On the *ABA patterns of Polish inchoative deadjectival change-of-state verbs

Introduction. Bobaljik (2012) previously noted a challenge of assimilating Polish (anti)causatives for his Comparative-Change-of-State Generalization (CΔG). In Polish, there are two intransitive change-of-state forms (inchoatives and anticausatives), which we take to represent two different classes of anticausatives (Alexiadou et al. 2015). The inchoatives (but not the anticausatives) display an apparent (unexpected) *ABA pattern, which appears problematic for Bobaljik's CΔG in which the comparative is contained within the Change-of-State verb. In this abstract, we account for these patterns by proposing portmanteau formation via spanning (cf. Davis 2021). More specifically, we propose a Vocabulary Insertion (VI) rule that describes the inchoative suffix as corresponding to adjacent comparative and V_{Δ} nodes. Thus, we argue that the Polish inchoative suffix is a portmanteau, expressing features of both the comparative and V_{Δ} nodes, but not inducing root suppletion. Furthermore, we propose that spanning of the type described for the inchoative cannot take place in Polish anticausatives, because the comparative node is not adjacent to the V_{Δ}. Ultimately, this analysis of Polish (anti)causatives is consistent with Bobaljik's CΔG.

Background. On the topic of suppletion in comparatives and superlatives, Bobaljik (2012) proposes the containment hypothesis, where the comparative structure is contained within the superlative. That is, the morphological derivation of a suppletive superlative form is not formed directly from the adjective. Bobaljik (2012) extends the containment hypothesis to also apply to deadjectival verbs, positing the Comparative-Change-of-State Generalization (CΔG), where this verb class likewise contains the comparative, illustrated in (1).

(1) a. [[[ADJECTIVE] COMPARATIVE] V_{Δ}] b. *[[ADJECTIVE] V_{Δ}] (Bobaljik 2012: 171)

Puzzle. As noted in Bobaljik (2012), patterns involving anticausative deadjectival verbs in Polish challenge this generalization. In Polish, the suppletive adjective pair *dobry – lepszy* 'good – better' corresponds to causative verbs (2a) as well as two apparent intransitive change of state verbs: the anticausative in (2b) and the inchoative form in (2c).

(2) a.	u-lepsz-yc	'to make something better'	(causative)
b.	po-lepsz-yc się	'get better'	(anticausative)
c.	dobrz-eć	'get better'	(inchoative)

The causative (2a) and anticausative (2b) surface with the comparative, *lepsz-y*, as expected by the CΔG. The inchoative (2c), however, appears to have the structure of (1b), as it surfaces with the adjectival root *dobr-y*, not the suppletive form of the comparative. While Bobaljik (2012: 205) hints at the possibility of there being two underlying verb types, ultimately, an account of these patterns is left as an open question, a counterexample (for now) to the CΔG. Dees et al. (2024) suggests an analysis in which there are two different roots, based on Alexiadou et al.'s (2015) division of different classes of anticausatives. While we maintain the concept of two classes of anticausatives in Polish, we argue that the difference between examples like (2b) and (2c) is structural, rather than root-based, more in-line with Alexiadou et al.'s (2015) analysis of different functional layers/material found in the two classes.

Proposal. In Polish the comparative node is associated with the VI rule in (3a). As Rościńska-Frankowska (2012) notes, Polish (anti)causatives typically have prefixes [i.e., *u-* in (2a); *po-* in (2b)]. Furthermore, they end in the verbal suffix *-ić*, which has allomorphs *-yć* (2a/b), *-ać*, and *-ować*. While the inchoative does not typically have a prefix, it does have its own verbal suffix *-nąc*, which has allomorphs *-nieć* and *-ieć*. Following Rościńska-Frankowska's (2012) argument that both the prefixes and the suffixes of (anti)causatives and inchoatives carry the change-of-state meaning, we assume VI rules associated with a V_{Δ} node (3b) and what we tentatively call the Δ node (3c). As previously noted, we argue that spanning can result in a VI rule in which the adjacent comparative and V_{Δ} nodes are expressed together, resulting in a portmanteau.

