

VERB PRODUCTIVITY: EVIDENCE FROM THREE VARIETIES OF SLOVENE

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1. Introduction

One particularly useful feature of the sections on synchronic morphology in Rado Lencek's *Structure and History of Slovene* is that, when the author lists declensional and conjugational categories, he states which paradigms are productive and which are not: for the nominal paradigms (1982: 194, 206 and 209); for adjectives (213); and for verbs (242). This Lencek does unobtrusively, 'as a matter of course'. Although it may seem obvious that readers ought to be informed about productivity, this is not yet a 'matter of course' for all grammarians; indeed, many linguists still seem preoccupied with the dusty corners of languages, rather than dwelling on the heavily-frequented 'productive' areas.¹

Descriptions of Contemporary Standard Slovene [CSS] written for Slovenes tend to deal with productivity less systematically. This is not to say that this kind of information is not there to be found; only that it appears in a number of guises. If we look at Toporišič 1984, for instance, we find that he makes frequent mention of productivity in the formation of derived forms (i.e., which paradigm is favored in a given derivational type): thus, 211 (denominal adjectival derivation), 254 (the relationship of adverbs to adjectives), 287-88 (aspectual derivation). There is even a short general statement, beginning: "Besedotvorne vrste in sredstva niso vsi enako živi in pogostni. . ." (123). Relative productivity among different paradigmatic types, however, is often more implicit than explicit. So, although there are some statements such as "število [samostalnikov na *-ost*] neprestano množijo" (229), there are also occasions when the reader has to assume that paradigms followed by a listing of all their exemplars are not productive, while paradigms without such listings are (more) productive; so, for verbs, (300-01) the author provides explicit listings only of 'irregular' verbs like *pečem*, *strižem*, *jem* and a few others; for *delam* and *kročim* the absence of comment is eloquent. However, insofar as this kind of productivity is presumably obvious to native speakers, this hardly matters.²

As for the specialized Slovene linguistic literature, the subject seems to have been frequently mentioned, but, to my knowledge, either indirectly, as part of the information relevant to some other topic (see, e.g., Gjurin 1974:66 on derivational limitations in slang, or Neweklowsky 1981 on a typology of derivation in South Slavic) or in a restricted field of analysis (see, e.g., Gjurin 1985 for an exemplarily exhaustive study of one single suffix.) Application to borrowings is dealt with by Jakopin (1971/72: 256), who mentions the high productivity of the *-izirati* suffix in the adaptation of foreign loans in Slovene; and by Toporišič 1972: 308-09 (see also Toporišič 1967) who describes the short-lived 19th century proposal to decrease the productivity of the *-irati* suffix by replacing it with *-ovati* (thus: *alarmovati* instead of *alarmirati*), and mentions the theoretical possibility of 'nativizing' some borrowed words by using the *-iti* suffix (thus: *podemokratiti* instead of *demokratizirati*). Nowhere, however, does there seem to be any straightforward general statement of the productivity of what concerns me here: verbal conjugations. A great deal of interconnected information is however required: not only what is productive and what is not, but what is more and what is less productive, and what (phonological, grammatical, semantic) limitations productivity may have.

I now quote Lencek's (1982: 242) paragraph on verbal productivity. Note his labels for the conjugations, which are used below to refer to historically-related verb-classes in other varieties of Slovene:³

"YCa, Yi and Ye classes . . . are open and productive classes of CSS. The YCa class has been open to borrowed stems from the oldest times. . . , it dominates the contemporary language with its formatives *-íra-* and *-izíra-*. The Yi stems are the second largest open class; together with the Ye verbs they are productive in new native formations. . . The remaining . . . classes are non-productive and closed."⁴

Note that Lencek not only **ranks** the productive classes—this is part of the essential information—but also makes the important distinction between borrowed words and native formations. Although productivity in the **derivation of new morphological forms by native speakers** is presumably most indicative of synchronic psycholinguistic facts,⁵ productivity in the **adaptation of borrowed words** is easier to investigate; the present paper makes a few tentative steps in the latter area. The data presented here deal with the fate of borrowed roots within Slovene verbal categories.⁶

Rough ideas about productivity are not difficult to come by. It is usually obvious when, for example, certain suffixes are frequently used with borrowed items: one has only to glance at Bunc's *Slovar tujk*, for example, to be struck by the inordinate number of verbs in *-irati*; the conclusion that this is a productive verbal class is trivial. The subject can however become interesting: one has only to ask, e.g., how much more productive is *-irati* than other suffixes? and, how does contemporary productivity compare with stages in the past? These are the questions whose answers may be found by pursuing the approach used here.

