verb in its infinitive form when it occurred in yet another iterative context. These facts are perhaps explained by a separate comment by Fasske and Michalk to the effect that prefixed perfective verbs whose imperfective aspect partners can be derived by either of the two available stem suffixes *-a- / -e-* or *-owa-* (*-uj-*) usually exhibit a preference for one of them (1981: 192—“Bei einigen Verben wird das Suffix *-owa-* bevorzugt, bei anderen das Suffix *-a-*”).

- (3) Po swjatoku a kónc tydženja *so zetskaja*<sup>P</sup> / <sup>L</sup>*so zetkawaja*<sup>L</sup>, zo bychu so rozmołwjeli, telewizor hladali abo wšelake hry, kaž billard, blidotenis a karty, hrali. (SN 6, no. 144 [26.7.1996]: 1)

'After work and on the weekend they *get together* to talk, watch television, or play various games like billiards, table tennis, and cards.'

Although either aspectual form—perfective *zetskaja* or imperfective *zetkawaja*—is felicitous in both sentences, only in (2) is the iterative nature of the action unambiguously established by the accompanying time adverbial (*nimale kóždy wječor* 'almost every evening'). There is therefore no compelling need to underscore the iterative nature of the action by morphological means as well (i.e., by means of an imperfective or indeterminate verb form), and so the perfective verb is used. In contrast, the time adverbials in (3) are potentially ambiguous with respect to iterativity: a perfective verb form here would allow for an unintended non-iterative reading, viz., 'after work and over the weekend they *will get together* (or, *will be getting together*) to talk, watch television, or play various games...'<sup>31</sup> The imperfective (or indeterminate) verb *zetkawaja* precludes the possibility that the sentence will be interpreted in this way, i.e., as an activity confined to a single period of time (here, a specific workday and weekend).

The foregoing analysis is supported by the primary verb selections made by the twelve respondents to the questionnaire. With regard to (2), the respondents were almost evenly divided in their choice of perfective *zetskaja* vs. imperfective *zetkawaja* (6.5 vs. 5.5 ratings of "1", respectively). With regard to (3), however, there was an appreciable shift in favor of the imperfective verb form: five more respondents selected it as the best verb form than selected the competing perfective form (3.5 [perfective] vs. 8.5 [imperfective] ratings of "1").

Passage (4), illustrated on the following page, consists of three sentences, the second and third of which both contain the temporal adverb *husto* 'often'. The iterative nature of the action is again unambiguously expressed by lexical means, thereby increasing the chances that the verb—particularly one denoting an accomplishment—will occur in its perfective form:

<sup>31</sup> We are reminded that the non-past tense forms of a perfective verb are temporally ambiguous; see fn. 16.

- (4) To pak je zaso njewěsty čas za bačony. Kuny, mórski worjoł, wróny a dalše ptački  $\sqrt{wurubja^P/wurubjeja^I/wurubjuja^I}$  husto hnězdo. Tež dlěje trajacy deščik abo wětrik, njewšedna zyma a dalše faktory  $\sqrt{zniča^P/zničeja^I/zničuja^I}$  husto jeja w hnězdach a z tym dorost. (SN 6, no. 137 [17.7.1996]: 4)

'Indeed this is again a precarious time for storks. Martens, the white-tailed eagle, crows, and other birds **often** rob the nest. Also, persistent rain or wind, unusual cold and other factors **often** destroy the eggs in the nests and, thus, the offspring.'

Five respondents deviated from the newspaper by rating imperfective *wurubjeja* as the best verb form, while only half as many "1" ratings (2.5) were received by imperfective *zničeja* in the very next sentence. Moreover, the form *zničeja*<sup>I</sup> even received 7.5 ratings of "unusual" or "unacceptable". These facts point up the rôle that lexical factors may play in aspect selection. According to Jentsch et al. (1991: 464, 570), the verb *zničić* is the perfective aspect partner to the basic imperfective *ničić*<sup>62</sup>—a form which the questionnaire failed to make available to respondents. In other words, it appears that for most of the respondents the aspectual partner to *zničić*<sup>P</sup> is the basic imperfective *ničić*, not the derived imperfective *zničeć*. However, this is not an unusual phenomenon in USo. To cite an analogous, albeit unrelated, example, the meaning 'promise' is expressed in some dialects of USo by the aspect pair *lubić<sup>I</sup>-slubić<sup>P</sup>*, while in others it is expressed by the pair *slubić<sup>P</sup>-slubować<sup>I</sup>* (see Toops 1992: 18). The fact that some respondents could prefer an imperfective verb in one sentence (*wurubjeja*<sup>I</sup>) and (for largely lexical reasons) a perfective verb in the very next sentence (*zniča*<sup>P</sup>) also testifies how fully the two aspects compete in a single iterative context.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Under the entry *vernichten*, Jentsch et al. cite "*zničić p, ničić*" (1991: 464); under the entry *zerstören*, the same authors cite "*ničić, zničić p*" (1991: 570).

