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Aspect and the Russian Verbal Base Form

OSCAR E. SWAN

Introduction

Roman Jakobson's 1948 single-stem analysis of the Russian verb inspired many imitations and applications around the Slavic world, especially in American Russian pedagogy, where the names Alexander Lipson, Charles Townsend, and Maurice Levin come most readily to mind (see References). The first is a by-now dated two-part textbook series, grammatically innovative for its time, that is still available on the internet (although as far as I know it is not actually used anywhere), while the applied linguistic works by Townsend and Levin are still in print and are commonly used in graduate courses on the structure of Russian. It is the admittedly small group of participants in such courses that is the intended target audience of this paper, although I hope it will also be of interest to those who are interested in Russian structural linguistic issues generally, whether or not these issues are of relevance to the undergraduate teaching/learning situation. In further discussion it will be assumed that the reader is generally conversant with Jakobson's system in either Townsend's or Levin's slightly varying treatments of it. We will not be concerned here with minor details or with any textbooks that apply the single-stem approach to lower levels of teaching, among which *Russian Stage One: Live from Russia!* (Lekić et al.) is prominent.

At one point in time, it seemed as though almost every other issue of *Slavic and East European Journal* (*SEEJ*) or *Russian Language Journal* (*RLJ*) one opened had an article about the "single-stem system of the Russian verb," based one way or another on Jakobson 1948, and about how it provided the key to presenting the Russian verb to American learners—or exactly the opposite, i.e., how it did not. I once took part in that discussion (Swan 1986), and I want to preface this discussion by stating that the present article does not participate in that by-now largely historical polemic, referring the reader instead to Gerald Mayer's highly readable *SEEJ* article of 1993, together with its bibliography. In my opinion, Mayer says everything that needs to be said on the pedagogical

side of this issue, and says it as well as anyone could.¹ Instead, I want to address a problem that I think has yet to be specifically raised in this regard, namely, that the Jakobsonian verb description is concerned primarily with the single dimension of tense-form prediction, whereas the verbal lexeme comprises the two more or less equally important cross-cutting dimensions of tense and aspect. Indeed, many would say, and have said, along with Cubberley in his *A Linguistic Tradition*, that “Modern Russian has ended up with a system in which aspect dominates over tense” (2002, 146). Raible (1990, 197) describes the system as an “aspect system by priority, combined with a tense system.” A verbal base-form system that concentrates almost exclusively on predicting tense forms is, therefore, largely missing the point of what is needed in a Russian verbal presentational strategy.

Base Forms

Base form, as used here, means a single annotated compact form containing the inflectional and stress information needed to produce all the word-forms of a nominal, adjectival, or, in the instance of the present paper, verbal lexemes. By nature, all base forms are, to a greater or lesser extent, abstractions, requiring various kinds of rules for their implementation. Jakobson himself, with his 1948 article, was influential in injecting the idea of the base form of inflected words into Slavic morphological description. Although the jury may still be out as to the pedagogical utility, at early stages of language instruction, of the base form of inflected words, its use in scientific writing and at advanced stages of pedagogy—say, at the graduate level—can hardly be doubted.²

¹ Although I hesitate to become involved in that old debate, I do side with Mayer (1993) in his conclusion that the verbal base form is of questionable utilitarian value on the elementary language-learning level, when there are so many other things to learn. As he shows, the traditional “three-form” approach of verb presentation (e.g., писа’ть пишу’ пи’шет; чита’ть чита’ю чита’ешь, etc.) seems perfectly adequate, and provides in a different way, and with concrete verb forms, exactly the same information as the Jakobsonian base form.

² This having been said, Davidson’s 2010 review, reflecting on fifteen years of experience sending students to ACTFL/ACCELS Russian study-abroad immersion programs incontrovertibly shows that structural proficiency in Russian is an especially strong predictor for making progress in both speaking and listening once in the country. I simply do not wish to sidetrack discussion here by injecting that issue into it.

At that stage, it is at the very least a heuristic construct that is useful when the need arises to explain why a given form is as it is, and to demonstrate to advanced learners that the majority of complex inflectional processes in Russian are largely systematic. By definition in the one-stem approach, a verb can be considered, in one way or another, irregular within the system when a base form cannot be generated for an inflected word. Most users of the idea of the base form view it as a purely utilitarian construct, without any accompanying philosophical-semiotic claims or imputations, and the present author shares that view.