As soon as productivity in the adaptation of borrowings is considered in any detail, problems arise. For instance, it is clear that the words in Bunc's dictionary mostly represent a specific subset of the Slovene lexicon—i.e., the most recent layer of borrowed words, including forms that may not be fully adapted into the grammar of Slovene—but it is not immediately clear how representative these words may be of productivity in general. If we put 'dictionaries of [recent] borrowings' aside because they may present us, so to speak, with the outer edges of the lexicon, we are faced with distinguishing, in more complete lexicons, not only between native and borrowed words, but also between recently-borrowed and not-so-recently borrowed words, since the evidence on productivity may relate to very long time-spans. Although analysis is awkward, it should nonetheless be attempted.

Here, three 'cross-sections' of the lexicon of Slovene are tentatively subjected to analysis: first, Megiser's dictionary of 1592; second, my own lexicon (now in preparation) of the contemporary Carinthian dialect of Sele; and third, CSS, as represented by two 'dictionaries of foreignisms', Verbinc (1969) and Bunc (1974). In all three cross-sections, only verbs are analyzed. These cross-sections are represented by lists that were drawn up on different principles, and the analytical procedure differs in each case, but the results of this tentative analysis are nonetheless informative.

2. Megiser

Of the verbs in Megiser's 16th-century dictionary (Lägreid 1967), the following were excluded: first, all onomatopoeic verbs, even if these were possible loans, since effects of this kind might skew the results; second, verbs where the borrowed morpheme is restricted to the prefix (thus *an-iti*, *nah-dati*), since only suffixal productivity is of interest;

and third, verbs listed as 'Croatianisms' (e.g., *pukšati*), since these were presumably borrowed into Slovene with conjugational suffixes already in place. Simple and prefixed verbs (e.g., *ropati* and *obropati*) were counted as a single verb; forms with different suffixes (e.g., *cagati* and *cagovati*) were counted separately. Verbs were added where there were 'accidental gaps' represented by participles and verbal nouns: thus, on the model of *ferdamati*, *ferdaman*, *ferdamanje* (which are all glossed), I included the assumed *imprimovati* and *klagovati* because Megiser lists, respectively, *imprimovan* and *klagovanje*. Of the remaining verbs, I excluded all with known Slavic roots, and inspected the remainder to be sure that I was dealing with borrowed materials; in this task, both Bezljaj (1977, 1982) and Striedter-Temps (1963) were referred to; where neither was informative, obvious borrowings (e.g., *regirati*, *fertigovati*, glossed by Megiser as "regieren" and "fertig machen") were included. Where the origin was unclear (see Bezljaj re. *omadežiti*, *jadriti* for examples) I omitted the verb. I finished with 150 verbs which are to be considered as indisputable loans.

Next, the conjugation of each verb had to be estimated. These cannot be determined with certainty, since Megiser does not give grammatical details of this kind; but most of his verbs do occur either in reference works on CSS or in other relatively modern listings (e.g., Pleteršnik 1894). It is of course possible that any one individual verb may have been conjugated differently in Megiser's time from the way it is conjugated today: e.g., *cagati* may in theory, in the 1590s, have had the optional alternate conjugation **cažem cažeš* (as well as *cagam cagaš* which may be assumed given the occurrence of *cagamo* in Newek-lowsky 1984); but, given a complete absence of evidence to the contrary in available dictionaries, it is assumed that this is not true—at least, not statistically true for the whole set of verbs. One problem remains: of the total, 56 verbs (over one-third) were not found in any available reference work, e.g., *šacati*.⁷ Most of these have infinitives in *-ati* and it may be assumed that most were conjugated *-am*; but, to be on the safe side, for analysis here these were all excluded. The final total of verbs analyzed in this source was therefore 94. According to conjugation (identified with Lencek's labels), they break down as on Table I.