<sup>33</sup> The mixing of imperfective and perfective verbs in a single iterative context is common in USo literary texts as well and stands in notable contrast to the consistent use of imperfective verbs in corresponding Russian texts. For example, in Puškin's *Belkin* tale "Vystrel" ('The Shot') we find the following passage: "Nikto ne znal<sup>I</sup> ni ego sostojanija, ni ego doxodov, i nikto ne osmelivalsja<sup>I</sup> o tom ego sprašivat'. U nego vodilis<sup>I</sup> knigi ... On oxotno dawa<sup>I</sup> ix čitat', nikogda ne trebuj<sup>I</sup> ix nazad; zato nikogda ne vozvrašcal<sup>I</sup> xozjainu knigi, im zanjatoj" (Puškin 1994: 10). An USo translation of this passage reads as follows: "Nichtó njeznaješe<sup>I</sup> jeho wobstejnoscé, ani jeho dochody, a nichtó njezwaži<sup>P</sup> so jeho za tym prašeć. Pola njeho walachu so<sup>I</sup> knihi ... Wón je rady čitać dawaše<sup>I</sup>, ani zo by sej je hdy wróćo žada<sup>I</sup>; za to pak tež wón požčeneje knihi knjezej ženje njeuróć<sup>P</sup>" (Brycka 1958: 12–13. 'No one knew his status or his income, and no one dared to ask him about it. He had piles of books ... He gladly let people have them to read, without ever asking for their return; then again, he never returned a borrowed book to its owner, either').

In (5), the respondents' overwhelming rejection of perfective *wočaka* in favor of imperfective *wočakuje* is similarly motivated by lexical considerations:

- (5) Hdyž bačony nalěto k nam do Łužicy <sup>↓</sup>*přičahnu*<sup>I/P</sup> / *přičahuja*<sup>I</sup>,  
*wočaka*<sup>P</sup> je / <sup>↓</sup>*wočakuje*<sup>I</sup> je ćežke džěto / *budže je ćežke džěto wočakowač*<sup>I</sup>.  
 (SN 6, no. 137 [17.7.1996]: 4)

'When (the) storks migrate to Lusatia in the spring, hard work awaits (~will await) them.'

In contemporary USo, the verb *wočakač*<sup>P</sup> is not aspectually paired with imperfective *wočakowač* with respect to the meaning 'await, expect' (German 'erwarten'). In this meaning the verb *wočakowač*<sup>I</sup> (like its Russian equivalent *oždat'*) is an unpaired *imperfectivum tantum*, allowing USo to reflect the German distinction between *abwarten* and *erwarten* (although the semantic distinction may be a concomitant of an earlier aspectual distinction; cf. fn. 26 and Fasske and Michalk 1981: 195).<sup>34</sup>

The verb *přičahnu*<sup>I/P</sup>, like other prefixed verbs of motion in contemporary USo, is biaspectual. Indeed, in a grammar of USo, Handrij Zejleř (Andreas Seiler) had treated prefixed determinate verbs of motion semantically as imperfectives as early as 1830 (see Seiler 1830: 85–86; Toops 1992–93: 20). As a biaspectual verb, *přičahnu*<sup>I/P</sup> should admit not only a present-tense reading, but a future-tense reading as well. In this regard, one respondent (born in 1956) stated in a marginal note that instantiating the future tense in the main clause (... *budže je ćežke džěto wočakowač* '... hard work will await them') would in fact result in the entire sentence's being interpreted as future ("cyła sada so potom interpretuje jako přichod"); accordingly, four of the respondents did indeed admit the imperfective future (*budže ... wočakowač*) as a possible alternate ("second choice") reading. Present-tense *wočakuje* in the main clause, in contrast, results in a temporally "generalized" reading of the sentence ("je woznam generalizowacy"),<sup>35</sup> a reading which all twelve respondents apparently focused on in rating *wočakuje* as their first choice.