As noted, a limitation of the base-form strategy as it has been traditionally applied to Russian verbs is that, unlike with nouns and adjectives, it has not been applied to the entire lexeme which, in the case of the verb, presides over a verbal pair, differentiated as to aspect and, within each aspect pair, as to tense. Although the dominant of these two verbal categories is aspect, the base-form strategy has mainly been applied to the tense dimension of individual aspect partners of an aspect pair, greatly limiting (more or less by half) the descriptive power of base forms as far as verbs are concerned. It is the purpose of the present study to investigate just how successfully (or unsuccessfully) the base-form strategy can be oriented around and applied to the entire verbal lexeme, better incorporating tense and aspect together, arriving at a base form from which all of the finite verb forms falling beneath a particular verbal lexeme can be derived with reliable and consistent morphological and phonological rules, i.e., rules that do not conflict either with one another or with the morphological and phonological rules that one finds elsewhere in Russian word formation.³

³ A major criticism, voiced by many, is that many of the Jakobsonian rules of single-stem word composition lack generality; they are good only for describing verb conjugation and for nothing else; for a good discussion, see Mayer's (1998) lengthy note 2. *Phonological rule* here means a rule that describes sound changes that are motivated by the phonological environment in which sound units fall, irrespective of the morphological environment. The units that participate in phonological rules in the present description are somewhat abstract, i.e., they are more like symbols than concrete units consisting of bundles of phonetic features, but they could be amenable to historical-phonological interpretation if the need should arise.

A Quick Review of Jakobson 1948

Reviewing a bit, Jakobson's base-form system treats verb-stems (infinitive/past vs. non-past/imperative) as phonologically conditioned allomorphs derived from the same underlying base. For simplicity, in further discussion we will refer to these two stems as the past stem and the non-past stem. Some of Jakobson's base forms end in consonants and others end in vowels. They are joined to endings, beginning either with consonants (past-tense endings) or with vowels (non-past tense endings). Rules of combination usually result in different past and non-past stem allomorphs in accordance with how the base stem either changes, or does not change, in response to rules governing different kinds of vowel+consonant, vowel+vowel, consonant+vowel, and consonant+consonant combinations at the stem-ending juncture. Jakobson's 1948 description did not (a) distinguish verbal suffixes or any other structure within verb-stems; (b) recognize the morphological or psychological reality of the different verb-stems (i.e., past vs. non-past); (c) concern itself with the derivation of aspect or with the derivation of gerunds, participles, or verbal nouns; or (d) concern itself with conjugational stress patterns. Townsend (1981) and Levin (1978) achieved considerable success both in describing stress patterns in the verb and in specifying how the participle and derived imperfective aspect suffixes are distributed according to the inflectional classes of verbs that emerge from Jakobson's base-form, as long as one is allowed to identify morphological units (suffixes) that exist within the verb stem and use them as classifiers (this seems to have been originally Lipson's (1981) innovation). There are around a dozen such verb classes. Under the revised Jakobsonian system former *писа-* becomes *пис-а-*; former *читай-* becomes *чит-ай-*; and so on. Proponents of the expanded system apparently have never been bothered by the fact that introducing the morphological structure into the verb stem fundamentally undermined Jakobson's original vision of the verb as having a single underlying psychologically unitary, phonologically defined, morphologically undifferentiated stem. In my opinion, this fact should have been of concern to followers of Townsend's and Levin's systems. Once the door has been opened to morphological rules and structures in finite conjugation, such rules and structures may be used alongside phonological rules anywhere they might conceivably facilitate

overall descriptive uniformity and simplicity, including the production not just of tense forms, but of aspect forms as well.

Problems Posed by Aspect Formation under the Single-Stem

A problem emerges when one attempts to add aspect formants to Jakobson's phonologically defined base, or even to its now morphologically segmented base, as both Townsend and Levin attempt to do. In both instances the description of aspect formation based on the single-stem base becomes an add-on construct, requiring its own specially adduced rules and procedures. Many of the rules of sound combination on which Jakobson's original system relies have to be replaced with other rules of combination, at times openly conflicting with Jakobson's original rules, while still living alongside them in an expanded and now rather rickety system. For example, Jakobson's base stem *писа-*, when added to a conjugational vowel ending, yields *пиш-*, see *писа-+у* → *пишу*, whereas adding *выпис-а-* to the imperfective aspect suffix *-ывай-* merely results in the chopping off (truncation) of the *a*: *выпис-а-+ывай-* → *выписывай-*, with no accompanying mutation. By contrast, adding the same suffix *-ывай-* to, say, *подсуд-и-* produces both truncation and mutation: *подсуживай-*. Adding the same suffix to the base *прочит-ай-* should logically, under Jakobson's rules of combination, produce **прочитаивай-*, but the actual result is *прочитывай-*. The aforementioned authors only partially attempt to reconcile the rules of aspect formation with Jakobson's rules of stem-ending combination, because that is all that is possible. Taking Levin as an example, when describing imperfective aspect derivation he asks the user of his version of the system to truncate the entire suffix *-ай-* before imperfective suffixes (whereas truncation under Jakobson was a purely phonological process, blind to morphological structure and applying only to final vowels or consonants), and then lists which kinds of suffixal truncation prompt mutation of the preceding consonant and which ones do not. As a result, a sizable gap in Levin's description opens up between verb conjugation in its dimension of tense on the one hand and in its dimension of aspect on the other without the nature of that gap ever being made explicit: namely, one has shifted from phonologically stated rules in present and past-tense conjugation, which are not permitted to look at morphological structure, to rules for aspect formation that depend on morphological