(3) a. [CMPR] ↔ –szy b. [V_{Δ}] ↔ –ić
c. [Δ] ↔ po– d. [CMPR V_{Δ}] ↔ -nąć [supercedes (3a)]

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We argue that in the change-of-state structures, two different derivations are found: One does not involve spanning due to adjacency restrictions and results in the anticausative form (2b) at Vocabulary Insertion (VI), the other [the inchoative as in (2c)] involves spanning, resulting in a different, portmanteau vocabulary item at VI. The existence of two distinct structures is also consistent with semantic distinctions observed between the two forms. Accordingly, we ultimately argue that the Polish inchoatives do not represent an exception to the CΔG, as both forms contain the comparative within their derivations.

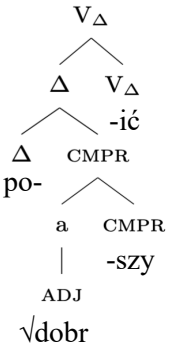
Spanning: (Anti)causatives vs. Inchoatives. Dowty's (1979) work on deadjectival verbs (like 'to cool') argues that they are derived via a covert operator, BECOME, added to the positive adjectival root as in (4).

(4) a. [BECOME] X COOL]] (inchoatives, e.g., *The coffee cooled*)
b. [CAUSE [BECOME [X COOL]]] (causatives, e.g., *The ice cooled the coffee*)

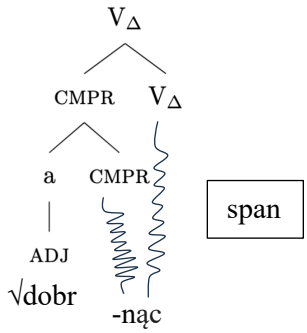
Bobaljik (2012) does not adopt Dowty's structure, largely based on the observation that the suppletive comparative adjectives are often used in deadjectival verbs cross-linguistically and the question of why some anticausative verbs like (4a) are permitted but [BECOME] X BAD]] is not attested (only [BECOME] X WORSE]]), and instead proposes the CΔG (1a).

We adopt a similar representation for both the Polish anticausatives and inchoatives (5).

(5) a. *Anticausative structure (po-lepsz-yc się)*



b. *Inchoative structure (dobrz-eć)*



While containment of the comparative is involved in both structures, the anticausative has additional structure that the inchoative does not. In the case of (5a), the comparative node and the V_{Δ} node are not adjacent. Thus, for the anticausatives, spanning cannot take place, resulting in the linearization/VI in (6). On the other hand, in the inchoative structure (5b), the comparative node and the V_{Δ} node are adjacent. Thus, linearization and VI resembles (7).

(6) **Linearization and VI**

Δ	ADJ	CMPR	V_{Δ}
po-	lep	-szy	-yc

(7) **Linearization and VI**

ADJ	CMPR V_{Δ}
dobrz	-eć

In the case of the anticausative (6), the root is within the context of the comparative morphology. Thus, when the root is a suppletive root, we get a suppletive form (as in (2b)). For the inchoative, the root is in the context of the portmanteau (spanned nodes). Therefore, suppletion does not take place (as in (2c)). However, the semantics of the comparative remains. This analysis is also compatible with the fact that comparative morphology is present only in (anti)causatives (but, need not be). In cases of non-suppletive roots, comparative morphology can surface in the (anti)causative forms (*upiększać (się)* 'beautify'), but not the inchoative (*pięknieć* 'beautify).

It is also worth noting that this concept of spanning is consistent with Bobaljik's (2012) CΔG. Bobaljik suggests that anticausatives may resemble the form of (1b), but this would be due to a V_{Δ} node containing the comparative. Thus, our paper argues that the Polish anticausatives and inchoatives do not present an issue for Bobaljik's (2012) CΔG.