Aspectual triplets in Bulgarian. Empirical foundations and theoretical implications

Elena Karagjosova, FU Berlin

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The Slavic imperfective:perfective opposition (Wiemer et al. 2025, Łazorczyk 2010)

- **basis for general architecture of aspect system**: binary distinction pfv/ipfv stems related to each other by means of productive derivational patterns marking changes of aspect membership

(1) a. Ru pisat' IPFV1 ⇒ **na**pisat' PFV 'write'
b. Ru **pere**pisat' PFV ⇒ **pere**pis**yva**t' IPFV2 'rewrite'

- **grammatical properties**: stems acquire pfv/ipfv status from complementary distribution over sets of contexts/constraints
  - present vs. future interpretation of present tense forms

(2) a. Pl Hania pisze IPFV1 listy. 'Hanna is writing/writes letters.'
b. Pl Hania **na**pisze PFV listy. 'Hannah will write (the) letters.'

  - analytic future constructions (ibid.)

(3) Pl Hania bedzie pisać IPFV1 / *__na__pisać PFV listy.
'Hannah will be writing letters.'

- **core feature of perfectivity**: setting boundaries to a situation (perfectivity ≠ telicity)
  - predicates with inherent endpoint are 'q-bounded' (Croft 2012)

(4) a. Ru On stroil dom. ⇝ implied boundary not reached
b. Ru On **po**stroil dom. ⇝ boundary entailed
'He built a/the house.'

  - predicates with no inherent endpoint terminate, if not temporally delimited ('t-bounded') (ibid.)

(5) a. Ru rabotat' 'work' atelic activity
b. Ru **po**rabotat' 'work for a while' 't-bounded' activity

Aspectual pairs (Ru, Pl, Cz) (Maslov 1984, Zaliznjak & Šmelev 2000, Wiemer et al. 2025, Kuznetsova & Sokolova 2016)

Pairs of IPFV1&PFV or PFV &IPFV2 with same lexical meaning (equivalent in at least one lexical meaning) **and complementary distribution**

(6) a. Ru I togda Spartak **po**vernul.PFV na jug. past
Ru I togda Spartak **po**vorač**iva**et.IPFV2 na jug. pres.hist.
'Then Spartacus turned/turns south.'
b. Ru **Po**zvoni.PFV žene. 'Call your wife.' pos. imperative
Ru Ne zvoni.IPFV1 žene. 'Don't call your wife.' neg. imperat.

- „natural perfectives": PFV derived by prefixes that leave lexical meaning of IPFV1 unchanged

(7) Ru čitat' ⇒ **pro**čitat' 'read' delat' ⇒ **s**delat' 'do'

Aspectual triplets (Ru, Pl, Cz) (Wiemer et al. 2025, Janda et al. 2013)

Triplets based on IPFV1+NPFV-pair, where NPFV form IPFV2

- 1/3 Ru and 1/3 Pl IPFV1+NPFV-pairs have more/less attested IPFV2
- IPFV1 may imply boundary (suitable of denoting telic event)
- prefix asserts that endpoint reached & narrows IPFV1's meaning range
- IPFV2 inherits telicity and narrower meaning from NPFV but may defocus boundary (competition b'n IPFV1 & IPFV2)

(8) a. Ru gret' ⇒ **na**gret' ⇒ **na**gre**va**t' 'warm up'
b. Ru gotovit'⇒**pri**gotovit'⇒**pri**gotavl**iva**t' 'prepare'

- IPFV1 and IPFV2 may behave like synonyms but develop different ipfv function

Aspectual triplets in Bulgarian (work in progress)

Motivation: Inner-Slavic differences

- definite article (9)
- present vs. generic (modal,habitual) interpretation of pres. tense (9)
- no constraints in analytic future constructions (10)
- ≈100% IPFV1+NPFV-pairs have (well attested) IPFV2 (Tbl. 1)
- a 2^{nd} dimension of aspect: Aorist vs. Imperfect (Tbl. 1)

(9) a. Bg Ana piše IPFV1 pismo/pismo**to**.
b. Bg (Kogato/Ako) Ana **na**piše PFV pismo/pismo**to**.
'(When/If) Ana writes/is writing a/the letter.'

(10) Ana šte piše IPFV1/**na**piše PFV pismo/pismo**to**.
'Ana will write a/the letter.'

Table: 1

Aorist			Imperfect			
IPFV1	NPFV	IPFV2	IPFV1	NPFV	IPFV2	
pisa	**na**pisa	**na**pis**va**	pišeše	**na**pišeše	**na**pis**va**še	'write'
pečeli	**s**pečeli	**s**pečel**va**	pečeleše	**s**pečeleše	**s**pečel**va**še	'win'
jade	**iz**jade	**iz**ja**žd**a	jadeše	**iz**jadeše	**iz**ja**žd**aše	'eat'

Properties of Bulgarian triplets (Karagjosova 2024a,b)

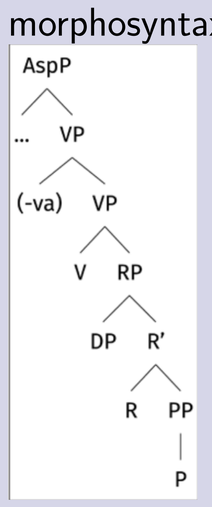
- uniform distribution of aspectual features (Rothstein 2004) among triplet members

(11) IPFV1: [+stages], [–change]
NPFV: [–stages], [+change]
IPFV2: [+stages], [+change]

- shifts at AspP-level due to Aorist/Imperfect

(12) a. NPFV + Imperf ⇝ unbounded
b. IPFV2 + Imperf ⇝ unbounded

- morphosyntax



Goals

- establish inventory of triplets (incl. IPFV1 stems with ≥2 NPFV)
- explore their properties: synonymity, distribution, argument alternation/coding, semantic and aspectual class, distribution of ipfv aspect functions among IPFV1 and IPFV2 (progressive, habitual, eventive), interaction with temporal modifiers and definiteness
- compare with Ru (Pl, Cz)

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