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## Iterativity and Contemporary Aspect Selection in Upper Sorbian

GARY H. TOOPS

In Upper Sorbian, as in the other contemporary Slavic languages, aspect is a grammatical category that characterizes the verbal system in its entirety. With the possible exception of certain types of verbs that are conventionally considered ‘biaspectual’,<sup>1</sup> each verb form in the language expresses one of two aspects — perfective or imperfective. In most instances, verbs that share the same morphemic base and the same lexical meaning constitute a pair of aspectually complementary verbs; these are referred to as an ‘aspectual pair’. Thus, the Upper Sorbian (hereafter, USo) verb *činić* is an aspectually imperfective verb signifying ‘to do’, and it is paired with the aspectually perfective verb *šćinić* which likewise signifies ‘to do’. The paradigms of both verbs include two synthetically formed tenses, present (or ‘non-past’) and preterite.<sup>2</sup> The synthetic non-past tense forms of the imperfective verb can denote an eventive present (sometimes designated by the Latin terms *praesens actuale* or *praesens hic et nunc*), while those of the perfective

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<sup>1</sup> Among the biaspectual verbs of literary Upper Sorbian we find (a) verbs that represent German morphological or semantic calques, (b) Latinate, and some USo prefixed, verbs exhibiting the stem suffix *-owa-* (e.g. *organizować* ‘to organize’, *analyzować* ‘to analyse’, *přihotować* ‘to prepare’ etc.), and (c) various prefixed verbs of motion (e.g. *přićić* ‘to come’). Even in the case of biaspectual verbs, however, individual verb forms are interpreted as either perfective or imperfective depending on the broader aspectuo-temporal context in which they occur. For details, see Gary H. Toops, ‘Upper Sorbian Prefixal Derivatives and the Question of German Loan Translations’, *Slavic and East European Journal*, 36, 1992, pp. 17–35 (hereafter ‘Prefixal Derivatives’).

<sup>2</sup> In older grammatical treatments the preterite (synthetic past) tense of USo imperfective verbs is called ‘imperfect’, while the preterite tense of perfective verbs is called ‘aorist’; cf. Frido Michalk, ‘Über den Aspekt in der obersorbischen Volkssprache’, *Zeitschrift für Slawistik*, 4, 1959, p. 247 (hereafter Michalk).

verb cannot. Non-past tense forms of the perfective verb either denote future time or express an 'abstracted' present, e.g. iterative present, gnomic present, historical present, etc.<sup>3</sup> In the USo literary language, the imperfective verb, unlike its perfective counterpart ('aspectual partner'), encodes the explicit expression of future action (i.e. the future tense) periphrastically, by means of the future-tense forms of the auxiliary verb *być* 'to be' and the infinitive. Thus, the imperfective verbal periphrase *budu činić* signifies 'I shall do, I shall be doing', while the corresponding time in the perfective aspect is expressed synthetically as *sčinja* 'I shall do, I shall get [something] done'.<sup>4</sup> Perfective periphrases of the type *\*budu sčinić* are accordingly ungrammatical in literary USo.<sup>5</sup> Further, a prefixed perfective verb whose lexical meaning is distinct from that of the corresponding non-prefixed (i.e. basic) verb is often 'paired' with not one, but two synonymous imperfectives (e.g. perfective *přičinić* signifies 'to fasten, attach' and is aspectually paired with both *přičinjać* and *přičinjować*).

Although an eventive present (be it an eventive present *sensu stricto* or an eventive action in the past or future) can be expressed only by imperfective verbs, this is not the only type of action that imperfective verb forms express: like perfective verbs, imperfective verbs, too, can

<sup>3</sup> See H. Schuster-Šewc, *Grammar of the Upper Sorbian Language. Phonology and Morphology*, trans. Gary H. Toops, Munich and Newcastle, 1996, pp. 167–69 and 173 (hereafter Schuster-Šewc).

<sup>4</sup> Therefore, as Schuster-Šewc aptly points out (p. 169): '[t]he 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.' Cf. also K. K. Trofimowič, *Verchneluzičko-russkij slovar' / Hornjoserbsko-ruski słownik*, Moskva and Budyšin, 1974, p. 492: '1. Present-tense forms of perfective verbs are also used to denote the historical present (*praesens historicum*). 2. Present-tense forms of perfective verbs are also used in describing repeated actions [*pri opisanii powtorjaščichsja dejstvij*]'.

<sup>5</sup> In the USo dialects and colloquial language, the future tense of perfective verbs is expressed in the same periphrastic manner as that of imperfective verbs. Moreover, under certain (emphatic) phonotactic conditions in sentences with marked word order, periphrastic future-tense forms of perfective verbs may occur in literary USo as well; e.g. Helmut Fasske, in his *Grammatik der obersorbischen Schriftsprache der Gegenwart. Morphologie*, asst. Siegfried Michalk, Bautzen, 1981, p. 253 (hereafter Fasske), cites the sentence *Přinjesć jemu ničto ničo njebudže* (literally: 'Bring him anything no one will'). Besides the two synthetic tenses ('non-past' [i.e. present or perfective future] and preterite) and the periphrastic future described here, each USo verb also has several other periphrastic forms, the most common being those of the perfect and pluperfect tenses and the conditional/subjunctive mood.

be used to express non-eventive actions.<sup>6</sup> One is therefore led to expect, at least in theory, a certain ‘competition’ between verbs of different aspects in iterative contexts, i.e. in time frames characterized by the repeated (or multiple) performance or occurrence of a given action.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, some recent studies of verbal aspect in contemporary USo suggest that the verbal stem suffix *-owa-*, by means of which imperfective aspectual partners to prefixed perfective verbs are often derived, has itself become a formal marker of iterativity (cf. *přičinjować* above, which, together with *přičinjeć*, is derived by stem suffixation from perfective *přičinić*).<sup>8</sup> These studies thus lead one to expect that such ‘derived’ (as opposed to ‘basic’) imperfectives might actually be the preferred or predominant means of expressing iterated actions among today’s speakers of USo.