structure and, in addition, often stand in violation of the phonologically stated rules needed for past and non-past tense formation. While it might be defensible to treat gerunds, participles, and verbal nouns as subsidiary categories belonging to verbal derivational morphology, thereby justifying their descriptive treatment as appendices to the main conjugational system with their own *sui generis* rules, aspect is a different matter. Aspect partners of a verb—perfective and imperfective—fall under the same verbal lexeme as tense partners—past and non-past—and hence belong equally to the narrow subject of finite verb conjugation, as Jakobson himself describes elsewhere (1932-1971). Leaving aside the derivation of gerunds, participles, and verbal nouns, it seems inarguable that finite verb conjugation, comprising the cross-cutting categories of tense and aspect, should be governed by rules that are (a) non-conflicting, i.e., consistent and compatible with one another and with Russian word structure generally; and (b) explicitly either phonological or morphological, instead of being neither clearly one nor the other.

Distinguishing Real Phonological Rules from Rules of Thumb

A start on a solution to the problem just described is to distinguish in Jakobson's system those rules that are truly phonological (non-suffixed verb rules, sound-changes which, like $\text{д} \rightarrow \text{c} / _ \text{т}$ in $\text{вед} + \text{-ти} \rightarrow \text{вести}$, have been inherited from Common Slavic and which can be found exhibited elsewhere in Russian morphophonology),⁴ and weed out those that are merely quasi-phonological, i.e., rules of thumb that have been invented for the verb by Jakobson and devised by him to operate only within the system of past vs. non-past verb conjugation as he narrowly circumscribes it in 1948. The quasi-phonological rules of thumb, of which in fact there are very few, turn out to be phonological-morphological hybrids in disguise, whose hidden purpose is to reference the past and non-past stems, an observation that has already been made by many commentators, especially well by Chvany (1990). It seems preferable to replace such hybrid rules, that are neither clearly phonological nor morphological, with explicit rules of morpheme substitution and stem-referencing, making it possible to meld aspect derivation into finite conjugation more seamlessly. Jakobson's system can be made more

⁴ For example, the same rule $\text{д} \rightarrow \text{c} / _ \text{т}$ can be found underlying the noun *вѣсть*.

compatible with aspect, and more internally logical within tense-form production itself,⁵ if some of the burden in the system is moved out of the phonology and back into the morphology, where it historically operated.

The system to be described recognizes the morphological and psychological reality of the two verb stems, past and non-past. Either one stem or the other, depending on the class to which the verb belongs, is used as the verbal base and to predict the other stem from it, making use of the same predictive power that is inherent in the 1948 system and in much the same way, i.e., one stem predicts the other, as long as one recognizes which stem it is, past or non-past. This turns out to be an easy task: only base forms in the suffixes *-й-* and *-н-* represent non-past stems, and the past stem is derived from them by dropping the *-й-* or *-н-*. All other base forms either represent the past stem or, with bases ending in consonants, the two stems are the same: for example, *вѣд-*. Here we will give only a couple of orientational examples of the modified system, adding others in further narrative as needed. The most prominent changes affect verbs of the *пис-а-*, *кол-о-*, *крик-ну-*, and *чит-а-й-* classes. Verbs of the *пис-а-* class (which, since they do not end in *-й-* or *-н-*, are recognizably past stems) replace *-а-* with the non-past-forming suffix *-й-*⁶ in order to obtain the non-past stem, hence *пис-а-* : *пис-й-*. Verbs of the *-о-* class behave similarly: *кол-о-* : *кол-й-*. Before *-й-*, plain consonants mutate;⁷ hence *пис-й-у* → *пишу*, *кол-й-у* → *кол^ь-у*, spelled *колю*, and so forth throughout the present. Verbs of the *крик-ну-* type replace *-ну-* with *-н-* in order to obtain the non-past stem, hence *крик-ну-* : *крик-н-*. Verbs

⁵ For example, the *a+y* rule mentioned above is internally inconsistent with the *y+y* rule one sees in *двину-+у* → *двину*. With no evident motivation, mutation occurs in one instance (*писа-+у* → *пишу*), but not in the other. It seems pointless to attempt to handle such discrepancies with phonological rules alone. The ending *-у* is obviously not added to *двину-* but to *двин-*, and the same ending *-у* is not added to *писа-* but to *пиш-*, which comes from *пис-й-*.

