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)


- 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


  - 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 rešaet 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
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 prodolžaet povyšat’sja* ‘the temperature increased and keeps increasing’ – cf. *saxar rastvorilsja i prodolžaet 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 \([she’s \text{ playing \rightarrow plays piano}]\)
- Momentary → processual: multiplicative / iterative \([he \text{ was coughing}]\)
- Processual → momentary: semelfactive \([give \text{ a cough; Rus. kašljat’ } \sim \text{ kašlja-nu-t’}]\)
- Atelic → telic: transformative \([go \sim \text{ go up, write } \sim \text{ write down}]\)
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

- **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. talk.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’)
  - “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”

  - 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 *caminó*: Russ. *šël* [IPF] [*nekotoroe vremja*]

- Strong correlation between ‘perfective’ and ‘telic’

- Telicization mainly (though not exclusively) through verbal prefixation.
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)
“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’


Selected bibliography (cont’d)


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