

Slavic aspect

Background reading:

Smith, C.S. (1991/97). *The Parameter of Aspect*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.
Chapter 10: The aspectual system of Russian (with G.C. Rappaport).

1 Introduction

1.1 Verkuyl's system

distinction between inner and outer aspect: A tenseless sentence S carries the complex aspectual information labelled $[\pm T_S]$.

Verkuyl (1993) is concerned with inner aspect ((a)terminativity at the VP level)

Verkuyl (forthcoming b): "The aspectual value of a predicate is determined only once and remains intact and is independent of any temporal information."

Path at VP level: set of spatio-temporal positions determined by the verb and its internal arguments

either the whole Path or just a part of it is actualized in real time ("viewpoint")

1.2 Smith's system

situation types (inner aspect, telicity, lexical aspect, terminativity, Aktionsart) vs.

viewpoint (imperfective vs. perfective (grammatical) aspect)

Viewpoints are universals that are parametrized.

Situation types are characterized in terms of (semantic) feature clusters:

State:	-dynamic	+durative		
Activity:	+dynamic	+durative	-tel	
Accomplishment:	+dynamic	+durative	+tel	(vs. ach: non-detachability)
Semelfactive:	+dynamic	+instantaneous	-tel	
Achievement:	+dynamic	+instantaneous	+tel	

telicity: "inherent end-point"

Basic-level vs. derived-level situation type ("verbs", "predicates" or "sentences")

- ⇒ no distinction between different levels with essentially different aspectual information (crucially different from Verkuyl)
- ⇒ grammatical aspect can coerce one situation type into another situation type

1.3 Slavic verbal morphology

All Slavic verb forms (finite and non-finite) are either perfective or imperfective

There is no uniform marking of either of the aspects (i.e. not all perfective verb forms contain a prefix, not all imperfective verb forms contain a suffix).

Morphological complexity of Slavic verbs and verb forms:

1. imperfective simple¹:
byt' – 'to be'
znat' – 'to know'
pisat' – 'to write (s.th.)'
2. perfective prefixed:
u-znat' – 'to get to know, to find out'
On po-pisal. – 'He wrote (for a while).'
3. imperfective prefixed-suffixed:
na-pisat' – 'to write s.th.'
pod-pisat' – 'to sign'
u-zna-va-t' – 'to get to know, to find out'
pod-pis-yva-t' – 'to sign'
?na-pis-yva-t', *?On popisyval.*
4. perfective suffixed:
krik-nu-t' – 'to shout (once)'
5. perfective simple:
dat' – 'to give'
kupit' – 'to buy'
sest' – 'to sit down'
6. imperfective suffixed:
a) *da-vat'* – 'to give'
sadit'sja – 'to sit down'
b) *by-va-t'* – 'to (usually) be'
Czech: *mi-va-t* – 'to (usually) have'
7. imperfective suffixed-suffixed (Czech only): *mi-va-va-t* – 'to (usually) have'
8. perfective prefixed-prefixed (Czech): *Po-od-stoupila.* – 'She stepped aside a little.'
9. perfective prefixed-suffixed (Czech): *Po-klek-l.* – 'He knelt down a little.'²
10. perfective prefixed-prefixed-suffixed (Russian only?, only in context, no infinitive):
On po-vy-da-va-l knigi. – 'He gave out (the) books (for a while)' (distributively).
11. perfective prefixed-prefixed-prefixed-suffixed:
On po-na-vy-derg-iva-l markovki. – 'He pulled out, one by one, a lot of carrots (for a while)'

⇒ Not all Slavic prefixes are perfective aspect markers

⇒ Not all Slavic prefixes are telicity markers

Tests for grammatical aspect:

- Only imperfectives have periphrastic future tense forms
- Only imperfectives are compatible with aspectual verbs (*start, continue, stop* etc.)
- Only imperfectives derive present active participles
- Only perfectives derive past passive participle

¹ The term 'simple verbs' used here refers to verbs without any affixes but also to verbs that were derived from non-verbal categories (nouns, adjectives etc.) by derivational affixes (e.g. in Russian the suffix *-ova-*).