⁶ Agreeing with Mayer (1998), and also following Townsend (1981) and Levin (1978), I strongly prefer to use the Russian letters rather than roman-letter transcription, both here and in my own instruction. This may result in a certain amount of estrangement for those not used to seeing *ʲ* and *ʷ* used as mobile-vowel operators, and *ʷ* also used as the abstract glide *w*. In the latter role, the rules for *ʲ* are as follows: *ʲ* → *в* / __V, *оʲ* → *у* and *еʲ* → *ю* / __C, otherwise *ʲ* is dropped. The operators *ʲ* and *ʷ* are placed in italics to distinguish them as such.

⁷ As seen throughout Russian morphology; see *дух-й-а* → *душа*, *зем-й-а* → *земл^ь-а* (spelled *земля*), etc.

of the *ЧИТ-а-й-* class, whose stem we segment in this way in order to separate the non-past suffix *-й-* from the stem formant *-а-*, drop the suffix *-й-* in order to obtain the past stem, hence *ЧИТ-а-й- : ЧИТА-*. Seen as stem-referencing bases, then, the form *ПИС-а-* contains the instructions: “replace the past-stem suffix *-а-* with *-й-* in order to obtain the non-past stem,” while the form *ЧИТ-а-й-* contains the instructions: “replace the non-past stem suffix *-й-* with 0 in order to obtain the past stem.” In this way, and by applying the same reasoning *mutatis mutandis* to other verb classes, base forms maintain basically the same appearance as under Jakobson (1948) (as modified by Lipson in 1981, Townsend in 1981, and Levin in 1978), but have a different interpretation, with different instructions attached to them. Without bothering with minor details, one can accept Jakobson’s presentation of the non-suffixed consonant stems (like *вести, веду, вёл*, etc.), together with their accompanying rules, most of which reflect history (or at least do not openly clash with history).

Simplex Imperfective Verbs

The simplest challenge is to compose base forms for simplex (unprefixed) verbs that form their perfective counterparts via empty prefixation:⁸ one lists the verb under its perfective form, with its perfectivizing prefix set off in some way. In this way, the base form for the lexeme READ becomes (про)ЧИТ-а-й-; similarly: WRITE (на)ПИС-а-; DO (с)ДЕЛ-а-й-; GLADDEN (об)РАД-оъ-а-; PAY (за)ПЛАТ-и-; BREAK (с)ЛОМ-а-й-; DRINK (вы)ПЬЙ-;⁹ (при)ГОТОВ-и-; and so on.¹⁰ These base forms carry the instructions:

⁸ I am aware that some deny that there is such a thing as empty aspectual prefixation (e.g., Janda et. al. 2013), but to me that is more or less the same as denying that the verb system tends toward one consisting of perfective and imperfective partners, availing itself of whatever morphological resources it has at its disposal, which is manifestly true, and the way that the verb system developed historically. The perfectivization of simplex imperfective verbs via one prefix or another was always a less-than-perfect device, because certain semantic nuances, however slight, always adhere to the prefixes.

⁹ There are about as many different notational interpretations of this class of five verb roots as there are descriptions of it. I prefer to use the surface non-past stem as verbal base, producing *и* in the infinitive-past stem with the rule *ьй → и / __ C*. Similarly, *ьй- → ы / __ C*, as in *мьй-ть → мыть*.

¹⁰ For the sake of simplicity and typological exigency, stress notation is not illustrated here for base forms. Stress is indicated, however, in derived imperfectivization, since stress assignment is an intrinsic component of imperfective derivation. Eventually one may follow a system like that of Townsend (1981, 35-37) or (Levin 1978, 84-86).

“subtract the prefix to form the imperfective aspect partner.”¹¹ Prefixes that are not set off from the root with parentheses will be considered not to be detachable, but melded to the verb in the given meaning, e.g., подсуд-и- ‘favor (in sports judging)’.

