


Typology of aspectual systems



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Synopsis

1. Generalities (approach and methodology)
2. Aspectual domain: definition and architecture
 1. “Primary aspect”
 2. Actionality and “secondary aspect”
 3. “Aspectual clusters”
3. “Slavic” and “non-Slavic” aspectual systems cross-linguistically

Generalities

- A *typological* approach
 - *Universal* inventory of values
 - *Compatibility* of aspectual systems
 - *Semantically-based* definition of aspectual domain (“aspectuality” vs. grammatical aspect)
- Friedrich 1974, Comrie 1976, Coseriu 1976, Dahl 1985, Bybee & Dahl 1989, Dahl (ed.) 2000, Bertinetto 1986, Brinton 1988, Cohen 1989, Dik 1989, Smith 1991, Mel’čuk 1993-2000, Bybee et al. 1994, Johanson 1996, 2000, Tournadre 2004 ...
- For Slavic languages, principally Maslov 1948, 1978, 1984 and Dickey 2000; see also Wierzbicka 1967 (on Polish), Glovinskaja 1982, 2001 and Padučeva 1996 (on Russian), Lindstedt 1985 (on Bulgarian), Stunová 1993 (on Czech and Russian) ...

Aspectual domain

- Temporal structure of the situation (= *primary, or linear, aspect*)
- *Actional type* of the predicate (also “taxonomic category” or “lexical aspect”, the last term is ill-advised)
- Aspectual uses changing / modifying the actional type (= *secondary aspect*)
- Recurrent patterns of polysemy attested for aspectual markers (= *aspectual clusters*)

Actionality

- Maslov 1948, Kindaichi 1952, Garey 1957, Vendler 1959 ... Dik 1989, Smith 1991, Breu 1994: aspectual behaviour of the predicates depends on their lexico-semantic properties
 - NB: Aspect is a grammatical property (related primarily to time and duration) while actionality is a lexical property (related primarily to dynamicity, control, and telicity); they are closely connected, but not identical. Calling actionality “lexical aspect” is misleading – as if we would call, e.g., nominal countability “lexical number”.

Basic actional oppositions and classes

- Stative [STATES] vs. dynamic predicates
- Dynamic predicates: momentary [EVENTS] vs. durable [PROCESSES]
- Processes: atelic (non-bounded) vs. telic (bounded)
- Four major classes: states [*know*], events [*find*], atelic processes [*walk*], telic processes [*open*]

Actional classes: a caveat

- ❑ Initially, rather a formal classification (both Vendler and Kindaichi appealed to adverbial combinability and differences in grammatical repertoire)
- ❑ On a later stage: a more systematic search for semantic principles underlying the syntactic behaviour (already in Maslov 1948, however)
- ❑ Actional class membership is ascribed to a particular word-form in a particular context (“aspectual composition”, in Verkuyl 1972’s terms)

Telicity

- In Slavic aspectology, a semantic (not a syntactic!) feature
 - Russ. *mal'čik rešayet zadaču* 'a boy is solving the problem' represents a telic process because of the inherent final point (the solved problem)
- In "post-Vendlerian" aspectology (cf. esp. Verkuyl 1972, 1993), a syntactic rather than a semantic feature, based on *in/for two hours* test; roughly, Verkuyl's telicity amounts to imperfectivity
 - From this point of view, *a boy is solving the problem* (**in two hours*) is atelic, because it does not refer to a "bounded" situation

Telicity: further complications

- In Slavic, two different verb classes are to be distinguished: “narrow” telic (as Russ. *goret'* burn or *rastvorjat'sja* ‘dissolve’) and “wide” telic (as Russ. *povyšat'sja* ‘increase’)
- “Wide” telic verbs do not refer to a final point in a strict sense (Glovinskaja 1972)
 - Russ. *temperatura povysilas' i prodolžает povyšat'sja* ‘the temperature increased and keeps increasing’ – cf. **saxar rastvorilsja i prodolžает rastvorjat'sja* ‘sugar dissolved and keeps dissolving’
- Still, “narrow” and “wide” telic verbs have much in common (e.g., both form similar “aspectual pairs”) and can be included under the heading “telic”

Primary aspect

- The notion of *reference interval* (= *topic time* in Klein 1994, *intervalle de référence* in Gosselin 1996, inter alia) – a better alternative to traditional “wholeness”
- “The time span to which the event is hooked up – which is generally not the time of the situation itself”; “the time for which the particular utterance makes an assertion” (Klein 1994: 37)
 - A fragment of the situation included in the RI
 - The whole situation included in the RI (or one of the transitional events: from non-existence to existence, or vice versa)

Primary aspect I: a typology of fragments

- Preparatory phase (prospective state):
prospective
- Intermediary phase: progressive (for processes only, dynamic fragment) / durative (both for processes and states)
- Resultant phase (resultant state):
resultative (for telic processes) / perfect (for atelic processes and other actional types)

NB: Aspect vs. phase !

