

SOME FEATURES OF THE COMPLETIVE PREFIX *DO-* IN RUSSIAN: THEORY FACES EMPIRICAL DATA¹

Stoynova N. (stoynova@yandex.ru)

Vinogradov Russian Language Institute & Institute of Linguistics,
RAS; NRU HSE; Moscow, Russia

The paper deals with some formal features of the completive prefix *do-* (‘to finish, to complete’). It was claimed in previous studies, that this prefix along with some others, has a range of formal properties that differ both from formal properties of productive “superlexical” prefixes (such as the cumulative *na-*, the distributive *po-*) and “lexical” (highly integrated) ones. Two important features were mentioned among others. 1) It can attach both to the perfective stem and to the imperfective one. 2) It cannot attach to secondary imperfectives. In the paper, I verify and develop these claims on corpus data. 1) I propose the rules of choice between the perfective vs. imperfective stem and describe the pool of variation. 2) I show, that, contrary to expectations, in informal speech *do-* attaches to secondary imperfectives quite easily.

Key words: Russian, verb, prefixation, intermediate prefixes, superlexical prefixes, completive

1. Introduction

The paper deals with some formal features of the completive prefix *do-* (‘to finish, to complete’). It was postulated in previous theoretical studies on Russian prefixation, that this prefix belongs to a small group of Russian prefixes, intermediate between productive “superlexical” prefixes (which are semantically transparent and occupy the external position within the stem) and “lexical” ones (which are lexicalized and

¹ The study was funded by RFBR, project 17-29-09154 (Trends in the development of language system: a corpus-based study of synchronic variation and diachronic change in different text types).

attach directly to the root), cf. [Tatevosov 2008]; [2009]; [2013]. They are predicted to have a range of formal features that distinguish them from both these types.

This paper is empirically-oriented, rather than theoretical. Its aim is to consider these features on quite a large massive of empirical data (dictionary data and corpus data), to verify the theoretical predictions on this prefix and to describe its more specific properties, which do not follow from general theoretical assumptions.

The paper has the following structure. In **Section 2**, I observe briefly the existing classification of Russian prefixes with a special focus on the completive *do-*. In **Section 3**, I differentiate between the completive *do-*, which is in focus of the study, and some other similar uses of this prefix. In **Sections 4** and **5**, I test on corpus and dictionary data two formal features of *do-*: the ability to attach both to perfective and imperfective stems (4) and the position with respect to the suffix of secondary imperfectivization (5). Section 6 contains a brief conclusion.

2. The completive *do-* within the classification of Russian prefixes

Russian verbal prefixes can be divided at least into two formal types. Prefixes of the first type are less productive, they express more concrete and less transparent meanings, and they are closer to the root within the verb stem: cf. *при-йти*, *вы-йти*, *обо-йти*, derived from *идти* ‘to go’; *при-думать*, *вы-думать*, *об-думать* derived from *думать* ‘to think’. Prefixes of the second type (e.g. the cumulative *на-*, the distributive *по-* and *пере-*) are very productive, they have abstract, transparent meanings, within the verb stem they can attach above prefixes of the first group, cf. *на-* in *на-при-думывать* (CUMUL-LEX.PREF-think.IPFV ‘to think out a lot of things’), *по-* in *по-у-ходить* (DISTR-LEX.PREF-go ‘to go one by one’). This opposition was formulated in impressionistic semantic terms of “qualifiers vs. modifiers” already in [Isatchenko 1965/2003: 222–224]. Later, this idea was developed within the modern formal approaches by [Babko-Malaya 1999]; [Ramchand 2004]; [Svenonius 2004]; [Romanova 2004]; [2006] and others (inner vs. outer prefixes, lexical vs. superlexical prefixes).

A more detailed classification was proposed by S. G. Tatevosov. In [Tatevosov 2008] he introduced one more “intermediate” type of prefixes consisting of the completive *do-*, which is in focus in the paper, and the repetitive *пере-* (and also *под-* which was added to the list in later papers). In [Tatevosov 2009] and [Tatevosov 2013] he also divided other superlexical prefixes to several groups.

In [Tatevosov 2008] proposes a list of 6 formal features of “intermediate prefixes”: some of them are shared with lexical ones, some of them are shared with superlexical ones, and some others are specific for this type.