Suffixally Derived Imperfectives

Prefixed perfectives with prefixes that are not detachable utilize imperfectivizing suffixes to produce imperfective partners. Primarily because of the number of imperfective suffixes and the complexity of their distribution, these verbs present more of a challenge. There are three main imperfective-forming suffixes: -а’-й-, ва’-й-, and -’ыва-й-; two minor ones: -ъ-а’- and -а’-; and one unique one: -оъ-а’-.¹² An additional special suffix -а-й-, without intrinsic stress characteristics, needs to be discussed in connection with simplex perfectives in -ну-. Imperfective suffixes are added to the past stem of both prefixed perfective verbs in new meanings and to simplex (unprefixed) perfective verbs. NB: imperfective suffixes are not added to the base but to the past stem; if the base is based on the non-past stem, the past stem must first be derived from it for it then to serve as the base for imperfective suffixation. Imperfective suffixes are inherently stressed; that is, they attract stress onto themselves, except for the suffix -’ыва-й-, which requires stress one syllable to its left, and except for the special suffix -а-й-, which is stress-neutral. Before adding the suffixes to the past stem, the base stem usually undergoes root-vowel “ablaut” (*ъ* → *и*, *ъ* → *ы*, *о* → *а*). Additionally, except for prefixed verbs in -и-, before adding the imperfective suffix, the base drops the right-most suffix of the past stem. In other words, the imperfective suffix takes the place of the right-most past-stem suffix. After possible ablaut, and after the right-most suffix of the past stem has been removed (except for

¹¹ In an English-to-Russian glossary, English ‘read’ will point to (про)чит-а-й-. In a Russian to-English glossary, the form чит-а-й- will direct the user to (про)чит-а-й-, instead of the other way around, as is current common practice. One way or another, a cross-reference is needed.

¹² These suffixes are not my invention, although their precise representations here may be. Along with the rules for their distribution, they are contained in all detailed descriptions of imperfective aspect formation. The suffixes -ва’-й-, and -’ыва-й- obviously represent extensions of the suffix -а-й-, one preceded by -в-, the other by -’ыв-. Likewise, the suffixal combinations -ъ-а’- and -оъ-а’- are varieties of the suffix -а’-, one preceded by the stem extension -ъ- and the other by -оъ-. For rules governing оъ, see note 6.

prefixed verbs in -и-, like подсуд-и-), the rules for the distribution of the suffixes are as follows:

1. The suffix -а'-й- is added to: (a) obstruent stems other than verbs of motion (e.g., застриг-, выгреб-); (b) н, м, and р stems (начьн-, нажьм-, умьр-); (c) most simplex perfective verbs in -и- (брос-и-); (d) asyllabic roots with suffix in -а- (выбьр-а-); (e) dropping -ну- verbs (исчез-[ну]-); (f) Church-Slavonic (*ChSl*) verbs in -и- (загруз-и-) and in -ну- (завви[г]-ну-). *ChSl* verbs in -и- show consonant mutations т → щ, д → жд, сл → шл¹³ instead of regular Russian т → ч, д → ж, сл → сль.¹³
2. The suffix -ва'-й- is added to (a) historical glide stems, i.e., verbs of the запьй-, вымьй-, and прожить- types (with surface past stems ending in и or ы); (b) most verbs of any class whose surface past stem ends in е, although verbs of the second conjugation in -е- are, in practice, quite messy; see the appendix *Exceptional Imperfective Derivation*.
3. The minor suffix -ь-а'- is added to three verbs whose surface past stem ends in root-final а- (да[д]- *irreg.*, узна-й-, доста-н-, past stems да-, узна-, доста-).
4. The minor suffix -а'- is added to simplex perfective roots ending in ов- or ев- preceding -ну- (in practice, соь-ну-, клеь-ну-, плеь-ну-).¹⁴
5. The unique imperfective suffix -ов-а'- is added to the non-past stem of ми[г]-ну-, yielding мин-ов-а'-.
6. The suffix -ыва-й- is the most productive; it is added to the past stem of verbs of most other types, including prefixed perfectives with bases ending in -а-, -а-й-, -и-, -ну-, -ов-а-, -о-, and -а- preceded by a hushing consonant or й (meaning second-conjugation verbs like пролеж-а-, застой-а- -ся).
7. The suffix -а-й- is used with simplex perfectives in -ну-. In the instance of an aspect pair based on a simplex verb in -ну- like

¹³ Stem mutation in the second conjugation is motivated by ordered phonological rules and the fact that prefixed perfectives in -и- do not drop this suffix; see *ChSl* вообраз-и-а-ть → вообраз-й-а-ть → вообраз-а-ть, replicating a historical progression.

¹⁴ See note 6 for the relevant sound-changes. To illustrate, remembering that the non-past stem exchanges -й- for -а- in the past: клеь-ну-ть → клюнуть, клеь-а-ть → клевать, клеь-й-у → клюю.