Passage (6), like (5), also exhibits a biaspectual prefixed verb of motion:

<sup>34</sup> See Jentsch et al. (1989): the verb *wočakač*<sup>P</sup> is cited alongside *wočakowač*<sup>I</sup> (as well as *wočaknyč*<sup>P</sup>) under the German entry **abwarten** ('wait [and see], wait for [something to happen]'; 1989: 54); under **erwarten** ('await, expect') *wočakowač*<sup>I</sup> alone appears (1989: 355).

<sup>35</sup> The only two individuals who selected *přičahuja*<sup>I</sup> as the best variant were born in 1960 and 1978, respectively, and were thus among the younger respondents to the questionnaire. This would seem to support the view that diglossia among younger speakers of USo is sufficient to allow them to make judgments regarding grammaticality from the standpoint of literary USo.

- (6) R. L. ... je frizerka mišterka a džěła w swojim salonje w Njebjelčicach. Tam njetřihaja jenož włosy, ale *přewjedu*<sup>P</sup> / *přewjedžeja*<sup>P</sup> / *√ přewjeduja*<sup>I</sup> tež manikěru a pedikěru. Žony a mužojo *√ přińdu*<sup>I/P</sup> / *přichadžeja*<sup>I</sup>, zo bychy sej dali mjezwočo masěrować a sej na nje wšelake žalby mazać. (SN 6, no. 137 [17.7.1996]: 1)

'R. L. ... is a licensed hair stylist and works in her own salon in Nebelschütz. There they not only cut hair, but also *perform* manicure[s] and pedicure[s]. Women and men *come* to have their face massaged and various [skin] cremes applied.'

Here eleven of the twelve respondents agreed with the newspaper in selecting biaspectual *přińdu* as the best variant (seven of these respondents, however, also marked imperfective *přichadžeja* as their second choice). With respect to imperfective *přewjeduja*, in contrast, the responses on the questionnaire deviated considerably from what had appeared in the newspaper, with 9.5 out of 12 responses indicating perfective *přewjedu* as the best variant. Here it is instructive to note that in their German-USo dictionary, under the German entry *durchführen*, Jentsch et al. (1989: 286) mark the imperfective form of this verb (*přewjedować*) as "bookish" ("buchspr[achlich]"). Thus, considerations of style also appear to influence an USo speaker's choice of one aspectual form over another in an iterative context.

The respondents' avoidance of the "bookish" derived imperfective *přewjedować* can be seen even more clearly in (7). Although (7) does not constitute an iterative context, it is nonetheless worth noting that the perfective (possibly now biaspectual) form *přewjedže so* 'is held, conducted' had appeared in the newspaper and that *all* twelve respondents to the questionnaire concurred by marking this verb form as their primary choice. Ten of the respondents even rated *přewjedować*<sup>I</sup> in both its present- and future-tense forms as "unusual, unacceptable, or archaic":

- (7) Jasne je, zo je so wobsedźer naraz zmynyl a zo steji domske hižo dlěje prózdne a z tym džeń a bóle *rozpada*<sup>P</sup> / *rozpadnje*<sup>P</sup> / *rozpaduje*<sup>I</sup>. Jenička móžnosć budže, zo *↓přewjedže so*<sup>P</sup> / *↓přewjeduje so*<sup>I</sup> / *budže so přewjedować*<sup>I</sup> dalše přesadźowanje, hdžež měła płacizna za „Worjoła“ niša być hač dotal. (SN 6, no. 141 [23.7.1996]: 4)<sup>36</sup>

‘It is clear that the owner disappeared suddenly and that the home has stood vacant for quite a while and thus [continued to] deteriorate more and more. The only solution will be to hold another auction, where the price for the “Adler” should be lower than [it has been] up to now.’

In (8), below, the majority of the twelve respondents indicated imperfective verb forms as their primary choices, with ten selecting *postajeja*<sup>I</sup> ‘set(s), establish(es)’ in the first sentence and eight selecting either *so zasadžeja*<sup>I</sup> or *so zasadźuja*<sup>I</sup> ‘are put/placed in [operation]’ in the second. Of the respondents who favored imperfective verbs in both sentences, five in each case went so far as to rate the perfective form “unusual” or “unacceptable”. There thus appears to be a correlation between the absence of a time adverbial in the first sentence and the respondents’ preference for an imperfective verb form (expressing “the assignability of [the] situation to more than one point in time”—see Dickey 2000 above) or, alternately, an indeterminate verb form (“cannot[ing] ... regular or habitual action”—see Heim 1982 above). Although *přeco wjetše* ‘more and more’ in the second sentence is not a time adverbial, it nevertheless denotes incremental increase and thereby connotes iteration of the action; this may lead speakers of USo to be less resistant to the use of a perfective verb.

