Morphological Intensifiers Beyond Adjectives: Evidence from productive patterns of Russian prefixation

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Diachronic relation of PRE- and PERE-

The phonological shape of the two prefixes exhibit different historical reflexes of the same Common Slavic root *per (Vasmer 1971: Vol. 3, 356):

• PERE- contains pleophony, typical for East Slavic languages including Russian,
• PRE- is the result of metathesis and compensatory vocalic lengthening, typical for South Slavic languages.

The prefix PRE-: Intensifier of quality

Adjectives: productive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semantic type</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CHARACTER (87)</td>
<td>dobryj ‘kind’</td>
<td>&lt; dobryj ‘kind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLOR (74):</td>
<td>sinij ‘blue’, černyj ‘black’</td>
<td>&lt; dobryj ‘kind’</td>
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<tr>
<td>LENGTH (45)</td>
<td>dlinnyj, dolgij ‘long’</td>
<td>&lt; dobryj ‘kind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIZE (45)</td>
<td>bol’šoj ‘big’, ogromnyj ‘huge’, bol’šuščij ‘big’, malen’kij ‘small’</td>
<td>&lt; dobryj ‘kind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHAPE (36)</td>
<td>tolstoj ‘fat’</td>
<td>&lt; dobryj ‘kind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHYSICAL PROPERTY (15)</td>
<td>tvrdýj ‘firm, solid’, sil’nyj ‘strong’, gustoj ‘dense’</td>
<td>&lt; dobryj ‘kind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTELLECT (14)</td>
<td>umnyj ‘smart’, glupýj ‘stupid’, mudryj ‘wise’</td>
<td>&lt; dobryj ‘kind’</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEMPERATURE (4)</td>
<td>teplyj ‘warm’, xolodnjuščij ‘cold’</td>
<td>&lt; dobryj ‘kind’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other semantic types of adjectives include HIGHT, WEIGHT, DIRTYNESS, RICH-POOR, and NATIONALITY.

Adverbs: productive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>very much/many</td>
<td>much/many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very much</td>
<td>very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to the very extreme degree</td>
<td>at all, entirely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very little</td>
<td>a little</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Nouns referring to qualities: rare but possible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>large abundance</td>
<td>surplus;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very unpleasant event</td>
<td>unpleasant event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very lazy person</td>
<td>lazy person</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Verbs: unproductive, 107 verbs prefixed in PRE- in the Russian National Corpus

Intensifier of verbal activity in its three submeanings (54% of all verbs in PRE-):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>succeed in</td>
<td>manage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exaggerate</td>
<td>enlarge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>excel</td>
<td>rise, mount</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other: marginal

(8) Timka metalisja iz storony v storonu, maxal rukami i kričal: – Pożalujsta-prepożalujsta¹, spasite menja! [Valentin Postnikov. Šapka-nevidimka (1997)]
  'Timka was running to fn, waving arms and shouting: “Please-INTENS-please, rescue me!”

  'Dear colleague, would you tell an interesting fairy tale to the children? – "Here-you-are-INTENS-here-you-are", the bearded man nodded. “One kind wolf ate a girl.”

  'Gena! Gena! Thank you! Thank you very much!' (lit. thank-you-INTENS-thank-you)

The prefix PERE-: Intensifier of activity

Verbs: productive, 1729 verbs prefixed in PERE- in the Russian National Corpus
  Intensifier in the following submeanings (60% of all verbs in PERE-):

(11) OVERDO: 'perform an activity more than a norm suggests'; peregruzit’ ‘overload’ < gruzit’ ‘load’
(12) REDO: 'repeat an activity to achieve a better result': pereedelat’ ‘redo’ < delat’ ‘do’
(13) DISTRIBUTE: 'apply an activity to a number of objects': pereprobovat’ ‘try many things’ < probovat’ ‘try’
(14) SUPERIORITY: 'perform an activity better than someone else’s': perekričat’ ‘outshout’ < kričat’ ‘shout’
(15) THOROUGH: 'thoroughly affect with an activity the whole object': perepakčat’ ‘stain all over’ < pakčat’ ‘stain’

(16) Ja buxgalterov-to videl-perevidel!. [V. Šukšin. Kalina krasnaja (1973)]
  'I have seen accountants many times (lit. have-seen-INTENS-have-seen).'

  'And there have been many nights (lit. was-INTENS-was).'

Participles: productive

  'Somehow its plate got a place in the density of built and overbuilt Moscow downtown.'

(19) Kniga byla staraja, čitanaja-perečitanaja, s massoj podčerkivanij. [Ju.O. Dombrovskij. Xranitel’ drevnostej (1964)]
  'The book was old, read many times (lit. read-INTENS-read), with lots of underlinings.'

  'Washed many times uniform lost its noble green color long ago.'

Adjectives: marginal

In (19) the word zanjat(yj)y ‘occupied’ is a lexicalized as ordinary adjective zanjat ‘busy’ (cf. Corbett 2004: 118):

  'Children get less and less attention. People are busy and over/very-busy.' (lit. busy and INTENS-busy)

¹ There are three attestations of this word in the RNC. Search was done on June 4, 2013.
² There is one attestation of this word in the RNC. Search was done on June 4, 2013.
Semantic network of the verbal prefix PERE-

Figure 1: The prefix *pere*- as productive intensifier of an activity *(thick boxes* highlight those submeanings where it functions as an intensifier)

Semantic overlap of PERE- and PRE- in verbs

Figure 2: Radial category profiling of the prefixes *pre-* and *pere-* in modern Russian *(shading* marks those submeanings that are attested for both prefixes)
Conclusions

• PERE- and PRE- are variants of a single morpheme and are specialized for different morphological domains;
• PERE- (native prefix) is a productive intensifier of activity in the verbal domain;
• PRE- (loan prefix) is a a productive intensifier of quality in the adjectival domain;
• PERE- and PRE- overlap in semantics and can be used beyond their typical domains;
• A similar opposition of native vs. loan intensifying prefixes holds for English: *over* vs. *super*, *hyper* vs. *uber*.

References