3. Selsko

The procedure with verbs collected in Sele was similar to that used for verbs in Megiser's dictionary: exclusions were made (onomatopoetic verbs, and verbs which were obviously marked as belonging to CSS-accommodating styles⁸); simple and prefixed verbs were counted as a single verb; verbs with different suffixes were counted separately. Those with Slavic roots and those of uncertain origin were excluded. I finished with 184 verbs which are to be considered as loans, of one period or another. According to conjugation, they break down as on Table II.

4. Contemporary Standard Slovene: Verbinc and Bunc

Superficially, at least, Verbinc 1969 and Bunc 1974 present fewer problems for analysis; after all, every word in a 'dictionary of borrowings' is known to be a loan. In each instance, all the verbal forms with different infinitive endings were totalled. The only question was the conjugational membership of individual verbs: for example, not every verb is listed in the *Slovar slovenskega knjižnega jezika* [SSKJ]. *-ati* verbs, in particular, are suspect, since they may in theory be conjugated as YC-a verbs (cf. the remarks on *cagati* in Megiser above). However, all *-ati* verbs in Verbinc and Bunc that **are** listed in

the *SSKJ* and in other reference works were found to belong to the YCa class and it was assumed that if there are any exceptions to this rule for the non-listed verbs, they will be few, and will not significantly affect the overall statistics. The total of verbs in Verbinc is 725, and the total in Bunc is 1467; they break down into the conjugations shown on Table III.

5. Commentary

One thing on the three tables presented above is very obvious: namely, that some verb-classes are strongly, others weakly represented; there appears to be very little 'competition'. In Verbinc, in Bunc and in Selsko, respectively, a single verb-class claims 97.9%, 91.9% and 87.4% of all verbs. The numbers are not quite as lop-sided in Megiser, but even there one class has 63.8% of the total and the two next-ranked classes have 14.9%. In other words, some verb-classes appear very productive and others appear very unproductive. This is clear from the comparative percentages on Table IV.

The 'other' category includes a number of verbs which, demonstrably, have no place in an analysis of synchronic productivity. The verbs in Megiser that are assumed to have belonged to the YC-a class, for example, are limited to *basati* and *risati*, both of which had then already been some 400-500 years in Slovene.⁹ One of these verbs occurs as an 'other' on the Selsko list, *bšat bšim* (note that Selsko *risat* is a YCa verb, *risam*); and the Selsko verb hidden behind the label 'irregular' on Table II is not only known to have been borrowed many centuries ago, but now occurs in an analogical formation that may be of recent origin: *žəbrat* 'to pray', known in other dialects as a YCa-class verb (so: *žebrám*), in Selsko is conjugated *žəbérim*, following the pattern of 'to read', *brət bérim*. This kind of information strongly suggests that if we could peel away the 'old' borrowings from the 'new', the statistics would be even more lop-sided in favour of a very few productive classes.

Moreover, it is very probable that some of the verbs representing the classes with low percentages on Table IV are **secondarily derived** forms. Thus, in Megiser, the Yi verbs *mojstriti*, *piliti*, *postiti*, *škoditi* are very probably derived from the nouns *mojster*, *pila*, *post*, *škoda*, and are unlikely to have been borrowed as verbs; Selsko *póšt póstim* similarly;¹⁰ and the same is surely true of the following CSS verbs in Bunc, *ceremoniti*, *elektriti*, *hapsiti*, *kalupiti*, *latiniti*, *magnetiti*, *mašiniti*, *pajdašiti se*, *špičiti*, *vitrioliti*, and the single *-iti* verb in Verbinc, *fazariti*. Note also that, in Selsko, borrowed words in the Ye class are uncommon, although this class is common in the derivation of perfectives in native verbs; and some of the words with borrowed roots in this class have entered it secondarily, i.e., by derivation from a borrowed verb; for example, the borrowed *pájsat* 'to lever upwards' (YCa class) has a Ye-class perfective *pájsənti* (non-past: *pájsənt*, *pájsəntš*). If, therefore, secondarily derived formations could be 'peeled away' from original borrowings, it is reasonable to suppose that the already obvious lop-sidedness would be even more striking.

