Prefixed nouns or compounds?
An analysis of prefixal elements in Latvian nouns

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The proposed paper analyses the properties of preposition-like word-initial elements of Latvian nouns to identify the ones that might be more typical of prefixes, i.e. derivation, than prepositions, i.e. compounding, and vice versa (typologically, see, e.g., Bauer 2017, Olsen 2017, and Stump 2017).

In Latvian, almost all prefixes are homonymous with corresponding prepositions, while not all prepositions have prefixes corresponding to them (e.g., Nītiņa & Grigorjevs 2013, Kalnača & Lokmane 2021). The classification of prefixal elements of nouns in Latvian has, in fact, always been controversial. Firstly, nouns such as in (1) have been interpreted by different linguists both as prefixed derivatives (e.g., Nītiņa & Grigorjevs *op. cit*.) and as compounds combining a preposition and a noun (Endzelīns 1951). Secondly, some word-initial elements of nouns (e.g., *bez-, zem-, pirms- pēc-*) have sometimes been interpreted as prefixes (e.g., Nītiņa & Grigorjevs *op. cit*.), as the so-called "semi-prefixes", i.e. elements that have only partially grammaticalized and are neither proper prefixes nor prepositions, and as prepositions (e.g., Kalnača & Lokmane, *op. cit*.).

(1)   *ap-roce* 'bracelet'
         aiz-durve 'space behind doors'
         no-male 'edge, outskirts'
         pa-galde 'space under a table'
         pie-kraste 'coastal area'
         uz-galis 'tip'

The idea of this study, therefore, has been to analyse a large comprehensive sample of nouns containing a prefixal element corresponding to a Latvian preposition for various morphological, semantic, and grammatical properties to see if there are any identifiable characteristics or clusters thereof that might point to distinct types of word-formation processes, i.e. derivation vs. compounding. One possible example would be a change of declension class and/ or gender in some nouns (2) and not in others (3):

(2)   a.   *rok-a* 'hand, arm' (IV declension, F) – *ap-roc-e* (V declension, F)
         b.   *galv-a* 'head' (IV declension, F) – *pa-galv-is* 'headboard' (II declension, M)
         c.   *kakl-s* (I declension, M) – *ap-kakl-e* 'collar' (V declension, F)
         d.   *gal-s* (I declension, M) – *uz-gal-is* (II declension, M).
(3)   a.   *vāk-s* 'cover' – *ap-vāk-s* 'dust cover' (I declension, M)
         b.   *gait-a* 'going forward, running' – *at-gait-a* 'return' (IV declension, F)

Another could be the presence of a clear semantic association and a metonymic relationship between nouns, such as in (4), and prepositional constructions, which might point to compounding (see Ungerer & Schmid 2006, Dancygier & Sweetser 2014):

(4) a. *ap roku* 'around arm'– *aproce*
     b. *no malas* 'from edge' – *nomale*
     c. *uz gala* 'on the end' – *uzgalis*

The list of nouns included in the study has been extracted from the "Database of Latvian Morphemes and Derivational Models" (currently in development), which includes all lemmas from "The Balanced Corpus of Modern Latvian LVK2018".

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