² The verb *kleknout* is derived from the simple imperfective verb *klekat* – 'to kneel' by the (only) perfectivizing suffix *-nou-*, regularly falling out in the formation of the past tense form with an l-participle *klek-l* (the l-participle of *klekat* is *klekal*). The additionally prefixed form in 9. is a variation of 8.

1.4 Can Verkuyl's system be applied to Russian?

telic VPs can be combined with the perfective or imperfective aspect

atelic VPs can be combined with the perfective or imperfective aspect

1.4.1 The [\pm SQA]-feature

Borik (2002): "In the absence of articles in Russian, there are no formal clues available which would tell us anything about the interpretation of a direct object"

⇒ SQA in general not marked on the NP – can only be inferred from information on the verb (?)

Verkuyl (forthcoming a): "Part of the information allocated to the determiners in Germanic languages is carried by the presence or absence of the perfective prefix in Slavic. And this might mean that the perfective prefix has a double duty to fulfill without having the certainty that these duties are of the same level."

- Borik (2002): "the aspectual value of the verb influences the interpretation of its direct object and requires it to become [+SQA] [...] but a generic interpretation is also available."

(1) *On pro-čital stat'i* – 'He through-read^{PF} articles'

- Some prefixes induce a [+SQA] interpretation of arguments:

(2) *On vy-pil pivo.* – 'He out-drank^{PF} beer'

- Other prefixes do not have this effect:

(3) *On po-sidel.* – 'He PO-sat^{PF}.'
On po-ljubil mjaso. – 'He PO-loved^{PF} meat.'

Also not distinguished by case system

1.4.2 Compositional (a)terminativity in general

Verkuyl (forthcoming a): English progressive takes both [+T]- and [-T]-predications

telic VP + imperfective aspect: "There is an event in the past such that only a part of e was 'visible', partial visibility resulting from an Imperfect operation on the denotation of the [+T]- φ ."

atelic VP + perfective aspect: "The [-T]-nature of the tenseless predication φ is retained in the resulting tensed proposition φ' itself. This sort of completion is not the same kind as the tenseless [+T]-information. It provides a bounded domain in which the semantic value of φ is hosted and it is due to the righthand bound of this domain that this second notion of completion is expressed rather than by predicational aspect at the level of φ itself."

"The opposition Pfv vs. Ipfv should not say anything about the predication itself rather about the frame in which the eventuality in question is (to be) situated."

1.5 The semantics of the Russian imperfective and perfective aspect (Smith)

“The perfective viewpoint in Russian presents dynamic situations with both initial and final endpoints. [...] The Russian perfective has an unusual requirement of specificity.”

Direct interpretations: FINAL EMPHASIS

Augmented interpretations: CONTINUING RESULT, SEQUENTIALITY, INTENTION

“The imperfective viewpoint in Russian focuses part of a situation, with neither initial and final endpoints.”

Direct interpretations: ONGOING, SIMULTANEITY, INCOMPLETENESS

Augmented interpretations: ANNULLED RESULT, DISCONTINUITY, STATEMENT OF FACT

Not mentioned by Smith: direct interpretation ITERATION / HABITUALITY

2 Aspectual pairs

Smith: “Perfective and imperfective verb forms with the same lexical meaning, only difference in viewpoint”

(4) Examples:	1.	ipf. <i>pisat'</i>	pf. <i>na-pisat'</i>	- 'write'
	2.	ipf. <i>u-zna-va-t'</i>	pf. <i>u-znat'</i>	- 'recognize'
	3.	ipf. <i>da-va-t'</i>	pf. <i>dat'</i>	- 'give'
	4.	ipf. <i>sadit'sja</i>	pf. <i>sest'</i>	- 'sit down'
	5.	ipf. <i>kričat'</i>	pf. <i>krik-nu-t'</i>	- 'shout'
	6.	ipf. <i>videt'</i>	pf. <i>u-videt'</i>	- 'see'
	7.	ipf. <i>sidet'</i>	pf. <i>po-sidet'</i>	- 'sit'

simple verbs (i.e. without any aspectual affixes) are overwhelmingly imperfective
prefixation always leads to perfectivity unless the verb undergoes further suffixation
affixation of imperfective simplex verbs:

- LEXICAL PREFIXES derive new lexical items: *znat'* – ‘know’ > *u-znat'* – ‘recognize’
- SUPER-LEXICAL PREFIXES derive perfective verb forms (aspectual pair OR AKTIONSART formation): *sidet'* – ‘sit’ > *po-sidet'* – ‘sit (for a while)’
- perfectivizing semelfactive suffix *-nu-* (aspectual pair OR Aktionsart formation): *kričat'* – ‘shout’ > *krik-nu-t'* – ‘shout (once)’

suffixation is the means to derive imperfective aspectual partners for simple perfective verbs (*dat'* / *davat'* – ‘give’) and the lexically prefixed perfective verbs under a) (*uznat'* / *uznavat'* – ‘recognize’) > SECONDARY IMPERFECTIVES

The only productive imperfectivizing suffix in Russian is *-(y)va-*

Two perspectives on aspectual pairs:

- a) paradigmatic: aspectual pairs in isolation from the context (Smith)
- b) syntagmatic: two verbs / verb forms can act as aspectual pairs in one context but possibly not in all contexts (Padučeva)

if we choose b): there are aspectual pairs for basically all verbs and situation types

2.1 Supporting evidence for the syntagmatic view I

In Russian, there are contexts that only allow one aspect:

Sequence of unique events	exclusively PF
Habituality	almost exclusively IPF
Historic present	almost exclusively IPF

- (5) *On odin iz šesti detej, i ego otec **byl**ⁱ takim sil'nym, čto, kogda synov'ja **klali**ⁱ na stol orech, on – raz pal'cem! – **raskalyval**ⁱ ego lučše, čem ščipcy dlja orechov.* (Hrabal, *The Mermaid*)

‘He is one of six children, and his father was so strong that, **whenever** the sons put a nut on the table, he – once with a finger – cracked it better than a nutcracker.’

*Kogda synov'ja **položili**ⁱ na stol orech, on – raz pal'cem! – **raskoloť**ⁱ ego lučše, čem ščipsy dlja orechov.*

‘**When** the sons put a nut on the table, he – once with a finger – cracked it better than a nutcracker.’

- (6) *Koka Dement'ev **vyryvaet**^{iPres} u nego iz ruk seryj mešoček. **Vytrjachivaet**^{iPres} na sneg galoši. [...] Škol'niki **xvatajut**^{iPres} Vovu, **deržat**^{iPres} ego za pleči... **Sujut**^{iPres} golovu v potemnevšij mešok...* (Dovlatov, *The Zone*)

‘Koka Dement'ev pulls the gray bag out of his hands. He “shakes out” the shoes on the snow. The students grab Vova, hold him at his shoulders. They put the head in the dark bag.’

*Koka Dement'ev **vyrval**^{pPast} u nego iz ruk seryj mešoček. **Vytrjachnul**^{pPast} na sneg galoši. [...] Škol'niki **sxvatili**^{pPast} Vovu, **poderžali**^{pPast} ego za pleči... **Sunuli**^{pPast} golovu v potemnevšij mešok...*

2.2 Supporting evidence for the syntagmatic view II

Młynarczyk (2004): formationally-driven classification of Polish verbs

Main criterion: “secondary imperfectivization test” (**uvidyvat*’, **kriknuvat*’)

	‘empty prefix’	<i>po-</i>	semelfactive <i>-nq-</i>	morphonological change ³
class₁	yes			
class₂		yes		
class₃	yes	yes		
class₄	yes	yes	yes	
class₅				yes

formational classification induces semantic distinction:

	IMPERFECTIVES	PERFECTIVES
class 1	statives and ongoing gradual transitions	inchoatives and completed gradual transitions
class 2	ongoing processes	completed processes
class 3	ongoing culminating processes	completed culminated processes
class 4	ongoing unitisable processes	completed non-culminated culm. proc. completed arbitrary unitisable processes completed non-minimal unitisable proc. completed minimal unitisable processes
class 5	ongoing culminations	completed culminations

can be carried over to Russian (and Czech), examples:

class 1 (*u*)*videt*’ – ‘see’ **class 3** (*na*)*pisat*’ – ‘write’
(*po*)*krasnet*’ – ‘become red’ (*po*)*pisat*’

class 2 (*po*)*sidet*’ – ‘to sit’ **class 4** (*po*)*kričat*’ – ‘shout’
Czech (*za*)*kričet*
kričat’ – *krik-nu-t*’

(7) *On ot-kryl^l okno.* (Russian class 5 verb)
he open.PAST window.ACC
‘He opened (the / a) window.’