Two of these features are relevant for this paper.

1) “Aspectual selection”. Superlexical prefixes attach to the imperfective stem: *по-спрашивать* (*по*-ask.IPFV), lexical prefixes behave differently: *от-дать* *от*-give.PFV, *но за-шить* (*за*-sew.IPFV), while intermediate prefixes are predicted to combine with both types of stems without restrictions: *до-шить* (*do*-sew.IPFV) and *до-подшить* (*do*-shorten.PFV). If both options are allowed by the general model of Russian prefixation, the question arises, on which grounds the stem is chosen in practice.

2) “Position with respect to the secondary imperfective”. Following [Tatevosov 2008], superlexical prefixes can attach above the secondary imperfective (*украсить* (decorate.PFV > *украш-а-ть* (decorate-IPFV) > *по-[у-краш-а]-ть* (po-decorate-IPFV)). Intermediate prefixes, including *do-* are, in contrast, predicted to attach only below the secondary imperfective. However, in [Tatevosov 2013] notes that this feature has no connection to other formal properties of this group of prefixes and it does not follow from the general architecture of Russian prefixation, i. e. the opposite situation would not break anything in the general model. If so, it is interesting to check, whether this feature is in fact so strict or the opposite option also can be realized under some conditions.

3. The completive use among other uses of *do-*

In the paper, I discuss the formal properties of *do-* only in its completive uses, i.e. the uses with the meaning ‘to finish, to complete, to carry through’, as in (1). I include in this type also uses with the meaning ‘to complete after a break’, as in (2):

- (1) До начала первого писал и, наконец, дописал статейку для «Смены». [RNC] ‘I had been writing a paper for “Smena” till 12 o’clock, and then I finished (*do-*+write) it at last.’
- (2) Потом, потом допишу, говорил я себе. А теперь пусть подсохнут листки. [RNC] ‘I said to myself: I’ll finish writing (*do-*+write) later. And now the papers must dry up.’

There are some other productive uses of *do-*, which are semantically very close to the completive one. However, I exclude them, because their formal properties differ in some respect from those of the completive *do-* and must be described separately. These are:

- 1) spatial uses ‘to reach the (spatial) Goal’, as in *дойти* (*do-*+go), *долететь* (*do-*+fly), *добежать* (*do-*+run);
- 2) uses with the explicitly expressed endpoint (*do* ‘to’ + GEN), as in: *сидеть до обеда* ‘to be sitting till the lunch-time (*do-*+sit)’, *дожить до старости* ‘to live to an old age (*do-*+live)’, *догореть до середины* ‘to burn half (*do-*+burn)’;
- 3) additive uses ‘V with additional portion of object / with a new object’, as in: *долить бензину* ‘to pour more petrol (*do-*+pour)’, *дорисовать усы* ‘to draw a moustache {= to add it to the existing portrait} (*do-*+draw)’, *докупить продуктов* ‘to buy more food’ (*do-*+buy).

The borderline between the completive *do-* and the additive *do-* is especially relevant for the further discussion. In the majority of cases it is quite clear. Usually, the object of a completive *do-*verb is definite, while the object of an additive *do-*verb is indefinite (it follows directly from their semantics). Since Russian does not express definiteness overtly, the following substitution test can be used to differentiate between these two uses. The additive *do-* allows the object modifiers, which show explicitly

that a new object (or a new portion of the object) is involved: *еще* ‘more’, *еще один* ‘one more’, *новый* ‘new’ etc., while the completive *do-* does not. Also, only the additive *do-* can take the object in the genitive case² instead of the accusative case. Cf.:

- (3) а. *Допив воду / *воды, он вдруг спросил...* [RNC] — completive
 ‘Having drunk up (*do-*+drink) the water (water.ACC / *water.GEN)’
 б. *Лучше всего долить в смесь воду /^{OK}воды.* [RNC] — additive
 ‘The best option is to pour (*do-*+pour) some water (‘water.ACC / ^{OK}water.GEN’) to the mixture’

However, there are uses, in which the distinction between the completive *do-* and the additive *do-* is more subtle. A problematic class is that of verbs with the incremental object (such as ‘pour’). For these verbs, a temporal phase of the event (referred to by the completive *do-*) corresponds to the degree of involvement of the object (referred to by the additive *do-*). A special case within this class is verbs with the semantic incremental object, which is referred to by the prefix, but which is not overtly expressed in the syntactic structure. Cf. *досолить* (*do-*+salt) in (4). The verb *солить* ‘to pour salt to sth’ (and its English equivalent ‘to salt’) takes food names as the direct object (*солить суп* ‘to salt the soup’), and its semantic object ‘salt’ is not expressed. Example (4) is ambiguous, since it is unclear, whether ‘salt’ is definite or not and whether we deal with a new portion of salt or with the full normal portion of salt.

