

The different grammars of event singularisation

Background:

In a binary approach to aspect such as (Smith 1991)'s two-component theory, situation (lexical) aspect combines with viewpoint (grammatical) aspect to compute the aspectual composition of sentences. Two important notions with respect to event singularisation are telicity and boundedness/perfectivity (Depraetere 1995, Bertinetto 2001, Borer 2005). Other, typologically-oriented models (Dik 1989, Tournadre 2004, Knjazev 2007), have shown that the universal category "aspect" need not look like Slavic aspect, because what we find across languages are polysemous aspectual clusters (Bybee, Dahl 1989, Plungian 2012). In such models, aspectual "grams" that express event singularisation (punctives, limitatives, inceptives, completives) are heterogeneous.

Method and data:

This talk will adopt an empirical, comparative approach to the expression of event singularisation, which for simplicity's sake will be referred to as boundedness and/or telicity, across four languages, based on *L'Etranger* by Camus and three published translations (English, Russian, Hungarian). *L'Etranger* is notorious for its wide use of P(assé) C(omposé), a primary candidate for marking boundedness/telicity.

Results:

The PC, semantically strengthened by the unbounded *Imparfait*, often yields bounded, quasi-telic meanings in and of itself (1a, 2a); English, in those cases, has to mark telicity explicitly on the DP-level (1b) or otherwise (2b), as the simple past is no explicit bounder (3).

Russian and Hungarian have a different strategy: they rely heavily on derivational, classificatory (Janda 2007) prefixes with transformative semantics to turn an unbounded situation into a (de)limited one (4). The prefixed verbs' bias towards singularised, momentaneous situations explains the absence of limitative perfectivity for unbounded predicates of the French (5a) or English (5b) type, thus expressed by an imperfective bare verb in Russian (6a) and a bare stem (6b) in Hungarian.

However, Russian and Hungarian diverge: the former has morphologized (obligatory) aspect, not the latter; a Hungarian verbal stem may denote a bounded (8c) or unbounded (7c) situation, especially in certain classes of predicates (consumption, creation; Kiss 2006); this never happens in Russian (7b vs. 8b).

This analysis aims to show that only an empirically-grounded, fine-grained analysis in the expression of event singularisation, can shed light on the nature of aspectual "systems".

Examples and references :

- (1) a- *Je suis descendu acheter du pain et des pâtes, j'ai fait ma cuisine et j'ai mangé debout.* (39)
 b- ... *prepared my meal and ate it standing up.* (22)
- (2) a- *J'ai secoué la sueur et le soleil.* (93)
 b- *I shook off the sweat and the sun.* (54)
- (3) a- *We all ate in silence. Masson drank a lot of wine.* (47)
 b- *Nous mangions tous sans parler. Masson buvait souvent du vin...* (78)
- (4) a- *Il a soigneusement essuyé la toile cirée de la table.* (50)
 b- *Tščatel'no vy-ter trjapkoj kleěnku na stole.* (20) (teret' > vy-teret')
 carefully PRF-STEM.PFV.PST with.cloth tablecloth on table
 c- *Majd gondosan le-törölte az asztal viaszosvászon abroszát.* (12) (töröl > le-töröl)
 carefully PRF-STEM.PST the table tablecloth
- (5) a- *J'ai marché longtemps.* (85)
 b- *I walked for a long time.* (52)
- (6) a- *Ja šěl dolgo.* (33)
 I walk.IMPFV.PST long
 b- *Sokáig jártam így a parton.* (21)
 long walk.PST thus on shore
- (7) a- *Masson buvait souvent du vin et il me servait sans arrêt.* (78)
 b- *Masson pil mnogo vina i neprestanno podlival mne.* (30)
 Masson drink.IMPFV.PST much wine and unceasingly served me
 c- *Masson igen sok bort ivott, s nekem is szünet nélkül töltögetett.* (19)
 Masson really much wine drink.3SG.PST and to-me without pause served
- (8) a- *J'ai encore pris du café au lait qui était très bon.* (22)
 b- *Potom ja opjat' vy-pil očen' vkusnogo kofe s molokom.* (7)
 then I again PRF-drink.PFV.PST very good coffee with milk
 c- *Megint ittam tejeskávét, s megint igen jólesett.* (5)
 again drink.1SG.PST coffee with milk and again very good

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