

## Abstract

This thesis compares particle verbs in Old Upper Sorbian to their corresponding verbs in modern Upper Sorbian. The goal of this analysis is to help explain the word formation of verbs in Sorbian<sup>2</sup>. For this purpose, two translations of the bible into Sorbian were compared: the Old Sorbian translation published in 1728 and the modern translation published during the period 1966–1976. The Old Sorbian text shows how Old Sorbian calques from German particle verbs began to form new models of Sorbian verbs, which can be explained using the term “Modellprägung” – coinage based on a model. The rise of the word-formational meaning ‘aus, hinaus’ (out, outside) for *won* in Old Sorbian according to the model of German particle verbs can be seen most clearly in the material. Similarly, the Old Sorbian *preč* developed the word-formational meaning ‘weg’ (away) and *horje* ‘auf(er-), hinauf’ (up, upward). The early development of such a word-formational meaning for the antonyms of these three direction-particles can also be tracked. The particle *won* is not only based on so-called calques (loan translations) of German particle verbs with *aus* and *hinaus* but it is also based on the German homonymous preposition *aus*: Old Sorbian borrows the German homonymy which enables similar variations of a prepositional phrase (with *z* + gen.) and the verb particle (*won*), as they are common in German. For derivations with other verb particles, there is a much stronger obligation to a concrete German lexeme in Old Sorbian – a Sorbian word-formational meaning has not yet developed. The same is true for verb particles which are used with an abstract meaning, the only exception being the particle *won*. The rise of such word-formational meanings for Sorbian verb particles was halted by the elimination of Sorbian verb particles during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which can be tracked very well through the changes in the modern bible translation.

An analysis of the Sorbian verbal aspect showed that verb particles are not yet used regularly as a means of reimperfectivation in Old Sorbian. This means of using verb particles for protoimperfective verbs could be shown only with some verbs of motion when the particle had local meaning. The examples eventually show the beginning of a grammaticalization process in Old Sorbian. This cannot be tracked in the modern Sorbian translation of the bible, because verb particles were mostly eliminated there. If there had been an early grammaticalization process in Old Sorbian, then this process was halted during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. On the contrary, in modern Sorbian we can often follow an aspect change from the protoimperfective to the perfective aspect due to the replacement of verb particles with “synonymous” verbal prefixes. In particular those sentences in which the aspect change took place in forms of the synthetic preterite (aorist and imperfect) suggest a narrative function of

---

2 In the interest of saving space, I use “Sorbian” to refer to Upper Sorbian in the following text.

these tempus forms in Old Sorbian, which does not occur in modern Sorbian. The Old Sorbian bible translation does not suggest the perfectivation function of verb particles.

The replacement of some very productive Old Sorbian verb particles with “synonymous” prefixes in modern Sorbian leads to the extension of prefixal functions. While in Old Sorbian there was a distribution of semantic functions between verb particles and their “synonymous” prefixes, this distribution disappeared with the elimination of the particle verbs as a means of verb formation in modern Sorbian.

Although the replacement of verbal particles with other lexical and morphological elements are a puristic intervention, aimed at eliminating calques from German, this purism did not lead to the greater independence of Sorbian word formation from German. On the contrary, some examples show how the changes in Sorbian word formation follow the development in German: this can be said of the increased usage of the so-called double particles for local relations in German, which are imitated by Sorbian verb particles, while aktionsart is expressed using “simple” verb particles in German and fixed prefixes in Sorbian, respectively. This distribution can be observed early on in Old Sorbian, while in modern Sorbian texts it can be seen more clearly, which corresponds to the development of the German verb formation. The Sorbian verb particle *sobu* probably arose as a reaction to the changed usage of *mit* as a verb particle in German. The regular replacement of particle verbs with the particle *zaso* ‘again; back’ in Old Sorbian with the particle *wróčo* ‘back’ or the simplex verb *wróčić so* ‘to go back’ in the modern translation seems to be motivated by changes in the stylistic character of the German equivalents *wieder* and *zurück*.

The verbal aspect, the usage of motion verbs and the expression of iterativity in Old Sorbian would be particularly worthy of further research on the basis of a larger corpus. But some questions of the formation of verbs remain unanswered as well. For example, the corpus of texts I excerpted for this study resulted in a non-representative number of examples with the particles *sobu* (with, along) and *wokoło* (around), which should be checked using a larger amount of text sources.

Further study of the incorporation of verb particles which are prepositional-adverbial in origin (Olsen 1997), e.g. *napřečo*, *nimo*, *wokoło* (opposite, by, around) would also be of interest. Only some observations of this phenomenon could be made which need further support from Old Sorbian texts, particularly those which are not translations.