<sup>36</sup> In the USo literary language, both *rozpadnyč*<sup>P</sup> and *rozpadač*<sup>P</sup> are aspectually perfective. Fasske and Michalk (1981: 195) regard the aspect pair *rozpadač*<sup>P</sup>-*rozpadować*<sup>I</sup> as “unmarked” relative to *rozpadnyč*<sup>P</sup>, which they regard as “marked”—apparently for semelfactive meaning. For example, *rozpadnyč*<sup>P</sup> is used to denote the situation of an object’s having fallen apart all at once, while *rozpadač*<sup>P</sup> is used to denote the situation of an object’s having fallen apart (piece by piece) over time, or of various objects’ having fallen apart at different times. Nevertheless, in the context considered here, only imperfective *rozpadować* can denote an eventive present from the standpoint of the literary language. Seven respondents did in fact mark this verb form as their primary choice; two, however, selected *rozpadnje*, and three selected *rozpadač*. For these last five respondents, *rozpadnyč* and *rozpadač* must accordingly represent determinate rather than perfective verb forms, with the gradual nature of the deterioration in question being expressed solely by lexical means (i.e., by the adverbial modifier *džeń a bóle* ‘more and more’).

- (8) Mamy pak sej wuwědomić, zo swětowe wiki trend ekonomije wobwliwuja a płacizny *postaja*<sup>P</sup>/*postajeja*<sup>I</sup>/*postajuja*<sup>I</sup>. Tak je njewobeńdžomne za toho, kiž chce wobstać, zo so přeco wjetše mašiny, traktory a syčmłóčawy *zasadza*<sup>P</sup>/*zasadžeja*<sup>I</sup>/*zasadžuja*<sup>I</sup>.  
(SN 6, no. 136 [16.7.1996]: 2).

'We ought to be aware that the world market influences the direction of the economy and sets prices. For anyone who wants to stay in business it is therefore indispensable that more and more machines, tractors, and harvesters get placed in operation.'

While respondents vacillated to some extent between perfective and imperfective forms in (8), they also vacillated between competing imperfective forms. Of the ten respondents who chose an imperfective form in the first sentence, all chose *postajeja*<sup>I</sup>; eight respondents even rated *postajuja*<sup>I</sup> "unusual" or "unacceptable" (see fn. 30 for explanation). In considering the second sentence, however, six respondents marked *so zasadžeja*<sup>I</sup> as their primary choice, and two marked *so zasadžuja*<sup>I</sup>. This can be explained by the fact noted by Fasske and Michalk (1981: 192) that some prefixal perfectives of productive Class 4 (i.e., verbs in *-ić*; see above) prefer imperfective counterparts derived with the stem suffix *-a-/-e-*, while others prefer imperfective counterparts derived with the stem suffix *-owa- (-uj-)*, even though both derived imperfectives are generally possible.<sup>37</sup>

Although (9) on the following page, like (8), also exhibits no adverbs of time, respondents expressed an overwhelming preference for the perfective verb forms in (9)—both *so pokaza*<sup>P</sup> 'shows (up)' and *zhubi*<sup>P</sup>—received equal ratings (7.5) of "1" from the twelve respondents to the questionnaire. The most likely explanation for the shift in preference (i.e., from imperfective in [8] to perfective in [9]) is that the verbs *pokazać*<sup>P</sup> 'show' and *zhubić*<sup>P</sup> 'lose' are achievement-type verbs, while those in (8)—*postajeć*<sup>I</sup> and *zasadžeć*<sup>I</sup>~*zasadźować*<sup>I</sup>—are accomplishment-type verbs. As has been shown elsewhere, there is a particularly strong correlation in USo between achievements (lexical aspect) and perfectivity (grammatical aspect—see fn. 6). The antonym of the achievement verb *zhubić*<sup>P</sup>—*namakać*<sup>P</sup> 'find'—, for example, exists in USo only as a *perfectivum tantum*.