- (4) *Попробовав с ложки еще раз, Кытин засомневался, подумал, досолил и помешал.* [RNC]
 ‘Kytin tried (the soup) again, hesitated, salted (the soup) and stirred it.’ = ‘added more salt’ (additive) or ‘made salty enough’ (closer to completive)?

4. The choice between the perfective vs. imperfective stem

As mentioned above, an important feature of the completive prefix *do-* is its ability to attach both to perfective and imperfective stems. However, the general model of Russian verbal prefixation, observed in **Section 2**, does not predict the choice of a stem for any particular verb. In this section, I formulate general empirical-based rules of the stem choice. The following data were used: first, the sample of *do-*verbs extracted from Minor Academic Dictionary (678 items); second, the corpus data of RNC (www.ruscorpora.ru) and GICR (<http://www.webcorpora.ru>). The first (dictionary) data source provides information on more conventionalized derivatives which belong to Standard Written Russian. The second (corpus) one provides additional information on the productive derivation in the real use, particularly on occasional derivatives and on those rejected by the prescriptive norm, but attested in informal speech. Such derivatives are especially in focus in the study. They are checked on the data of GICR (the search on blogs: livejournal.com and vk.com).

² Ø-stem masculine nouns take the special partitive case form *-u* in this context (*чаю* ‘tea.PART’, *сахар-у* ‘sugar.PART’).

The rules of stem choice are different for different formal types of aspectual verb pairs. I will describe them separately.

A) Aspectual pairs “unprefixed imperfective + prefixed perfective”

(*писать* — *написать* ‘write’)

Within this type, the completive *do-* attaches consistently to the imperfective stem:

- (5) a. ^{OK}*до-писать* (*do-*+write.IPFV) — ^{???}*до-на-писать* (*do-*+PREF-write.PFV)
 b. ^{OK}*до-шить* (*do-*+sew.IPFV) — ^{???}*до-с-шить* (*do-*+PREF-sew.PFV)

Very few counter-examples are attested in written informal texts of blogs: 1-2 uses of *до-про-читать* (*do-*+PREF-read.PFV) и *донаписать* (*do-*+PREF-write.PFV) compared to more than 10,000 uses of *дочитать* (*do-*+read.IPFV) and *дописать* (*do-*+write.IPFV) in GICR:

- (6) *Допрочитал-таки* The Probability of God... [GICR]
 ‘In the end (I’ve finished reading (*do-*+PREF-read.PFV) “The Probability of God”...’
- (7) ... а сегодня *донаписал* кое-как распознавание маджонговых фишек. [GICR]
 ‘...and today, I’ve somehow finished writing (*do-*+PREF-write.PFV) the code for the recognition of mahjong tokens.’

B) Aspectual pairs “unprefixed perfective + unprefixed imperfective”

(*решить* — *решать* ‘solve, decide’)

Within this type, the completive *do-* also usually attaches to the imperfective stem:

- (8) Игорь сдал работу и ушел, я *дорешал* свою за двадцать минут. [GICR]
 ‘Igor handed in his exercise and went away, I finished solving (*do-*+solve.IPFV) my task in twenty minutes.’

Uses with the perfective stem are also attested in informal speech, though they are rare (9% of uses for the verb *решить* ‘solve/decide.PFV’, mostly with the meaning ‘to decide’)³.

- (9) Ну что такого, что я не смогла *дорешить* задачу? [GICR]
 ‘What does it matter, that I failed to solve the task completely (*do-*+solve.IPFV)?’