(8) *On ot-kry-va-t^l, no ne ot-kryl^l okno.* (Russian class 5 verb)
he open.IPF.PAST but not open.PAST window.ACC
‘He tried to open the window, but didn’t.’

³ Morphonological change (to a great extent suffixation, less often vowel alternation) derives secondary imperfectives. The verbs in class 1 to class 4 are imperfective base verbs which derive their perfective counterparts by prefixes or the semelfactive suffix. The class 5 verbs are perfective base verbs (derive secondary imperfectives).

Młynarczyk's class 5 verbs are perfective base verbs that derive imperfectives by morphological change ("secondary imperfectives").

Class 5 verbs usually contain "lexical prefixes".

3 Lexical vs. super-lexical prefixes

Lexical prefixes: have lexical meaning as well

Super-lexical prefixes: convey PF only

Recursive prefixation: Smith's example between (42) and (43):

- (9) *po-na-vy-derg-iva-t' markovki*
'to pull out, one by one, a lot of carrots over a limited period of time'
simplex verb *dergat'* – 'tear, pull'
+ lexical prefix *vydergat'* – 'pull out'
+ imperfectivizing suffix *vydergivat'* ("secondary imperfective")
+ super-lexical *na-* (accumulative)
+ super-lexical *po-* (distributive)

3.1 How can we distinguish between these two kinds of prefixes?

- Lexically prefixed verbs are lexically distinct from the unprefixed verb and the semantic contribution of the prefix is highly idiosyncratic.
The application of super-lexical prefixes leads to a predictable meaning change.
- Lexical prefixes show argument structure effects, super-lexical prefixes do not.
- Lexically prefixed verbs derive secondary imperfectives.
Perfective verbs with super-lexical prefixes do not.
- super-lexically prefixed verbs cannot occur as infinitival subjects. Infinitives of these verbs are always dependent on some other verbal form:

(10) *Nado po-govorit^p s nim.* – 'It is necessary to (have a) talk with him.'

- Only super-lexical prefixes can stack (on top of lexical or super-lexical ones) but not lexical ones.

3.2 Lexical but not super-lexical prefixes induce telicity.

- compatibility with temporal adverbials:

(11) *On po-spat^p (*za) dva časa.* (lexical prefix)
he PO-sleep.PAST (*in) two hours

(12) *On ot-kryl^p okno *(za) dva časa.* (super-lexical prefix)
he open.PAST window.ACC *(in) two hours

- telicity entailments:

(13) *Ja pro-čital^P knigu.* entails *Ja (bol'se) ne čitaju^I knigu.* (lexical)
I THROUGH-read.PAST book.ACC I (anymore) not read.PRES book

(14) *Ja po-čital^P polčasa.* doesn't entail *Ja (bol'se) ne čitaju^I.* (super-lexical)
I PO-read.PAST ½ hour I (anymore) not read.PRES

- compatibility with *to the end, stop / finish*:

(15) **Ja po-čital^P knigu do konca.* vs. *Ja pro-čital^P knigu do konca.*
I PO-read.PAST book to the end I THROUGH-read.PAST book to the end

(16) *On po-spat^P.* - *On prekratil^P spat^I.* / **On zakončil^P spat^I.*
he PO-slept he stopped sleeping / *he finished sleeping

(17) *On u-bil^P svoju ženu.* - *On zakončil^P ee ubivat^I.* (lexical)
he killed his wife he finished killing her

(18) *On prekratil^P ee ubivat^I.* (in this case she is still alive)
he stopped killing her

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