Using the results of a questionnaire administered to twelve native speakers of USo, I examine here the functional distribution of perfective and imperfective verbs with respect to iterativity in contemporary USo usage. The questionnaire from which I draw the relevant data was administered in the summer of 1996 and consists of passages (both original and grammatically altered) drawn from several 1994 issues of

<sup>6</sup> It is more accurately the case that both perfective and *basic* imperfective verbs can express any non-eventive present (or past, or future). Neither derived (‘secondary’) imperfectives (e.g. *wulažować* ‘to climb/crawl out’, derived from perfective *wulěžeć*) nor ‘paraphrastic’ imperfectives (*won lěžeć* ‘idem’) are used to denote a *praesens historicum* or *praesens dramaticum*, for example. See Gary H. Toops, ‘The Grammar of “Paraphrastic Imperfectives” in Latvian and Upper Sorbian’, *Slavic and East European Journal* (forthcoming). Michalk, p. 243, classifies eventive actions in the present, past, and future as ‘konkretes Präsens’, ‘konkretes Präteritum’, and ‘konkretes Futurum’. Jouko Lindstedt, in his *On the Semantics of Tense and Aspect in Bulgarian*, Helsinki, 1985, pp. 122–26, uses the corresponding terms ‘continuous present’, ‘continuous present in the past’, and ‘continuous present in the future’. In Bulgarian, as in Upper Sorbian, it is the imperfective aspect that exclusively encodes eventive (‘concrete’, ‘continuous’) actions in all time frames.

<sup>7</sup> The notion of ‘competing aspects’ is a common one in aspectological studies of the various Slavic languages; cf., *inter alia*, Valentin Stankov, *Konkurencija na glagolnite vidove v bǎlgarskija knižoven ezik* (‘Competition Between Verbal Aspects in the Bulgarian Literary Language’), Sofia, 1976. I use the term ‘action’ in a broad sense, including both acts and events. Nevertheless, from the standpoint of Vendler’s classification of verbs into those that express states, activities, accomplishments, or achievements (see Zeno Vendler, *Linguistics in Philosophy*, Ithaca, New York, 1967), it is typically the accomplishment verbs that occur in imperfective/perfective aspectual pairs in USo and other Slavic languages (achievement verbs in USo are most often aspectually unpaired *perfectiva tantum*, while states and activities are denoted by imperfective verbs).

<sup>8</sup> In particular, Gary H. Toops, ‘On the Functional Status of Derived Imperfectives in Contemporary Upper Sorbian’, *Slavic and East European Journal*, 42, 1998, pp. 283–97 (hereafter ‘Functional Status’); however, ultimately it is concluded there that the stem suffix *-owa-* is more accurately viewed as a marker of *distributive* iterativity. Nevertheless, P. Wowčerck, in his *Kurzgefasste obersorbische Grammatik. Phonetik und Morphologie*, 3rd edn, Berlin, 1955, p. 154, states, without elaborating, that, compared to imperfectives derived with the stem suffix *-a/-e-*, imperfective verbs derived with *-owa-* can generally be said ‘to express the height of iteration’ (‘den Höhepunkt der Wiederholung ausdrücken’). In noteworthy contrast, Fasske (pp. 192–93), recognizes no semantic distinction between the imperfective verb stem suffixes *-a/-e-* and *-owa-*.

the USo newspaper *Serbske Nowiny*. In a previous study this same questionnaire led me to conclude that '[a]spect usage in the USo press, compared to that of the respondents, reflects a somewhat "puristic" or more conservative norm in the instantiation of imperfective verbs in contexts where habitualness/iterativity is lexically expressed'.<sup>9</sup> While this fact is noted again here, my focus this time is the relative degree (expressed as a percentage of total occurrences) to which one aspect is used in place of the other in iterative contexts, whether by the USo press or by individual respondents to the questionnaire.