<sup>37</sup> For Fasske and Michalk (1981: 194), *zasadžeć* is a perfective verb, analogous to *rozpadać* (see preceding note). That is, *zasadzić*<sup>P</sup> stands in relation to the pair *zasadžeć*<sup>P</sup>-*zasadźować*<sup>I</sup> as *rozpadnyć*<sup>P</sup> does to *rozpadać*<sup>P</sup>-*rozpadować*<sup>I</sup>. In my informant work, however, I have found *zasadžeć* to be understood as an imperfective verb form, competing to varying degrees with *zasadźować*<sup>I</sup> (see Toops 1992: 31; Toops 1992/1993: 14; Toops 1998a: 526.)

- (9) ... Njeje, kaž druhdže, socialne prašenje tak wusahowace. Na přěni pohlad. Ale na druhi pohlad *so tež tu pokaza<sup>P</sup> /<sup>√</sup>pokazuje<sup>I</sup>*: Socialne wične hospodarstwo *zhubi<sup>P</sup> / pozhubi<sup>P</sup> /<sup>√</sup>pozhubjuje<sup>I</sup>* swój atribut „socialne“ a z tym swoju atraktiwnosć. (SN 6, no. 138 [18.7.1996]: 2).

‘... The social question is not as prominent [here] as [it is] elsewhere ... on first consideration. But on second consideration, it *shows up* here as well: The socially-oriented market economy *is* (gradually) *losing* its “social” aspect and thus its attractiveness.’

While imperfective *pokazuje* received only 4.5 ratings of “1” from the twelve respondents, none of the respondents rejected it by marking it “unusual” or “unacceptable” either. Imperfective *pozhubjuje*, in contrast, received just as many “1” ratings (3.5) as rejections (its perfective counterpart *pozhubić* fared no better, having received 4 “X” ratings). The verb *pozhubić<sup>P</sup>-pozhubjować<sup>I</sup>* expresses either an attenuative Aktionsart or a delimitative one (cf. Schuster-Šewc 1996: 191–92), signifying ‘lose a little’ or ‘lose for a while or little by little’. There is evidence to suggest that the use of *po*-prefixed verbs to express an attenuative or delimitative Aktionsart is declining and that younger speakers of USo increasingly convey such Aktionsarten by lexical means (e.g., *pozhubić<sup>P</sup>-pozhubjować<sup>I</sup>* might well be paraphrased as *zhubić<sup>D</sup> poněčim* ‘lose gradually’).<sup>38</sup> It is thus conceivable that not one, but two factors are responsible for the respondents’ preference of perfective *zhubić* in (9): its lexical status as an achievement-type verb as well as the desuetude of *po*-prefixed verbs expressing an attenuative or delimitative Aktionsart.

Finally, in (10), perfective *přikazachu* ‘ordered’ was the primary choice of seven respondents, while imperfective *přikazowachu* was favored by only five respondents, although the verb *smalachu<sup>I</sup>* ‘flitted, dashed’ in the same sentence is imperfective. This would appear to attest to the coordinability of both perfective and imperfective verb forms not only within the same iterative context, but, more precisely, within the same sentence.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>38</sup> In Toops (1992/1993: 9) I note that, under the influence of German, even older speakers of USo are apt to paraphrase *po*-prefixed verbs with attenuative meaning in order to derive imperfective aspectual counterparts: *popjec<sup>P</sup> → trochu/kusk pjec<sup>I</sup>* ‘fry a little’ (German ‘anbraten’), *podžětać<sup>P</sup> → chwilku džětać<sup>I</sup>* ‘work a while/a little’. In Toops (1997: 18–19) I also note that the form *popomhać<sup>P</sup>* ‘help out (a little)’ was unanimously rejected as a potential alternative to *pomhać<sup>I</sup>* ‘help’ by respondents to the questionnaire administered in 1996.

<sup>39</sup> The mixing of perfective and imperfective verb forms within a single sentence expressing several iterative actions is common in literary USo as well: cf. “Wón měješe mje rady: znajmjeřša *wostaji so<sup>P</sup>* přede mni swojich kusatych zlych řeči a *rěčeše<sup>I</sup>* wo wšelakich wěcach dušnje a njewšědnje přijomnje” (Brycka 1958: 15; cf. the original Russian in Puškin 1994: 13: “On ljubil menja; po krajnej mere so mnoj odnim *ostavljal<sup>I</sup>* obyknovnoe

- (10) Spěšni kurěrojo smalachu dom wot domu a přikazachu<sup>P</sup> /  
 √přikazowachu<sup>I</sup> aktiwistam, zo maja so nanajspěšnišo do žurle  
 měšćanskeho zarjada podać ...  
 (SN 6, no. 139 [19.7.1996]: Předženak supplement-1).