Finally, we may compare, in the 'cross-sections' of Slovene considered here, the incidence of the two suffixes *-ov-* and *-ir-*. The first-named, which has been so productive in Russian (both singly, in *-ovat'* verbs, and in combination, in *-irovat'* verbs; cf. Worth 1963: 51, Speck 1978: 164-165) and, to a lesser extent, in Serbo-Croatian (Grotzky 1978: 142-146), occurs 14 times in Megiser (about one-seventh of all the borrowed verbs). A few of these forms are presumably secondary derivations: thus most probably *cagovati*, *šentovati*, cf. *cagati*, *šentati*; *fertigovati*, if an adjectival form *fertig* was borrowed first; *erpergovati*, *špotovati* if the nouns for 'lodging' and 'derision' were borrowed first; and

I. CONJUGATIONAL CLASSES OF BORROWED VERBS IN MEGISER:

YCa:	-IRATI, IRAM:	2 [2.1%]	
	other -ATI,-AM:	60 [63.8%]	
	total -ATI,-AM		62 [66.0%]
YC-a:	-SATI,-ŠEM	2 [2.1%]	
Cov-a:	-OVATI,-UJEM	14 [14.9%]	
	total -ATI,-EM		16 [17.0%]
Ye:	total -NITI,-NEM		2 [2.1%]
Yi:	total -ITI,-IM		14 [14.9%]
			94 [100%]

II. CONJUGATIONAL CLASSES OF BORROWED VERBS IN SELSKO:

YCa:	-IRAT,-IRAM:	6 [3.3%]	
	other -AT,-AM:	159 [87.4%]	
	total		165 [90.7%]
YC-a:	-SAT,-ŠIM	1 [0.5%]	
YCov-a:	-OAT,-UJIM	2 [1.1%]	
	other -AT,-IM	2 [1.1%]	
	total		5 [2.7%]
Ye:	-NT,-NəM		4 [2.2%]
Yi:	-T,-M	4 [2.2%]	
	-IT,-IM	3 [1.6%]	
	total		7 [3.8%]
IRREGULAR:			1 [0.5%]
			182 [100.00%]

III. CONJUGATIONAL CLASSES OF VERBS IN VERBINC and BUNC:

		VERBINC	BUNC
YCa:	-JATI	0 [0.0%]	3 [0.2%]
	-UVATI,-AVATI	1 [0.1%]	2 [0.1%]
	-IRATI	710 [97.9%]	1348 [91.9%]
	other -ATI,-AM:	14 [1.9%]	90 [6.1%]
	total -ATI,-AM	724 [99.8%]	1443 [98.4%]
Cov-a:	total -OVATI,-UJEM	0 [0.0%]	2 [0.1%]
Ye:	total -NITI,-NEM	0 [0.0%]	1 [0.1%]
Yi:	total -ITI,-IM	1 [0.1%]	21 [1.4%]
		725 [100.0%]	1467 [100.0%]

IV. CONJUGATIONAL CLASSES: DATA CONTRASTED (in %)

	Megiser	Selsko	Verbinc	Bunc
IRATI, IRAM	2.1	2.7	97.9	91.9
other ATI, AM	63.8	87.9	1.9	6.4
NITI, NEM	2.1	2.2	0.0	0.1
ITI, IM	14.9	3.8	0.1	1.4
OVATI, UJEM	14.9	1.1	0.0	0.1
other	2.1	2.1	0.0	0.0

perhaps others. Some, however, seem to show that the *-ov-* suffix was productive at that time in the **direct** adaptation of borrowed verbs: especially for *imprimovati* and *pegerovati* do verbal models appear more likely (cf. Ital. *imprimere*, Gmn. *begehren*). Earlier forms in *-óvat* (with stressed *-ó-*) give modern Selsko its YCaV-a class verbs (*-óat*, *-úim*) but there are only two words on my list with borrowed roots in this class: *cəhóat cəhúim*, *žihóat žihúim* 'to doubt, to bless'; the first of these was just mentioned as a probable secondary derivative in Megiser, and the second is probably also secondary, viz., derived from the YCa verb *žéhnat* 'to bless'. Selsko has a number of other verbs which derive diachronically from *-ova-* verbs which are now solidly in the YCa class: e.g., *márwat márwam* 'talk' from earlier *marnowat* (see Striedter-Temps 1963: 176). As for CSS, as represented here, Verbinc has none of these verbs, and Bunc has just two verbs in *-ovati*: *francozovati* and *šolmoštrovati*. Since neither is glossed in *SSKJ*, it appears that here, as elsewhere, Bunc includes words that have not been 'properly borrowed' into CSS; in other words, I suggest that these two forms are (cf. above) 'on the outer edges' of the standard language, if not beyond its borders.¹¹