дви[Г]-ну- : двиг-а-й- (alternatively, двиг-а-), the question arises as to whether the perfective partner is derived from the imperfective or the imperfective from the perfective, sometimes one and sometimes the other, or neither, i.e., the verbs are not derivationally directional. Here the suffix -а-й-, unlike the other imperfectivizing suffixes, is not inherently stressed, and the imperfective usually matches the stress of the perfective in -ну¹⁵(see root stressed пры́г-ну- : пры́г-а-й- vs. post-root-stressed руг-ну'- : руг-а'-й-). Infrequently, stress is assigned independently, as with root-stressed ки́[д]-ну- vs. post-root-stressed ки́д-а'-й-. Because of the *ѵ* → *ы* ablaut in the root, the pair тѵк-ну- : ты́к-а-й- suggests that this pair at least, operates in the following direction: perfective in -ну- → imperfective in -а-й-. The following rule covers most cases: simplex perfectives in -ну- derive imperfectives in -а-й-, which copy their stress, whether root stress or post-root stress, from the stress of the verb in -ну-. For exceptions, including the use of the suffix -а- instead of -а-й- with simplex perfectives in -ну-, see the appendix *Exceptional Imperfective Derivation*, c.

Illustrations

Following are some representative base forms for various verbal lexemes showing imperfective suffixation. The output form under the imperfective-derivation column represents the base used for obtaining the imperfective tense-forms.

Lexeme:	General base:	Imperfective derivation:	Explanation:
ASK	СПРОС-И-	спрас-и- (о → а ablaut; -и- is not dropped)	
		спра́с-и-ыва-й- (-'ыва-й- is added by rule 6)	
		спра́с-й-ыва-й- (и → й / __ V)	
		спра́ш-ыва-й- (C _{plain} → C _{mutated} / __ й)	

¹⁵ The implication is that the suffix -а-й- here is by origin not really an imperfectivizing suffix but just a suffix that is imperfective, although this may be a distinction without an important difference.

BAKE	ВЫПЕК-	выпек- выпек-а'-й-	(no change) ¹⁶ (-а'-й- is added by rule 1.a)
BEGIN	НАЧЬН-	начин- начин-а'-й-	(<i>b</i> → <i>и</i> ablaut) (-а'-й- is added by rule 1.b)
BESEECH	УМОЛ-И- <i>ChSl</i>	умол-и- умол-и-а'-й- умол-й-а'-й- умол ^ь -а'-й-	(<i>ChSl</i> , therefore no <i>o</i> → <i>a</i> ablaut) ¹⁷ (-а'-й- is added by rule 1.f) (<i>и</i> → <i>й</i> / __V) (<i>C_{plain}</i> → <i>C_{mutated}</i> / __й)
BEWITCH	ЗАКОЛД-ОЪ-А-	заколд-оъ- заколд-о'ъ-ыва-й- заколд-о'в-ыва-й-	(right-hand suffix -а- drops; no ablaut) ¹⁸ (-ыва-й- is added by rule 6) (<i>v</i> → <i>в</i> / __V)
DIE	УМЬР-	умир- умир-а'-й-	(<i>b</i> → <i>и</i> ablaut) (-а'-й- is added by rule 1.b)
ENCHANT	ВОСХИТ-И- <i>ChSl</i>	восхит-и- восхит-и-а'-й- восхит-й-а'-й- восхищ-а'-й-	(the suffix -и- does not drop) (<i>ChSl</i> : add -а'-й- by rule 1.f) (<i>и</i> → <i>й</i> / __V) (<i>ChSl</i> : <i>т</i> → <i>щ</i> / __й)
ENDURE	ПРЕТЕРП-Е-	претерп-е- претерп-е-ва'-й-	(-е- does not drop) (-ва'-й- is added by rule 2.b)
MASTER	ОВЛАД-Е-Й-	овлад-е- овлад-е-ва'-й-	(derive the past stem: drop -й-) (-ва'-й- is added by rule 2.b)
PECK	КЛЕЪ-НУ-	клеъ- клеъ-а'-	(right-most suffix, -ну-, is dropped) (-а'- is added by rule 4)

¹⁶ Possibly, a *ë* → *e* ablaut occurs, but it is impossible to tell from the spelling or pronunciation.

¹⁷ Possibly, an *o* → *a* ablaut occurs, but it is impossible to tell from the spelling or pronunciation.

¹⁸ Roots of the *соъ-* and *-оъ-а-* types (i.e., root *оъ* and suffixal *оъ*) are immune to root ablaut.