'Fast couriers would dash from house to house and *would order* the activists to proceed as quickly as possible to the City Hall auditorium ...'

Indeed, perfective forms of performatives (*verba dicendi*, including *přikazać*) are generally preferred in most time frames (Fasske and Michalk 1981: 183; Toops 1997: 21–22), and this preference appears to be reflected in the 7–5 split in the respondents' indication, respectively, of *přikazać<sup>P</sup>* vs. *přikazować<sup>I</sup>* as their primary choice of verb form.

#### 4. Concluding Remarks

The foregoing passages excerpted from the USo press, and the verb choices made by respondents to a questionnaire containing those passages, corroborate the extent of aspectual competition in iterative contexts in contemporary USo. We have seen that perfective and imperfective verbs co-occur within one and the same iterative context, and that perfective and imperfective verbs are even coordinable within individual clauses of the same sentence. At the same time, we have seen that a variety of lexical, stylistic, and morphological factors influence or even determine speakers' selections of aspectual forms, so that what we have termed "complete aspectual competition" in iterative contexts is not tantamount to a haphazard hodgepodge of perfective, imperfective, and bispectual verbs.

In passage (5) we observed that lexical differences between opposing aspectual forms (*wočakać<sup>P</sup>* 'wait and see' vs. *wočakować<sup>I</sup>* 'await, expect') prompted instantiation of the imperfective verb form (similar lexical considerations may have played an ancillary rôle in the selection of *je so wužiwała<sup>I</sup>* vs. *je so wužiła<sup>P</sup>* in passage [1]—see fn. 26). The absence of a temporal adverbial modifier in (8), as well as the ambiguity of the temporal adverbial in (3), appear to have favored the instantiation of imperfective verb forms in those sentences. Despite a similar absence of a temporal adverbial in (9), however, the lexical aspect (aspectuality) of the verbs (both achievements) favored the perfective aspect; while in (2), the non-

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svoě rezkoe zlorečie i *govorit<sup>I</sup>* o raznyx predmetax s prostodušiem i neobyknovennoju prijatnostiju"—'He liked me; at least it was only with me that he abandoned his usual gruff talk and spoke about a variety of things open-heartedly and with unusual pleasantness').

ambiguity of the temporal adverbial increased preference for the perfective form of the same verb whose imperfective form was subsequently favored in (3). The unambiguous denotation of iteration by the twice-occurring adverb *husto* 'often' in (4) appears to have favored the perfective forms of the accomplishment verbs in that passage. Temporal ambiguity of the biaspectual verb *přičahnyč<sup>I/P</sup>* 'migrate' in (5) influenced the choice of tense in the matrix clause (*wočakuje* 'awaits' vs. *budže wočakować* 'will await'), albeit not the choice of aspect (for largely lexical reasons—see above); however, temporal ambiguity in (1) does appear to have influenced individual respondents' selections of *pokazaja so<sup>P</sup>* and *předstaja so<sup>P</sup>* vs. *pokazuja so<sup>I</sup>* and *předstajeja so<sup>I</sup>*. In (6) and (7), the stylistic markedness (specifically, "bookishness") of the derived imperfective *přewjedować* prompted preference for the originally perfective *přewjesć* 'perform, conduct'; this is no doubt connected with the restricted functional load of derived (stem-suffixed) verbs of motion and carrying in general (see Toops 1998b). A similar preference for non-derived (non-stem-suffixed) forms of *verba dicendi* and other performatives is evident as well in the respondents' slight inclination towards the perfective verb form in (10), even when it is coordinated with an imperfective verb in the same sentence (*smalachu* 'flitted, dashed'). Finally, in (9) a newer tendency to express attenuative and delimitative Aktionsarten by lexical rather than grammatical means seems to have disinclined respondents from selecting not only imperfective *pozhubjować* but also its perfective partner *pozhubić* 'lose a little; lose little by little'.

Thus we see, on the basis of a variety of iterative contexts, that aspect use in USo today, as in the other contemporary Slavic languages, is a complex issue, involving a number of lexical, stylistic, and morphological factors. In USo, moreover, aspect use is further complicated by the existence of different aspectual systems resulting from younger speakers' partial re-interpretation of the perfective-imperfective aspectual opposition as a determinate-indeterminate opposition, particularly in the case of prefixed perfective verbs and their suffixally-derived imperfective counterparts. These facts in themselves, however, do not justify the view, held by some, that verbal aspect in USo is an obsolescent or inoperative grammatical category.

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