The evidence is far from enough for general conclusions; neither the standard (and therefore partly artificial) language, nor a single dialect, can be considered very representative of the whole. Also, the lists that formed the starting-points for this analysis are not necessarily guaranteed to be representative of the lexicons even of the speakers of these 'unrepresentative' varieties. For CSS, Bunc and/or Verbinc may have been tempted to collect words that 'sounded foreign', and thus may have prejudiced their choice in advance: for example, the set of *-irati* verbs tend to exclude native words while the set of *-ovati* verbs is comprised mostly of native words; the former set is thus more attractive in this context. For Selsko, I myself have spoken more with one ex-forester in Sele than with any other villager: his active verb-stock may not be typical of the village (pan-)dialect. To the extent that CSS and Selsko, as presented here, 'represent' modern Slovene, however, I conclude that the *-ov-* suffix, which was productive (if not very productive) in loanword-adaptation in Megiser's time, has (almost?) completely lost its productivity since then.

On the other hand, the difference in percentages for the *-ir-* suffix is interesting for a different reason. In Megiser, the small number of these verbs (viz., just two: *regirati*, *špancirati*) is striking; the fact that the suffix can at best be considered marginally productive in the 16th century is explained by the history of the spread of the *-ir-* suffix in German.¹² In the Selsko materials I have gathered to date, there are only six verbs¹³ in *-írat*: *fəršírat*, *pəsírat*, *qəšírat*, *quməndírat*, *quntrəlírat*, *špəncírat* 'to mince, sieve, harness, command, check, stroll'; with the exception of the last (cf. Megiser, above) these may well be very recent loans, since their phonological shape is very close to the modern Carinthian German counterparts.¹⁴ Given that over nine-tenths of the verbs in Bunc (and almost 98% of the verbs in Verbinc) are verbs in *-irati*, the obvious conclusion is that this is the most productive CSS suffix for adapting borrowed roots as verbs (cf. the quotation from Lencek above). However, the cautions already expressed with respect to Verbinc and Bunc must be repeated here; it may be that a different listing of recent borrowings in CSS would not show such a huge preponderance of verbs with this suffix. Nevertheless, the difference between CSS, as represented by these two listings, and one Carinthian dialect (on the one hand) and one 16th century variety of Slovene (on the other hand) is certainly striking. It is interesting to recall the ineffectiveness of the attempt mentioned above to reduce the pervasiveness of *-irati* verbs in favor of *-ovati* verbs. It does indeed appear that languages can, in some ways, 'get into a rut': their speakers become restricted to certain patterns for processes such as borrowing.

As stated earlier, I accept the greater psychological relevance of productivity in the synchronic derivational processes of a language; but the adaptation of borrowed words into the native vocabulary also involves processes that have greater or lesser productivity. The overall picture of this facet of the productivity phenomenon will, I hope, become clearer if numerous varieties of Slovene—providing both diachronically and geographically different ‘cross-sectional’ views—are subjected to the kind of analysis attempted here.