C) Aspectual pairs “prefixed perfective + prefixed secondary imperfective”

(*переписать* — *переписывать* ‘rewrite’)

This is the most interesting type. For aspectual pairs, in which the prefixed imperfective is derived from the prefixed perfective by means of the imperfectivizing suffix *-ыва(∼-ва-∼а)*, a variation is attested. For one and the same aspectual pair, both the perfective stem and the imperfective one can take the completive *do-*. Cf.:

– *доуложить* (*do-*+put.to.bed.PFV) and *доукладывать* (*do-*+put.to.bed-IPFV)

³ This is a small heterogeneous exceptional verb class. Only *решать* — *решить* was consistently checked on corpus data. It is possible that the quantitative data on other verbs differ from those on *решать* — *решить*.

- (10) а. ...*вот доложу* сейчас детей и узнаю кто убийца. (www.hv-info.ru)
 ‘Now I will finish putting children to bed and find out who is a murderer.’ —
доложить
 б. ...*ты уложи* Андрея, а я тогда *докладываю* Костю.
 (<https://www.babyblog.ru>)
 ‘Put to bed Andrej, and I will finish putting to bed Kostya.’ — *докладывать*

D) Other cases

There are also some marginal cases that do not fit in this picture. One of them is a case of “aspectual triplets”. For some verbs, the unprefixed imperfective and the prefixed secondary imperfective are synonymous or quasi-synonymous, cf. *мести* > *подмести* > *подметать* (‘to sweep’). In this case, all three stems can take *do-*: *до-мести* ~ *до-под-мести* ~ *до-под-мет-а-ть*. Not only two prefixed stems, but also the initial unprefixed one is involved in competition⁴.

One more exceptional case is a narrow class of verbs of attachment with spatial prefixes: *при-/в-/за-крутить*; *при-/в-/за-винтить*; *при-/в-/за-вернуть* ‘to screw on/in’⁵. The unprefixed imperfective stem (*крутить* etc.) is not used with the same meaning. However, *do-* can attach not only to the prefixed stem, but also to this unprefixed imperfective stem, cf.:

- (11) Ну не *до-вернули* гайку, ну выпил пивка или еще чего?
 [RNC] = *до-за-вернули*, the unprefixed verb **вернуть* does not exist at all
 ‘We have not screwed on the nut completely, I’ve drunk a bit of beer, what else?’

Table 1 contains the quantitative data on competing derivatives for 2–3 verbs of each type. These are the data on informal Internet-communication taken from GICR.

The table shows, that a real competition is in fact attested only within Type C (prefixed perfective + prefixed secondary imperfective). The majority of such competing completives (both derived from the imperfective and perfective stem) are occasional. If one of them is conventionalized and does not contradict to the prescriptive norm, then it is usually the derivative from the perfective stem (*дорассказать*). However, derivatives from the perfective stem are not obviously more frequent in informal speech (cf. *довышивать* with the opposite distribution). The frequency distribution of competing variants varies a lot across particular verbs. Using such a little sample, I cannot explain which features of a verb predispose to one or another distribution.

⁴ A more difficult case is a triplet *чесать* > *при-чесать* > *при-чес-ыва-ть* ‘to brush’. It also has three competing derivatives: *до-при-чесать*, *до-при-чес-ыва-ть* and *до-чесать*. The unprefixed *чесать* had been used with the meaning ‘to brush’ till the beginning of the XX cent. (cf. *Марьянка в одной рубашке чесала косу, собираясь спать*. [Л. Н. Толстой. *Казак* (1863), RNC]). However, in modern Standard Russian it is not a neutral synonym of *при-чесывать*. *Мести* is also archaic compared to *подметать* ‘to sweep’. At the same time, the derivatives *до-мести* и *до-чесать* do not seem to be archaic.

⁵ These three verbs are conventionalized and mentioned in dictionaries. Cf. also rare occasional uses of the same class, which are outside the norm, but attested in informal Internet communication: *до-вязать шнурки*, *до-стегнуть крепления*, *до-крепить унитаз*.