For convenience I discuss below only a limited, albeit representative, cross-section of the data produced by the questionnaire. In citing USo newspaper passages that constitute iterative contexts, I divide them into present, past, and future time frames. While time frames most often correlate with corresponding (present, past, or future) verb tenses, they also subsume a number of modal constructions as well as infinitive constructions formed with auxiliary verbs. The verb forms that actually appeared in the USo press are preceded by a raised check mark ( $\checkmark$ ); imperfective verb forms are followed by a superscript letter I, and perfective verbs are followed by a superscript letter P. After each English translation, I indicate how many of the twelve respondents selected each of a pair or series of lexically synonymous verb forms that were provided in the questionnaire. In a few instances a fractional figure (.5) is indicated; this results from the fact that occasionally a respondent to the questionnaire considered two competing verb forms to be equally felicitous. Although respondents were given instructions to indicate their choice of 'next-best' or 'somewhat acceptable' verb forms, for this study I have taken into account only the respondents' primary choices. As in a previous analysis of the same questionnaire, there was no discernible correlation between the respondents' choices and their place or year of birth (which ranged from 1936 through 1976).<sup>10</sup>

The pairs or series of verb forms provided for each sentence in the questionnaire are arranged in a specific order. If a basic imperfective verb exists, it is cited first. The perfective verb is then cited. So-called 'secondary' or corresponding suffixally derived imperfectives follow the perfective verbs; where more than one derived imperfective is provided, the one with the stem suffix *-a-/-e-* precedes the one with the stem

<sup>9</sup> Gary H. Toops, 'Aspectual Morphology and Morphosyntactic Disparity in Contemporary Upper Sorbian Usage', *Lětopis*, 44, 1997, 1, p. 23 (hereafter 'Aspectual Morphology').

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 24. The language of the USo press is the USo literary language. If we consider that literary USo represents a supradialectal norm that is assimilated to varying degrees by Sorbs more or less irrespective of their age or dialect, then the lack of any discernible correlation between a Sorbian respondent's verb choices and his/her age or dialect is not all that surprising.

suffix *-owa-* (*-uj-*). For example: *pláćić*<sup>I</sup> / *zapláćić*<sup>P</sup> ‘to pay’ (cf. below passage 1), *rozšěri*<sup>P</sup> / *rozšěrja*<sup>I</sup> / *rozšěrjuje*<sup>I</sup> ‘is spreading’ (passage 7).

#### *Present Time Frames*

As Table 1 below summarizes, in present time frames USo-speaking respondents to the questionnaire were almost as likely to choose an imperfective verb form (49.65%) as they were to choose a perfective one (50.35%). The USo press, in contrast, employs imperfective verb forms in the same iterative contexts by a ratio of almost 3:2 (58.33% imperfective vs 41.67% perfective).

As has already been noted in other studies, the use of imperfective verb forms to convey iteration in sentences where it is contextually implied, or concomitantly expressed by lexical means, is characteristic of the USo literary language. Colloquial USo tends to eschew imperfective-verb morphology for purposes of ‘redundantly’ encoding iterative meaning in sentences where iteration is either implied or conveyed by means of such (indefinite) temporal adverbs as *měšačnje* ‘monthly’, *hustohdy* ‘oftentimes’, *dale a bóle* ‘more and more’, and *wot tydženja k tydženjej* ‘week after week’.<sup>11</sup> The use of imperfective verbs in such contexts is generally regarded as a ‘conservative’ or ‘puristic’ feature of the literary language, although it remains unclear whether older forms of USo ever actually exhibited such a feature or whether it was incorporated into the literary language as a ‘Slavicizing’ element by nineteenth-century grammarians.<sup>12</sup> In either case, the conclusion is warranted that, in this respect, the language of the USo press more faithfully reflects the norms of the literary language than does the language of the respondents to the questionnaire. According to H. Fasske, for example, ‘in various types of sentences that express a general, temporally unspecified, habitual action’ imperfective verb forms, be they basic or derived, 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

<sup>11</sup> ‘Aspectual Morphology’, pp. 20–21; ‘Functional Status’, pp. 288–90. The colloquial USo preference for perfective verb forms in iterative contexts parallels the colloquial preference for determinate verbs of motion in similar contexts; cf. Fasske, pp. 106–07: ‘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’ (thus cited in ‘Functional Status’, p. 288).

<sup>12</sup> See Martina Lindseth, ‘Upper Sorbian Pronouns and Purism’, *Lětopis*, 44, 1997, 1, pp. 184–87. The term ‘Slavicizing’ refers to attempts on the part of Sorbian grammarians to align the grammar of USo more closely with that of other, closely related Slavic languages. In Russian, Polish, and (to a somewhat lesser extent) Czech, iterative action is most often expressed by imperfective verbs, irrespective of the presence or absence of temporal adverbs.

perfective verb'.<sup>13</sup> As I have noted elsewhere, when Fasske speaks of grammatical forms being 'preferred', he has in mind preference from the standpoint of the USo literary language.<sup>14</sup>