PRODUCE	ВЫДЕЛ-А-Й-	выдел-а- выдел- выде'л-ыва-й-	(derive the past stem: drop -й-) (right-most suffix -а- is dropped) (-'ыва-й- is added by rule 6)
PROTRUDE	ВЫСОЪ-НУ-	высоъ- высо'ъ-ыва-й- высо'в-ыва-й-	(the suffix, -ну-, is dropped) ¹⁹ (-'ыва-й- is added by rule 6) (ъ → в / __V)
REACH	ДОСТИГ-[НУ]-	достиг- достиг-а'-й-	(the right-most suffix, -ну-, is dropped) (-а'-й- is added by rule 1.e)
RECOGNIZE	УЗНА-Й-	узна- узна-ъ-а'-	(derive past stem: drop -й-) (-ъ-а'- added by rule 3) ²⁰
RECALL	ПОМЪН-НУ- ²¹	помин- помин-а'-й-	(ъ → и ablaut; the suffix -ну- drops) (-а'-й- is added by rule 1.b)
ROT THRU	ПРОГНИ-Й-	прогни- прогни-ва'-й-	(derive past stem: drop -й-) (-ва'-й- is added by rule 2.a)
SHUT	ЗАМЪК-НУ- <i>ChSl</i>	замык- замык-а'-й-	(ъ → ы ablaut; suffix -ну- drops) (<i>ChSl</i> : -а'-й- is added by rule 1.f.)
SIGN	ПОДПИС-А-	подпис- подпи'с-ыва-й-	(suffix -а- drops) (-'ыва-й- is added by rule 6)
THROW	БРОС-И-	брос- брос-а'-й-	(suffix -и- is dropped) ²² (-а'-й- is added by rule 1.c.)
THRUST	СОЪ-НУ-	соъ- соъ-а'-	(suffix -ну- is dropped) (-а'- is added by rule 4)
TOSS	КИ[Д]-НУ-	кид- кид-а'-й-	(the suffix -ну- is dropped, revealing д) (-а'-й- is added by rule 1.c)

¹⁹ No ablaut: see note 18.

²⁰ According to rules for ъ (note 6), узна-ъ-а-ть → узнавать, узна-ъ-й-у → узнаю.

²¹ помянуть is produced from помън-ну- by the rule ън/м → я / __C, which also produces, for example, начън-тъ → начать (with я being spelled а after ч).

²² Unlike prefixed perfective verbs in -и-, simplex perfective verbs in -и- usually do drop -и-, hence there is no accompanying stem-mutation, although there are exceptions (see appendix *Exceptional Imperfective Derivation*, d).

UNDRESS	РАЗДЕ-Н-	разде- разде-ва'-й	(derive past stem: drop -н-) (-ва'-й- is added by rule 2.b)
WINCE	ВЗДРОГ-НУ-	вздрог- взра'г-ыва-й- взра'гива-й-	(о → а ablaut; suffix -ну- is dropped) (-'ыва-й- is added by rule 6) (г softens before ы, and ы is respelled и)

Conclusion

Under the present proposal, a verb's main entry in a glossary will contain only one form (the base form), and that form is presumed to be the perfective base unless otherwise noted. In this way, Russian verbal citation becomes associated with a single, stable place in the morphology, i.e., that of the perfective form of the verb. To be sure, some verbs, like *им-е-й- impf*, have no perfective partner, and will have to be listed as such. Verbs for which both aspect forms need to be listed because they cannot be predicted from a single base are, by virtue of that fact, irregular. Still, the perfective form would be listed first. A further project would be to survey a large corpus of verbs in order to obtain a precise estimate of how many verbs are *regular* under this proposal, and how many are *irregular*, but it is clear that by far most are regular within the rules given.

The aims of the changes recommended here are two-fold. The first aim is to more seamlessly incorporate aspect—which is, alongside tense, one of the two cross-cutting categories comprising the Russian finite conjugational system into the description of individual verbal lexemes. The second is to take the opportunity, while so doing, to eliminate conjugational rules deriving from Jakobson 1948 that openly conflict with the rules needed for aspect formation.

In specialized courses in the structure of Russian, the Russian verbal base is a useful, even indispensable, heuristic construct for casting light on inflectional patterns in order to identify what in Russian conjugation is truly regular and systematic, and also—perhaps of equal importance—in order to point to exactly where lack of systematic uniformity lies. For example, as the present analysis perhaps surprisingly brings out, the aspect pair *встретить : встреча'ть* is not regular, since it shows the *ChSl* imperfective suffixal type, but Russian-type stem mutation.

It seems clear that most of the complexity in the morphology of the verb system comes from the variety of imperfective suffixes and their rules of distribution. Given this complexity, the great majority of verbs form imperfective aspect pairs regularly. This happens as long as one introduces the distinction between 'Church Slavonic' and traditional Russian formation, a distinction which determines the formation of the derived imperfective by -а'-й- instead of -ыва'-й-, and, in a few instances, regulates the outcome of stem mutation. The formation of the participles, gerunds, and verbal nouns is as equally compatible with the present description as is the formation of the imperfective aspect form. In fact, participle, gerund, and verbal noun formation are considerably less complicated than imperfective aspect formation because the suffixes involved are much simpler in their form and distribution.