Table 1. Competing *do*-derivates from the perfective vs. imperfective stem: GICR⁶

verb type	<i>do</i> -+PFV vs. IPFV	verb	translation	+IPFV	+PFV	% of IPFV
type A	IPFV	<i>читал-прочитал</i>	'read'	26,770	1	100%
		<i>писал-написал</i>	'write'	9,192	2	100%
type B	IPFV (~PFV)	<i>решал-решил</i>	'solve'	71	7	91%
type C	IPFV (~PFV)	<i>вышила-вышивала</i>	'embroider'	316	56	85%
		<i>перечитал(а)-перечитывал(а)</i>	'read again'	22	65	25%
		<i>переписал(а)-переписывал(а)</i>	'write again'	3	10	23%
		<i>рассказал(а)-рассказывал(а)</i>	'tell'	10	202	5%

Competing completives can be used in absolutely identical contexts, (12):

- (12) ...потому что вензель на наволочке не успела *довышивать* :) Ну что, *довышила* и поехала! [GICR]
 '... because I didn't have time to finish embroiding (*do*-+IPFV) a monogram on the pillow-case. Well, I finished it (*do*-+PFV) and went away.'

However, the following non-strict tendencies in their distribution are attested.

a) The presence of the corresponding perfective vs. imperfective base verb may predispose to the choice of stem (*укладывал, но так и не доукладывал; нужно уложить, вернее доуложить ребенка*).

b) There is a correlation with the frequency of a secondary imperfective derived from the completive verb, which is homonymous to the derivate from the secondary imperfective (*дорассказывать* = *do*-+tell.IPFV 'to finish telling' vs. *do*-tell+IPFV 'to be finishing telling'), see **Section 5**.

c) The main factor is which component of the event is in focus. If the temporal semantics is in focus, then the derivate from the imperfective stem is more likely. If the argument semantics (the change/involvement of the object in the course of the event) is in focus, then the derivate from the imperfective stem is more likely. Cf.:

- (13) *Контрольные допроверяла!!! Ура!!! Еще чуть-чуть приблизилась к концу семестра.* [GICR] — the imperfective stem
 'I've finished checking the test. Hurrah! Now, I'm a bit closer to the end of the semester!' (the temporal semantics is more in focus⁷)

⁶ The search on blogs: vk.com (8,720 millions) and livejournal.com (9,820 millions): the forms PST.F and PST.M. All the results were looked through manually, only completive uses were counted (see above on the distinction between different meanings of *do*-).

⁷ The temporal interpretation is supported by the next sentence, in which the speaker refers to the time period.

- (14) Доделала, допроверила, подправила и выслала клиенту итог двухнедельного труда — 5 свеженаписанных нарядных отчета, каждый на двух языках... [GICR] — the perfective stem
'I finished, checked and sent to the client the result of my work of the last two weeks, 5 just written accurate reports, each in two languages.' (the argument semantics is more in focus⁸)

d) One more argument for the previous point is the fact that the additive *do-*, which is closer to uses that focus the object, than to uses that focus the temporal semantics (see Section 3 above on the semantics of additive uses), are also likely to chose the perfective stem. Cf.:

- (15) a. — Ну, эти крупные планы мы *доснимем* в павильоне в Москве.
[RNC] — additive & the perfective stem
'We will make photo of these close-ups in the studio in Moscow.'
b. Завтра *доснимаю* и выложу. — completive & the imperfective stem
'Tomorrow, I will finish making photos and publish them.'

It is interesting, that the rules regulating the stem choice for *do-* are quite different from those regulating it for *pere-* (which is expected to belong to the same formal type), cf. for the rules for *pere-* [Stoynova 2014].

5. The prefix *do-* and secondary imperfectivization

One more point that requires empirical verification is the position of *do-* with respect to the suffix of secondary imperfectivization *-yva(-va-~a)*.

Completive *do-*verbs, which themselves are perfective, attach the suffix *-yva* without any restrictions, cf.:

– imperfective: *мыть* (wash-IPFV) > perfective: *до-мыть* (*do-wash*) >
secondary imperfective: *до-мы-ва-ть* (*do-wash-IPFV*)

- (16) Разделся в прихожей и прошел на кухню — там престарелая домработница Клава *домывала* посуду после ужина. [RNC]
'(I) took off my clothes and entered the kitchen — there the old housemaid Klava was finishing washing (*do-wash-IPFV*) dishes after dinner.'

On the contrary, the attachment of the completive *do-* itself to secondary imperfectives is claimed to be forbidden. [Tatevosov 2008] considers this feature as one of the arguments to attribute this prefix to a separate intermediate formal type along with *pere-* and *pod-* (see Section 2 above).