- 1 Jeli młodostny po wukubljanju džěłowe městno w Sakskej namaka, njetrjeba wón pjenjezy hižo wróco  $\sqrt{\text{płaćić}^I / \text{zapłaćić}^P}$ . Džěła-li pak w druhim zwjazkowym kraju, ma wón kredit z měsacnje 200 hriwnami  $\text{wotpłaćić}^P / \text{wotpłaćić}^I / \sqrt{\text{wotpłaćować}^I}$ .<sup>15</sup>  
 'If a young person, after receiving job training, finds a job in Saxony, he no longer has to pay the money back. If, however, he works in another state (Bundesland), he is expected to pay off the extended credit in monthly instalments of 200 marks.'  
 (Respondents' choices:  $\text{płaćić}^I - 12 / \text{zapłaćić}^P - 0, \text{wotpłaćić}^P - 7 / \text{wotpłaćić}^I - 1 / \text{wotpłaćować}^I - 4$ .)
- 2 Hdyž započnje młodostny ze strukturnje słabeje kónčiny swobodneho kraja powołanske wukubljanje w hospodarsce sylnym regionje Sakskeje, móže wón měsacnje 250 hriwnow jako bjezdanowy kredit  $\sqrt{\text{dostać}^P / \text{dóstawać}^I}$ .<sup>16</sup>  
 'When a young person from a structurally weak area of the Free State (Freistaat) begins professional training in an economically strong region of Saxony, he can receive a tax-free credit of 250 marks a month.'  
 (Respondents' choices:  $\text{dostać}^P - 10.5 / \text{dóstawać}^I - 1.5$ .)
- 3 A wězo njesmědža so škleńca, blachowe tyzy abo podobne w lěsu přeč  $\text{mjetać}^I / \sqrt{\text{ćisnyć}^P}$ .<sup>17</sup>  
 'And of course, jars, tin cans or the like must not be thrown away in the forest.'  
 (Respondents' choices:  $\text{mjetać}^I - 8 / \text{ćisnyć}^P - 4$ .)
- 4 Młynska technika bazuje na jednorym přenošenju mocow. Cyle po wětriku so horni džěl wětrnika napřečo wětrikej  $\text{wjerćić}^I / \text{zwejćić}^P / \text{zwejertnje}^P / \sqrt{\text{zwejertuje}^I}$ , na čož  $\sqrt{\text{započnu}^P / \text{započinaja}^I}$  so wokřidła wjerćić.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Fasske, p. 183. When referring to actions that are 'temporally unspecified' ('zeitlich nicht festgelegt'), 'indeterminate' ('unbestimmt'), and 'habitual' ('usuell'), Fasske does not mean to suggest sentences in which no temporal adverbs occur at all. He cites in this connection the following sentences (among others): 'Husto zetykowach ducy do šule tolsteho komercneho radu Waneku', 'On the way to school I often met the fat Kommerzienrat (economist) Wanke', 'Tajkich bě sej Józef přeco ludźi předstajał, kiž sej něšto cyle wulke a nowe wumysluja', 'Joseph had always imagined people who think up something really great and new'.

<sup>14</sup> 'Functional Status', p. 288.

<sup>15</sup> *Serbske Nowiny*, 4 (48), no. 143 (26 July 1994), p. 4.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 (48), no. 146 (29 July 1994), *Předženak* supplement, p. 4.

‘Mill technology is based on a simple transfer of forces. The upper part of a windmill *is turned* fully towards the wind, whereupon the vanes *begin* to turn.’

(Respondents’ choices: *wjerći*<sup>I</sup> – 1 / *zwejerći*<sup>P</sup> – 2 / *zwejertnje*<sup>P</sup> – 9 / *zwejertuje*<sup>I</sup> – 0, *započnu*<sup>P</sup> – 8 / *započinaja*<sup>I</sup> – 4.)

- 5 Džensa však, hdyž *so* třechi hustohdy přidatnje z foliju *√zakryja*<sup>P</sup> / *zakrywaja*<sup>I</sup> a *so* zdžěla škódnje maćizny za wobdžělanje drjewa *zasadža*<sup>P</sup> / *zasadžeja*<sup>I</sup> / *√zasadžuja*<sup>I</sup>, *přiuozmu*<sup>P</sup> / *přibjeru*<sup>P</sup> / *√přiběraja*<sup>I</sup> tež problemy w paradizu njetopyrjow, w Hornjej Łužicy.<sup>19</sup>

‘Today, in fact, when oftentimes roofs *are* additionally *covered* with foil and harmful materials *are employed* in part for processing wood, problems accordingly *increase* in [what is otherwise] a paradise for bats, *viz.*, Upper Lusatia.’

(Respondents’ choices: *zakryja*<sup>P</sup> – 6 / *zakrywaja*<sup>I</sup> – 6, *zasadža*<sup>P</sup> – 5 / *zasadžeja*<sup>I</sup> – 3.5 / *zasadžuja*<sup>I</sup> – 3.5, *přiuozmu*<sup>P</sup> – 1 / *přibjeru*<sup>P</sup> – 2 / *přiběraja*<sup>I</sup> – 9.)

- 6 Wosebje [. . .] Serba zwjesela, hdyž nowy wjesnjanošta [. . .] *potwjerdži*<sup>P</sup> / *√potwjerdža*<sup>I</sup> / *potwjerdžuje*<sup>I</sup>, zo budžeja “stajnje kedžbować na zdžerženje stawizniskich, narodnych a kulturnych wosebitosćow”.<sup>20</sup>

‘It makes a Sorb especially happy when the new village mayor [. . .] *asserts* that they will “constantly attend to the preservation of historical, national, and cultural attributes”.’

(Respondents’ choices: *potwjerdži*<sup>P</sup> – 9 / *potwjerdža*<sup>I</sup> – 2 / *potwjerdžuje*<sup>I</sup> – 1.)

- 7 Dale a bóle *so* tež w našich dwurěčnych kónčinach žónska kopańca *rozšěri*<sup>P</sup> / *√rozšěrja*<sup>I</sup> / *rozšěrjuje*<sup>I</sup>. Wjele hrow a turněrow *dožiwimy*<sup>P</sup> / *√dožiwjamy*<sup>I</sup> wot tydženja k tydženjej.<sup>21</sup>

‘Women’s football *is spreading* more and more in our bilingual areas. Week after week we experience many games and tournaments.’