Are there lessons to be learned here for lower-level Russian language pedagogy? Possibly, but that is not the issue that is primarily in play here. As in many areas of Russian grammar, it may be the case that verb rules begin to make sense only *ex post facto*, after the verb forms have already been learned (which does not mean that the rules are less valid, but simply that they are not pedagogically helpful). On the other hand, the awareness that one is not really teaching/learning the Russian verb until one is integrally teaching/learning tense and aspect alongside one another might well stimulate more logical presentational approaches to the verb in elementary textbooks.

Appendix

Exceptional Imperfective Derivations

Essentially, all verbs of motion derive the prefixed imperfective form with exceptions. Additionally, suppletive aspect pairs like TALK сказ-а- : говор-и-, PUT полож-и- : клад-, etc. are also exceptions. A few verbs require listing in two stem-forms, like NAME, with perfective past stem назъв-а- and perfective non-past stem назов-²³ (imperfective derivation here is regular). Aside from such instances, the described rules hold for the vast majority of prefixed perfective verbs for which a single base form

²³ Here the difference derives from a difference in zero vs. *o* Indo-European ablaut grade, a few traces of which may still be found in Russian.

can be established. The following overview of exceptions to aspect-formation is offered. A slightly more complete list of exceptions can be found in Levin (1978, 128-137).

a. Despite rule 2.d., second-conjugation verbs in -e- must be treated individually; almost anything is possible; see, for example:

- Truncation and no stem mutation, with suffixal -'ыва-й-: за-вид-е-: за-ви'д-ыва-й-, под-гляд-е-: подгля'д-ыва-й-.
- Truncation, possible ablaut, and stem mutation, with the suffix -'ыв-а-й-: засид-е- -ся: заси'ж-ыва-й- -ся, рассмол-е-: рассма'тр^b-ыва-й-.
- Truncation without stem mutation and no evident ablaut, with suffixal -а'-й-: выгор-е-: выгор-а'-й-
- Without truncation, stem mutation, or evident ablaut; suffixal -ва'-й-: претерп-е-: претерп-е-ва'-й-, забол-е-й-: забол-е-ва'-й-.
- With truncation, ablaut, and stem mutation; suffixal -'ыва-й-: выздор-е-й- : вы'здора'вл^b-ыва-й-.

b. Some prefixed perfective verbs in -и- do undergo suffixal truncation of the -и- and hence fail to show imperfective stem mutation, even when, as sometimes happens, mutation is present in the perfective passive participle; a sample: вон'з-и-: вон'з-а'-й-, вскол-и-: вска'к-ыва-й-,²⁴ выброс-и-: выбра'с-ыва-й- (выброшен), выруб-и-: выруб-а'-й- (вырублен), выступ-и-: выступ-а'-й-, закус-и-: заку'с-ыва-й- (закушен), перекрич-а-: перекри'к-ыва-й-, проглот-и-: прогла'т-ыва-й- (проглочен), схват-и-: схва'т-ыв-а-й- (схвачен).

c. Simplex perfective verbs in -ну- that are related to imperfectives in -а- instead of in -а-й- include кап-ну- : кап-а- (alongside кап-а-й-), плес[к]-ну- : плеск-а- (alongside плеск-а-й-), рез-ну-²⁵ : рез-а-, свист-ну- : свист-а- (alongside свист-е-), хлест-ну- : хлест-а-, шеп[т]-ну- : шепт-а-. Some simplex perfective verbs in -ну- are related to second-conjugation

²⁴ As this pair and pairs such as пере-крич-а-: перекрик-ыва-й show, the latent velar consonant in some verbs of the second-conjugation needs somehow to be taken into account. One way to do this is to derive крич-а- from крик-ѣ-, with ѣ first causing the mutation of к to ч, and then changing to а after ч.

²⁵ More usual perfectives of рез-а- are за-рез-а- or с-рез-а-.

verbs: гля[д]-ну- : гляд-е-, крик-ну- : крич-а-, писк-ну- : пищ-а-, скольз-ну- : скольз-и-, шевел^ь-ну- : шевел^ь-и-.²⁶

d. Among simplex perfectives in -и- that do not truncate -и- in the imperfective (and hence do undergo mutation) are прост-и- (impf. прощ-а-й-), яв-и- -ся (impf. явл^ь-а-й- -ся).

e. In addition to the foregoing, the following prominent anomalous aspect pairs may be mentioned: восклик-ну- : восклиц-а-й-, выну- : выним-а-й-, застря-н- : застре-ва-й, затъм-и- : затме-ва-й, навеи-а- : наве-ва-й, от-дох-ну- : от-дых-а-й-, продл-и- : продле-ва-й, рази-ну- : разе-ва-й, про-кашля-ну- : пройкашл^ь-ыв-а-й-.

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²⁶ As the last two groups of exceptions show, many verbs that today comprise aspect pairs were historically formed before the aspect opposition became firmly crystalized and these pairs became subordinated to it.

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