In fact, for *pere-* and *pod-* this restriction takes place:

⁸ The speaker focuses not on the time period her work took, but rather on the result of her work, namely on the positive changes in her reports, cf. the other verbs of changing in the chain: *доделала, подправила*.

– perfective: *записать* (write.down) > secondary imperfective: *записыва-ть* (write.down-IPFV) > *perfective with *pere-*: **пере-[записыва]-ть* (*pere-write.down-IPFV* ‘to write down again’)⁹

The case of *do-* is more complicated. Derivates from secondary imperfectives are not attested in the sample extracted from Minor Academic Dictionary. However, they are actively used in informal speech. Cf. the verbs *довышивать*, *доукладывать*, *дорассказывать* and others, mentioned and exemplified in **Section 4**. Moreover, for some verbs these variants are more frequent, than the expected derivates from the perfective stem (see **Table 1** above). Cf. one more example:

– perfective: *перечитать* ‘to read again’ > secondary imperfective: *перечитыва-ть* (*read.again-IPFV*) > *до-перечитывать* *do-read.again-IPFV* ‘to finish re-reading’, (17):

- (17) ...надеюсь *доперечитывать* и отправить с приведением любимых фрагментов. [GICR]
 ‘I hope to finish re-reading (*do-read.again-IPFV*) (it) and to send (it) with my favorite fragments marked.’

As both derivational scenarios: *do-V* > [*do-V*]-*ыва* and [*V-ыва*] > *do*-[*V-ыва*] are available, homophonous verbs with different structures and aspectual interpretations are imaginable. And they are in fact attested, cf. *до-рассказыва-ть* (*do-tell-IPFV*) in (18) and (19):

- (18) Вы не дорассказали! Зеро. *Дорассказываю*. Однажды... [RNC] — *до-рассказыва-ть* is the secondary imperfective derived from *дорассказать* (*do-tell*)¹⁰
 ‘— You haven’t finished your story! Zero: I’m telling (*do-tell-IPFV*): Once...’
- (19) Я же ещё не *дорассказывал* сказку=(risovach.ru) — *до-рассказывать* is the perfective completive derivate from *рассказыва-ть* (*tell-IPFV*)¹¹
 ‘But I haven’t finished (*do-tell-IPFV*) my tale yet’.

⁹ The homonymous secondary imperfective derived from the perfective verb with *pere-* is attested: *пере-записать* ‘to write again’ > [*пере-запис*]-*ыва-ть* ‘to be writing again’.

¹⁰ The form *дорассказываю* has the progressive performative interpretation in this sentence, so this is the imperfective verb, derived from *дорассказать*. If it was the perfective derivate from *рассказывать*, it would have the future time reference, which is very unprobable in this context (cf. the following sentence with unprefixed verbs: *Рассказываю* (IPFV). *Однажды...* / ???*Расскажу* (PFV). *Однажды...*).

¹¹ According to the general rule of interpretation of perfective vs. imperfective verbs in the not-yet context, the imperfective derivate from *дорассказать*, would have the meaning ‘(I) have not begun to finish telling’, and not the meaning ‘I (began) and have not finished telling’ expected from the broader context, cf. the following contrastive pair with unprefixed verbs: *Я же еще не рассказывал сказку* (‘I have not even begun to tell the tale’) / *не рассказал сказку* (‘I have not finished the tale yet’).

6. Conclusion

Thus, the empirical data involved in the study, and especially the data of informal speech which lies beyond the prescriptive norm, give the possibility to verify and enlarge the existing assumptions on the completive *do-* and on the whole system of Russian prefixes.

- 1) The prefix *do-* is predicted to attach both to perfective and imperfective stems. The empirical data confirm this prediction and give a possibility to formulate the rules regulating the stem choice, which do not follow from the general theoretical assumptions. The rules are complex, a large pool of variation takes place.
- 2) The prefix *do-* is predicted to attach below the secondary imperfective. It is true for more conventionalized uses. However, numerous occasional uses in modern informal speech totally break this prediction.
- 3) The small class of “intermediate prefixes” appears to be heterogeneous: there are some features that distinguish *do-* from *pere-*, including the interaction with the secondary imperfective and the rules of stem choice.
- 4) So, the detailed empirically-based study does not create considerable problems for the existing theory of Russian prefixation. However, more new data involved — more detailed becomes the classification, up to one prefix classes.

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