(Respondents’ choices: *rozšěri*<sup>P</sup> – 3 / *rozšěrja*<sup>I</sup> – 8 / *rozšěrjuje*<sup>I</sup> – 1, *dožiwimy*<sup>P</sup> – 6 / *dožiwjamy*<sup>I</sup> – 6.)

In reviewing the respondents’ selections of imperfective verb forms in the seven passages cited above, we find no consistent correlation between an imperfective verb’s particular stem suffix (*-a/-e-* vs. *-owa-[-uj-]*) and its probability of being selected in place of a corresponding perfective verb. Although *potwjerdža* (< *potwjerdžec*<sup>I</sup>) was preferred to

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 4 (48), no. 136 (15 July 1994), p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



*potwjerdźuje* (< *potwjerdźować*<sup>1</sup>) ‘asserts’ in passage 6, and *so rozšěrja* (< *rozšěrjeć*<sup>1</sup>) was preferred to *so rozšěrjuje* (< *rozšěrjować*<sup>1</sup>) ‘is spreading’ in passage 7, *wotpláćować*<sup>1</sup>, rather than *wotpláćeć*<sup>1</sup> ‘to pay off’, proved to be the preferred imperfective form in passage 1, while in passage 5 the competing imperfectives *so zasadžeja* (< *zasadžeć*<sup>1</sup>) and *so zasadźuja* (< *zasadźować*<sup>1</sup>) ‘are employed’ enjoyed equal favour among the USo respondents.

Fasske notes that in certain types of contexts, ‘unsuffixed’ verbs, i.e. verbs that have not been (re-)derived by means of the stem suffix *-a/-e-* or *-owa-* (*-uj-*) are ‘preferred’, regardless of their aspect.<sup>22</sup> Leaving aside the question whether any of the above seven passages actually constitute contexts in which unsuffixed verb forms might be ‘preferred’, we observe no such preference here. Perfective *dostać* was indeed preferred to imperfective *dóstawać* ‘receive’ in passage 2, and perfective *započnu* was preferred 2:1 to imperfective *započinaja* ‘(they) begin’ in passage 4, but equal numbers of respondents to the questionnaire (in each case, six) selected *so zakryja*<sup>P</sup> and *so zakrywaja*<sup>I</sup> ‘are covered’ in passage 5 as well as *dožiwimy*<sup>P</sup> and *dožiwjamy*<sup>I</sup> ‘we experience’ in passage 7.<sup>23</sup>

TABLE 1: USo aspect selection in present time frames

Twelve respondents to questionnaire		USo press ( <i>Serbske Nowiny</i> )	
No. of tokens (= 12x12)	Percentage of tokens	No. of tokens (= 12)	Percentage of tokens
Imperf. Perfective	Imperf. Perfective	Imperf. Perfective	Imperf. Perfective
71.5    72.5	49.65%   50.35%	7        5	58.33%   41.67%

### *Past Time Frames*

If in present time frames we found the USo respondents to the questionnaire almost evenly divided between imperfective and perfective verb forms, with the USo press favouring imperfective verb forms to perfective ones by a ratio of almost 3:2, in past time frames we find USo aspect selection to be very different. Here perfective verbs proved unambiguously to be the preferred aspectual forms in iterative contexts,

<sup>22</sup> Fasske, 182–83. See also ‘Prefixal Derivatives’, p. 18, and ‘Functional Status’, p. 283.

<sup>23</sup> In the first sentence of passage 1 we note that both the imperfective (*pláćeć*) and the perfective (*zapláćeć*) verbs are unsuffixed forms; nevertheless, all twelve respondents concurred with the USo press in their choice of the basic imperfective verb *pláćeć* ‘to pay’. As noted in ‘Aspectual Morphology’, p. 19, *zapláćeć*, besides being a perfective aspectual partner to *pláćeć*, is also a calque of German *einzahlen* ‘to pay in, deposit’, which can be aspectually paired with the paraphrastic imperfective *nutř pláćeć* (see Helmut Jenč [Jentsch], Frída Michalk and Irena Šerakowa, comps., *Němsko-hornjoserbski słownik / Deutsch-obersorbisches Wörterbuch*, vol. 1, A–K, Budyšin, 1989, p. 321).

both among the twelve respondents to the questionnaire and in the USo press. Nevertheless, as Table 2 below summarizes, to the extent that imperfective verb forms did occur, the USo press selected the imperfective aspect about twice as often as did the respondents to the questionnaire (25% vs. 11.46%). Again, this fact would seem to attest to the press's somewhat stricter adherence to the norms of the USo literary language.

- 8 Nimo němciny a jendželšćiny bě rozmołwna rěč ruska, byrnjež Baltojo nałożowanje rušćiny hustodosć *wotpokazali*<sup>P</sup> / *√wotpokazowali*<sup>I</sup>.<sup>24</sup>  
 'Aside from German and English, the language used in conversation was Russian, even though the Balts oftentimes *resisted* the use of Russian.'

(Respondents' choices: *wotpokazali*<sup>P</sup> – 9 / *wotpokazowali*<sup>I</sup> – 3.)