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1. Among post-war descriptions of Slovene morphology for non-Slovenes, we find no mention of what is productive and what is not in Svane 1958, Bidwell 1969, or De Bray 1980. The only modern non-Slovene description of Slovene morphology before Lencek's to mention productivity is the one by Vincenot, but the subject is not dealt with as systematically (see, e.g., 1975: 106).
2. In passing, I should mention that Isačenko's description of the Carinthian dialect of Sele, which I have had cause to severely criticize in the past, is in this respect exemplary: productivity is described no fewer than seven times (1939: 96, 100, 102, 102-03, 104, 120, 121).
3. The YCa class comprises verbs in *-ati*, *-am*, e.g. *delati*; the Yi class, verbs in *-iti*, *-im*, e.g. *misliti*; the Ye class, verbs in *-iti*, *-em*, e.g. *dvigniti*.
4. Note that different classes often have different semantic correlations—a part of the problem that is not addressed in this paper.
5. See e.g. Krysin 1974: 218-224 for an enquiry into synchronic verbal derivational productivity in Russian.
6. On morphological productivity, see Aronoff 1980, Mayerthaler 1980, and especially Bybee 1985: 85-86, 132-133. For an analysis of the place of productivity in the adaptation of one set of borrowings in three Slavic languages, see Thomas 1983. Although the subject is considered an elusive one by both Aronoff (1980:71: "The question of productivity has always been a difficult one for modern linguistic theories") and Mayerthaler (1980: 124: "'Produktivität' zählt zu den unklarsten Begriffen in der Linguistik"), its role in the morphological adaptation of borrowed words, at least, does not seem difficult to understand.
7. This verb is cited deliberately as one of many of Megiser's verbs which, though not listed in *SSKJ*, does occur in Selsko and, presumably, in many other dialects. See Striedter-Temps 1963:213, and cf. Vidovič-Muha 1984: 247 for a study which, while not concerned with productivity, is very informative about derivation in 16th-century Slovene.
8. For examples of partial and complete accommodation to CSS in this dialect, see Priestly 1980.
9. The initial consonant of one and the root-vowel of the other allow for dating—Slovene [Sln.] /b/ for Gmc. /f/ before about 1200, and /i/ for Gmc. /i/ before about 1100 (Striedter-Temps 1963: 32-34, 13-14.)
10. Also Megiser *noriti*, Selsko *norit nurim*. This is an oddity: could the verb have been derived directly from the adjective *nor*? and how was this adjective loaned from the German noun? See Striedter-Temps 1963: 184, who derives the adjective directly from 'bair.-öster. *Narr*.'
11. Cf. the criticisms of Verbinc by Hofbek 1974 and Pečar 1974 for including forms unrepresentative of CSS. Velemir Gjurin points out that Bunc may well have 'inherited' these two *-ovati* verbs from the 1950 *Pravopis*, and that *francozovati* "is kept alive through a kind of facetious use among intellectuals." He also stresses the productivity of this suffix in native derivations; I suggest that, at least as far as the adaptation of foreign words is concerned, *-ovati/-evati* has at least one foot in the grave, kept (artificially?) alive in contexts with high stylistic marking.
12. Although German first borrowed the verbal *-ir-* suffix from French before 1200, its use was restricted for many centuries, especially to certain styles of literature and to German dialects contiguous with France, see Öhmann 1970. It may be added that both *-irati* verbs are accompanied by their verbal nouns in Megiser, and that we can only speculate as to whether verb or noun was borrowed earlier; e.g., *regirati* from *regiren* first? or *regiranje* from *regiringa*? or both at once? Velemir Gjurin points out that in the sixteenth century the *-ir-* syllable (even if much

less rare than this evidence suggests) might well have been psycholinguistically segmented as part of the stem: thus, *špancir + ati* (rather than, say, *španc + irati*).

13. Note my earlier remarks about my major informant. It should be pointed out that he had relatively little schooling and learned/used little CSS outside Church, and therefore can be expected to display relatively few loans from the standard language. (He also knew very little German until World War II, when he was well into his twenties, but did have to learn a certain amount then.)
14. One of these, 'to harness', is not borrowed from a verb with the corresponding Standard German *-ieren* form; local Carinthian German for *geschirren* is, however, approximately /kši:rn/. Selsko has one verb with, historically speaking, both the *-ir-* and *-ov-* suffixes: *puθrəfirwat* 'to photograph', from **-irowati*; like all **-ovati* verbs with the stress elsewhere than on the *-o-*, however, this is now a YCa verb, *puθrəfirwam*, *-waš*, cf. *márwat*, *márwam*, *-waš* 'to speak'.

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POVZETEK

DOKAZ ZA GLAGOLSKO PRODUKTIVNOST V TREH RAZLIČICAH SLOVENŠČINE

Čeprav besedotvorno živ proces verjetno najbolj izpričujejo podatki o izpeljavi novi morfemskih oblik, so podatki o domačenju izposojenih besed veliko bolj dostopni in jih je lažje analizirati. V tem članku avtor primerja glagolske razrede izposojenk v treh različicah slovenščine: Megiserjevem jeziku iz 16. stoletja, sodobni zborni slovenščini in enim izmed sodobnih koroških narečij (selskem). Razlike med temi tremi različicami so v neka terih pogledih izredne, še zlasti glede sorazmerja med glagoli na -ovati in -irati.