- **Duration:** an intermediary fragment is included in the RI; the other fragments of the situation are outside
 - a correlation between a fragment of the situation and the RI
- **Continuity:** the situation takes place as compared to a previous time point (and, possibly, against the speaker's expectations)
 - a correlation between two time points where the situation takes place
- *she's dancing* [just now] ~ *she's still dancing* [as before]

Primary aspect II: a typology of integrities

- ❑ The whole event within the RI: punctual [*<then> the bridge exploded / it thundered / the light shot out flame and sparkled*]
- ❑ The end point of a telic process (not necessarily the whole process): completive [*<then> sugar dissolved in water / the wood burnt away*]
- ❑ The starting point of a process or a state: inceptive [*<suddenly,> they realized that...*]
- ❑ A process or a state entirely included in the RI: limitative [*we walked for two days <and then...>*]

Secondary aspect

- Different actional types have different possibilities for expressing primary aspect values
- Telic processes display the maximal inventory
- However, a less straightforward combinability is also possible: aspectual markers then assume the passage from one actional type to another

Secondary aspect: types of passages

- Dynamic → stative: habitual [*she's playing* → *plays piano*]
- Momentary → processual: multiplicative / iterative [*he was coughing*]
- Processual → momentary: semelfactive [*give a cough*; Rus. *kašljat' ~ kašlja-nu-t'*]
- Atelic → telic: transformative [*go ~ go up, write ~ write down*]

Aspectual clusters

- ❑ Natural languages express universal values in a “pure” form extremely rare
- ❑ Grammatical markers are normally polysemous: from the universal standpoint, they are to be treated as **clusters**
- ❑ The number of clusterization patterns is limited
- ❑ Typology of clusterization patterns contributes to the *typology of verbal systems*

Aspectual clusters: the main types

- Imperfective : Durative / Habitual (as in Slavic, Latin and Romance, Greek)
 - NB: Imperfect = Imperfective + Past
 - NB: Virtual = Habitual / Future (Haspelmath 1998, Tatevosov 2004)
- Perfective: Punctual / Completive / Inceptive / Limitative (as in Greek)
 - NB: Aorist = Perfective + Past
- “Extended perfect”: Perfective / Perfect (as in East and West Slavic, Rumanian)

Aspectual clusters: the less common types

- “Incompletive” : Resultative / Progressive
 - attested in Japanese, Polynesian, Tungusic
- “Factative” : Perfective / Durative
 - attested in many African and Creole lgs.
 - cf. Krio *i go* ‘he went’ ~ *i fil bad* ‘he feels bad’
- “Antiresultative”: cancelled result / non-achieved result
 - cf. Russian *otkryval okno*, which may be ambiguous between ‘tried to open’ and ‘opened and (then) closed’

“Slavic aspect”: formal properties

- Binary opposition / complex clusters
 - NB: Binary opposition of perfectivity ~ imperfectivity is not universal (pace Comrie 1976, Smith 1991), it is a typical aspectual cluster attested primarily in Slavic
 - NB: Some tendencies towards non-binary configurations!
- Formal expression of aspect: no stable morphological markers
 - a lexical stem? (cf. *dat'* 'give' [PF] vs. *znat'* 'know' [IPF])
 - a prefixed verb? (cf. *u.znat'* 'learn' [PF] vs. *pred.stojat'* 'await' [IPF] vs. *uzna.va.t'* 'learn' [IPF])
 - a suffixed verb? (cf. *tolk.nu.t'* 'push' [PF] vs. *sty.nu.t'* 'cool' [IPF]; *otkry.va.t'* 'open' [IPF] vs. *na.otkry.va.t'* 'to open (too) many...' [PF])

“Slavic aspect”: paradigmaticity

- Basically, a non-paradigmatic opposition: there exist aspectual “classes” rather than aspectual “pairs”
 - perfectiva tantum (*xlynut'* ‘flush, flood’)
 - imperfectiva tantum (*prinadležat'* ‘belong’)
 - complex semantic relations: *dumat'* [IPF] ‘think’ ~ *zadumat'* [PF] ‘design’, *pidumat'* [PF] ‘invent’, *peredumat'* [PF] ‘change mind’, etc.
 - “Aspectual pairs”: telic process [IPF] ~ process end point [PF], cf. *goret'* ~ *s.goret'* ‘burn [~away]’, *rastvor.ja.t'sja* ~ *rastvor.i.t'sja* ‘dissolve’

“Aspectual pairs”

- A very controversial notion (for different approaches, cf. Xrakovškij 2005, Janda 2007, Zaliznjak, Mikaëljan & Šmelëv 2010, inter alia)
 - Very important for those who tend to view Slavic aspect as a paradigmatic category
 - Less important for those who subscribe to a non-paradigmatic account of Slavic aspect
- Maslov’s criterion: the imperfective correlate substitutes the perfective one in the context of historical present and/or iterative present:
 - Russ. on **vypil** *moloko* i **postavil** *pustoj stakan na stol*
‘he drank the milk and put the empty glass on the table’
~ on **vypivaet** *moloko* i **stavit** *pustoj stakan na stol*

“Aspectual pairs”

- *vypit'* ~ *vypi.va.t'* 'drink out', *stavit'* ~ *po.stavit'* 'put (vertically)' are thus “aspectual pairs”
- Rather, contextual pragmatic correlates than forms belonging to one and the same paradigm
- Contra:
 - “aspectual trios” of the type *upakoval* 'packed' > *pakuet* / *upakovyvaet*
 - impossibility of Maslov's substitution in many contexts

“Slavic aspect”: semantic properties

- Strong correlation between ‘perfective’ and ‘momentary’
 - No (or very few) limitative perfectives: no natural equivalent for Engl. *walked* or Spanish *camino*: Russ. *šël* [IPF] [*nekotoroe vremja*]
- Strong correlation between ‘perfective’ and ‘telic’
- Telicization mainly (though not exclusively) through verbal prefixation.