- 9 Nimo toho zhonichu [. . .], za kotre ponowjenske naprawy móže sej přenajer bydlenjow wjace podružje žadać [. . .] W zašłosći *su* husto *√zwěšćili*<sup>P</sup> / *zwěšćeli*<sup>I</sup> / *zwěšćowali*<sup>I</sup>, zo sej wotnajer za jednore ponowjenske džěla, kotrež njeplaća jako modernizowanje, hnydom wyšu podruž žada.<sup>25</sup>

'Moreover they discovered [. . .] for which renovations a landlord can collect more rent [. . .] In the past they often *noted* that a renter would immediately be required [to pay] a higher rent after minor renovations that did not qualify as remodelling.'

(Respondents' choices: *zwěšćili*<sup>P</sup> – 9.5 / *zwěšćeli*<sup>I</sup> – 2.5 / *zwěšćowali*<sup>I</sup> – 0.)

- 10 Wjacekróć *je so* twarjenje *√wotpalilo*<sup>P</sup> / *wotpalalo*<sup>I</sup> / *wotpalowalo*<sup>I</sup>, *bu* pak kóždy raz hnydom zaso *twarjene*<sup>I</sup> / *√natwarjene*<sup>P</sup> / *natwarjane*<sup>I</sup>.<sup>26</sup>

'The building *burned down* several times, but each time it *was* immediately *rebuilt*.'

(Respondents' choices: *wotpalilo*<sup>P</sup> – 12 / *wotpalalo*<sup>I</sup> – 0 / *wotpalowalo*<sup>I</sup> – 0, *twarjene*<sup>I</sup> – 0 / *natwarjene*<sup>P</sup> – 12 / *natwarjane*<sup>I</sup> – 0.)

As in the present time frames considered above, in the past time frames there was no observable correlation between an imperfective verb's stem suffix and its probability of being selected. In passage 9 imperfective *su zwěšćeli* (< *zwěšćec*<sup>I</sup>) was selected 2.5 times while *su zwěšćowali* (< *zwěšćować*<sup>I</sup>) 'they noted' was not selected at all, but in passage 10 the different stem suffixes played no role at all in the rejection of both imperfective verb forms (*je so wotpalalo* [< *wotpaleć*<sup>I</sup>]

<sup>24</sup> *Serbske Nowiny*, 4 (48), no. 149 (3 August 1994), p. 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 (48), no. 142 (25 July 1994), p. 4.

as well as *je so wotpalowało* [*< wotpalować*<sup>1</sup>] ‘burned down’). Indeed, in passage 8, where, for strictly formal reasons, only one, *-owa*-suffixed imperfective verb form (*wotpokazowali* [*< wotpokazować*<sup>1</sup>] ‘resisted’) was available, the stem suffix in question did not prevent the selection of this imperfective verb form by one quarter of the respondents to the questionnaire.

TABLE 2: USo aspect selection in past time frames

Twelve respondents to questionnaire				USo press ( <i>Serbske Nowiny</i> )			
No. of tokens (= 12x4)		Percentage of tokens		No. of tokens (= 14)		Percentage of tokens	
Imperf.	Perfective	Imperf.	Perfective	Imperf.	Perfective	Imperf.	Perfective
5.5	42.5	11.46%	88.54%	1	3	25%	75%

#### *Future Time Frames*

Although the future tense *per se* is expressed in only two ways — periphrastically if the verb is imperfective (cf. *budu činić* ‘I shall do, I shall be doing’ above), synthetically with a non-past tense form if the verb is perfective (cf. *śčinju* ‘I shall do, I shall get [something] done’ above) — among the extended or figurative meanings of present-tense forms of imperfective verbs is the so-called ‘prophetic present’ (*praesens propheticum*), which is characterized by the denotation of future action.<sup>27</sup> Although this meaning is similarly expressed in English (cf. *Jutře jědu do města* ‘Tomorrow I am going to town’), its expression in USo, as in German, is considerably more extensive than in English (cf. *Hdyž rano wotućiš, sym hižo daloko přeč* ‘When you wake up in the morning, I shall already be [“I already am”] far away’).<sup>28</sup> Because of the potential for prophetic present readings, the questionnaire used for this study occasionally offered respondents three verbal tense forms — perfective ‘non-past’, imperfective present and imperfective periphrastic future (cf. *dóstanu*<sup>P</sup> – *dóstawaja*<sup>I</sup> – *budź[ej]a dóstawać*<sup>I</sup> in passage 11 below).

As Table 3 below summarizes, the USo press exclusively employed perfective verb forms in the future time frames cited here. Moreover, apart from the modal construction occurring in passage 13 below, the USo press consistently expressed futurity with (synthetic) non-past-tense forms of perfective verbs. Although we found that in the present and past iterative time frames above the USo press had instantiated imperfective verbs considerably more often than had the respondents to the questionnaire, with respect now to future time frames we find

<sup>27</sup> See Schuster-Šewc, p. 168.

<sup>28</sup> These sentences and their English glosses are reproduced here from Schuster-Šewc.

that it is the respondents who were more likely than the USo press to select imperfective verb forms (almost 16% vs none at all in the USo press). This apparent incongruity can be partly accounted for by the fact that a slight majority of the imperfective verbs chosen by the respondents were present-tense forms of imperfective verbs used to denote a prophetic present (cf. *dóstawaja*<sup>1</sup> [passages 11 and 14 below], selected 4.5 times, and *přinošuje*<sup>1</sup> [passage 12 below], selected 0.5 times). From the standpoint of the USo literary language, according to Fasske, 'the future [tense] is nonetheless preferred' in sentences where the speech event precedes the narrated event.<sup>29</sup> As noted previously (see above), implicit in such 'preference' on the part of the literary language is the proposition that the competing tense form (here, prophetic present) is 'less literary' and therefore more characteristic of colloquial USo.

- 11 Wotpowědne formulary  $\surd$  *dóstanu*<sup>P</sup> / *dóstawaja*<sup>1</sup> / *budž(ej)a dóstawać*<sup>1</sup> zajimowani młodostni wot spočatka přichodneho měsaca w Budyskim džělowym zarjedže.<sup>30</sup>

'Interested young people *will receive* the appropriate forms as of the beginning of next month in the Bautzen employment office.'

(Respondents' choices: *dóstanu*<sup>P</sup> – 10 / *dóstawaja*<sup>1</sup> – 1 / *budž(ej)a dóstawać*<sup>1</sup> – 1.)

- 12 W někotrych wsach Budyskeho wokrjesa  $\surd$  *přinjese*<sup>P</sup> / *přinošuje*<sup>1</sup> / *budže nosyc*<sup>1</sup> póstownik wot přichodneje pónđzele k hinašim časam póst do domu.<sup>31</sup>

'In some villages of Bautzen County (Kreis Bautzen) as of next Monday the postman *will be bringing* mail to one's home at different times.'

(Respondents' choices: *přinjese*<sup>P</sup> – 10.5 / *přinošuje*<sup>1</sup> – 0.5 / *budže nosyc*<sup>1</sup> – 1.)

<sup>29</sup> 'Die Präsensform des imperfektiven Verbs kann zum Ausdruck einer erwarteten Handlung, mit dem Futur konkurrierend, auch in Satzgefügen mit einem Temporalsatz gebraucht werden [. . .] Das Futurum wird jedoch zum Ausdruck des Verhältnisses SZ [Sprechzeit] vor BZ [Betrachtzeit] [. . .] bevorzugt.' Fasske, p. 257.

<sup>30</sup> *Serbske Nowiny*, 4 (48), no. 143 (26 July 1994), p. 4. In the questionnaire the sentence with the periphrastic future was actually formulated as a bracket construction (German *Rahmenkonstruktion*): 'Wotpowědne formulary *budu* ~ *budž(ej)a* zajimowani młodostni wot spočatka přichodneho měsaca w Budyskim džělowym zarjedže *dóstawać*.'

<sup>31</sup> *Serbske Nowiny*, loc. cit. In the questionnaire the sentence with the periphrastic future was actually formulated as 'W někotrych wsach Budyskeho wokrjesa *budže* póstownik wot přichodneje pónđzele k hinašim časam póst do domu *přinošawać*' (cf. preceding note). Nevertheless, one informant (born in 1937, from Nowy Łusć [Neulauske, Kreis Bautzen]) noted that the verb *přinošawać* (formally an imperfective verb derived from *přinjesć* 'to bring') signifies only 'to contribute' (German 'beitragen'). This same informant therefore supplied *budže* [. . .] *nosyc* 'will be carrying' as an acceptable alternative to the periphrastic future (*budže* [. . .] *přinošawać*) contained in the questionnaire.

- 13 Runje tak pak móhli *so* časy w druhich wokrjesach  $\sqrt{\text{změnic}^{\text{P}} / \text{změnjec}^{\text{I}} / \text{změnjowac}^{\text{I}}}$ .<sup>32</sup>  
 ‘[Mail delivery] times, though, could likewise *(be) change(d)* in other counties.’  
 (Respondents’ choices:  $\text{změnic}^{\text{P}} - 12 / \text{změnjec}^{\text{I}} - 0 / \text{změnjowac}^{\text{I}} - 0$ .)
- 14 Bohužel pak njemóžachmy zhonić, hdže nětko póstownik w kotrym času list do domu  $\sqrt{\text{přinjese}^{\text{P}} / \text{přinošuje}^{\text{I}} / \text{budže nosyc}^{\text{I}}}$ . Wobydlerjam drje ničo druge njezbywa, hač zo wot přichodnjeje pónđzele sami hladaja, w kotrym času swój póst  $\sqrt{\text{dóstanu}^{\text{P}} / \text{dóstawaja}^{\text{I}} / \text{budž(ej)a dóstawac}^{\text{I}}}$ .<sup>33</sup>  
 ‘Unfortunately we were unable to find out where the postman *will be bringing* mail to homes at which time. Residents probably have no choice as of next Monday but to watch for themselves at what time they *(will be) get(ting)* their mail.’  
 (Respondents’ choices:  $\text{přinjese}^{\text{P}} - 11 / \text{přinošuje}^{\text{I}} - 0 / \text{budže nosyc}^{\text{I}} - 1, \text{dóstanu}^{\text{P}} - 7 / \text{dóstawaja}^{\text{I}} - 3.5 / \text{budž(ej)a dóstawac}^{\text{I}} - 1.5$ .)