Slavic aspect: binary or not?

- Some growing-points (or relics):
- “Old” and “new” past (or “discontinuous”, cf. Plungian & van der Auwera 2006) habitual, as in Czech, Sorbian, North and XIX-century Russian; cf. also Lithuanian forms on *-dav-* or Yiddish constructions with *fleg* as a possible areal phenomenon
 - Czech *Za dávných časů tam **stával** kostel* ‘A church **used to be** there’
 - Also the so-called “verbs of motion” in Russian, preserved as a relic group (*pticy letjat* ‘the birds are flying’ ~ *pticy letajut* ‘birds fly’, with either habitual or iterative reading)

Slavic aspect: binary or not?

- “New” perfect or resultative:
 - North Russian perfect of the type *deti v gorod uexavši* or *u detej v gorod uexano* ‘the children have gone to town’
 - new Macedonian perfect of the type *imam dojdeno* ‘I have arrived’
 - NB: standard Russian passive resultative constructions of the type *dver’ otkryta* ‘the door is open’ or *uroki u nego sdelany* ‘his homework is/has been done’ (stative reading only)

Slavic aspect: verbal prefixation

- Semantic effects of telicity
 - IPF *idti* 'go, walk' ~ PF *vyjti* 'exit', *vojti* 'enter', *perejti* 'cross', *projti* 'pass', *ujti* 'leave', *prijti* 'arrive', *najti* 'find'
 - IPF *rezat'* 'cut' ~ PF *vyrezat'* 'grave, carve', *zarezat'* 'slaughter', *urezat'* 'curtail'
- 'Telic' does not necessarily mean 'perfective'! Cf. *delit'* [IPF, atelic] 'divide' ~ *razdelit'* [PF, telic] ~ *razdeljat'* [IPF, telic]
- Still, telicization, in a sense, implies perfectivity

“Empty” preverbs?

- In some cases, preverbs seem to mark nothing but perfectivity, as in *s-delat'* ‘make’ [PF], *na-pisat'* ‘write’ [PF], *pro-čitat'* ‘read’ [PF], etc.
- Traditional approach: “empty” (or “purely aspectual”) prefixes, devoid of non-grammatical semantic components
- Two major problems:
 - Why one and the same preverb can be both “empty” and “non-empty”, depending on the context? Cf. *pro-delat'* ‘break through’ or ‘perform’; *s-pisat'* ‘copy’.
 - And – why different verbs take different preverbs as “empty”?

Vey – Schooneveld's effect

- Each preverb has a genuine semantic value and an aspectual value (roughly, telicization)
- Sometimes, however, the semantic value of the preverb comes to coincide with that of the verbal stem, whence the effect of semantic “emptiness”
 - *na* + *pisat'* ‘write’ [surface]
 - *pro* + *čitat'* ‘read’ [sequencing]
 - *pod* + *žarit'* ‘fry’ [under]
- NB: A “classifying perfectivation” model, i.e. the choice of perfectivizing marker is made according to the semantic class of the verb (partly specified in the lexicon). About a dozen of such classes for Russian.

“Slavic aspect” as an areal and typological phenomenon

- ❑ **Binary** opposition with broad perfective and (especially) imperfective clusters
- ❑ A completive-oriented perfective privileging **momentary** uses: perfectives as events (and not as limited processes or states)
- ❑ A well-developed system of expressing **telicity** (within secondary aspect marking): derivational prefixes combining telicization with a **classifying** function
- ❑ in South Slavic, a more typical system is also preserved, which amounts to a ternary inflectional opposition *aorist* ~ *imperfect* ~ *perfect* like in Romance and Greek

Elsewhere

- Systems where completive can be marked by derivational means with a telicizing and classifying function: “derivational aspect” (Dahl)
- Within European area
 - Georgian and Ossetic
 - Lithuanian and Latvian
 - Hungarian and Yiddish
 - NB : Gothic and late Latin (IV-VI c. C.E.)
- Outside Europe: both derivation and “analytic perfectivation”

Non-European models

- Several groups of languages with a well-developed system of suffixal or prefixal verbal derivation
 - West Africa (Chadic)
 - California (Pomo)
- A large area of languages where perfectivation is made through an analytical component of a verbal construction (most often, serial VC) – “analytical perfectivation”, according to Majsak 2005
 - Primarily, South and South-East Asia (Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Thai etc.); also Turkic
 - ‘buy’ + ‘take’, ‘sell’ + ‘give’
 - ‘be born’ + ‘come’, ‘die’ + ‘go’

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