TABLE 3: USo aspect selection in future time frames

Twelve respondents to questionnaire		USo press ( <i>Serbske Nowiny</i> )	
No. of tokens (= 12x5)	Percentage of tokens	No. of tokens (= 5)	Percentage of tokens
Imperf. 9.5	Perfective 50.5	Imperf. 0	Perfective 5
	15.83%		0%
	84.17%		100%

### Concluding Remarks

The data presented above suggest that, both among native speakers of USo and in the USo press, iterative performances or occurrences of actions are expressed with imperfective verbs more often in present time frames than they are in either past or future time frames. Indeed, if we consider the past and future time frames together, we see that the percentage of imperfective verb forms instantiated in ‘non-present’ time frames (whether by the USo respondents to the questionnaire or by the USo press) amounted to fewer than 14% of all available verb forms. In present time frames, in contrast, the instantiation of imperfective verbs approached 50% among respondents to the questionnaire and 60% in the USo press.

<sup>32</sup> *Serbske Nowiny*, loc. cit.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. See note 12 with regard to *budže* [. . .] *přinošowac*. The periphrastic future in the second sentence was actually formulated on the questionnaire as ‘w kotrym času budu ~ *budž(ej)a* swój póst *dóstawac*’ (cf. note 11).

A possible explanation for the greater use of imperfective verbs to express iterativity in present time frames is that in USo, imperfective verb forms, besides being indispensable for the expression of eventive action (*praesens actuale*), are also indispensable for the expression of continuous (temporally unbounded) states. According to Yu. S. Maslov, '[t]here are cases where the meanings of quantitative aspectuality combine with qualitative aspectual meanings, modifying them in certain ways. Thus an iterative action which is limited and even attains its limit in each separate act of repetition, may, when seen as a whole, as a series of repetitions, be non-limited'.<sup>34</sup> In other words, repeated or multiple performances or occurrences of an action — some of which are completed, some in the process of completion, and some not yet begun — are prone to being equated with temporally unbounded ('non-limited') states. This equation appears to prompt the use of imperfective verbs in iterative contexts.

The question nevertheless remains why expressing iterative action in the same way as a continuous state (i.e. by means of imperfective verbs) in USo is more likely in present than in non-present time frames. A plausible answer resides in what may prove to be an USo tendency to merge temporal boundedness with aspectual boundedness (i.e. the 'qualitative aspectuality' of perfective verb forms, marked, as they are, for the successful completion of the action they express). Iterative action in past time frames, even if once conceivable at some point in the past as a continuous state, is nevertheless temporally bounded from the viewpoint of the moment of speech (speech event). At the very least, a temporal bound is imposed by the past-tense verb morphology itself.<sup>35</sup> With the possible exception of the prophetic present, the same holds true, *mutatis mutandis*, of future time frames. The only difference between the two time frames resides in the nature of their respective temporal bounds: past-tense verb morphology expresses a temporal end, while future-tense verb morphology expresses a temporal beginning. Present time frames, in contrast, are temporally unbounded.

<sup>34</sup> Yu. S. Maslov, 'An Outline of Contrastive Aspectology', in Yu. S. Maslov (ed.), *Contrastive Studies in Verbal Aspect in Russian, English, French and German*, translated by James Forsyth, Heidelberg, 1985, p. 17.

<sup>35</sup> The notions of aspectual boundedness and temporal boundedness that I discuss here are comparable to the Russian notions of 'internal bound' (*vnutrennij predel*) and 'external bound' (*vneshnij predel*), resp., put forth in A. V. Bondarko, *Die Semantik des Verbalaspekts im Russischen / Semantika glagol'nogo vida v russkom jazyke*, Frankfurt a.M., 1995, p. 37. In my review of this work (*Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue canadienne des slavistes*, 37, 1995, 267–70) I note that '[a]n "internal bound" is inherent in all actions expressed by perfective verb forms; an "external bound" finds expression in some adverbial modifier, which may occur with both perfective and imperfective verb forms. Thus, while the action expressed by the imperfective verb in *Ždali do desjati časov večera* ([They] waited until 10 p.m.) and that expressed by the perfective verb in *posidel pjat' minut* ([he] sat for five minutes) are both bounded, the former is only externally bounded, whereas the latter is both externally and internally bounded'.

Thus, imperfective (i.e. aspectually unbounded) verbs are more likely to occur together with present-tense morphology in present (i.e. temporally unbounded) time frames, while perfective (i.e. aspectually bounded) verbs are more likely to occur together with past- and future-tense morphology in non-present (i.e. temporally bounded) time frames.

Finally, with respect to the putative iterative semantics of the verbal stem suffix *-owa-* (*-uj-*) mentioned earlier (see above), the data considered here provide little, if any, insight into its functional status. In two previous studies I advanced the view that distributivity (or distributive iterativity), rather than iterativity *per se*, is the overriding meaning of this morpheme in the USo popular language,<sup>36</sup> and the present data provide no unambiguous grounds for either accepting or rejecting that view.

<sup>36</sup> 'Functional Status', p. 292, and Gary H. Toops, 'The Scope of "Secondary" Imperfectivization in Bulgarian, Russian, and Upper Sorbian', in Robert A. Maguire and Alan Timberlake (eds), *American Contributions to the Twelfth International Congress of Slavists, Cracow, August–September 1998*, Columbus, Ohio, 1998, pp. 525–26.