

RLMSEE-2020**The Russian Language in Modern Scientific and Educational Environment****RUSSIAN VERB CATEGORIES OF ASPECT AND DEGREE OF
DURATION SYSTEMIC ANALYSIS**

Olga Valentinova (a), Vladimir Denisenko (b), Mikhail Rybakov (c)*

*Corresponding author

- (a) Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN-University), 6 Miklukho-Maklaya St, Moscow, 117198, Russian Federation, valentinova_oi@rudn.ru
- (b) Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN-University), 6 Miklukho-Maklaya St, Moscow, 117198, Russian Federation, denisenko_vn@rudn.ru
- (c) Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (RUDN-University), 6 Miklukho-Maklaya St, Moscow, 117198, Russian Federation, rybakov_ma@rudn.ru

Abstract

The category of aspect of the verb in Russian has been a disputable issue for many years and has become the subject of a separate section of morphology. Numerous attempts to explain the semantics of an aspect either in the context of the category of tense or as an combined of the lexical-grammatical category of action mode do not provide an exhaustive explanation of the specific facts of the use of verb forms. Less well known are the works of Russian scientists of the 19th century, in which the idea of considering aspect in connection with the value of the degree of duration was put forward. This idea was more fully developed by the founder of modern systemic linguistics Melnikov. The systemic interpretation of the aspect allows us to understand it as a specific category of Slavic languages that most fully realized the idea of a multifaceted presentation of a developing event, prescribed by the inner form of languages of the inflectional type. The systematic approach allows not to limit the interpretation of the aspect by opposing completeness – incompleteness, or internally exhausted - unexhausted action, but at the same time not to abandon the idea of the invariant meaning of the grammatical category.

2357-1330 © 2021 Published by European Publisher.

Keywords: Aspect, category, determinant, grammar, systemology, verb

1. Introduction

The verbal category of aspect in Russian and other Slavic languages is one of the most disputable categories because of evident complexity of meaning, especially in contrast to Germanic and Romance aspectual categories.

The formal grammar traditionally describes aspectual meaning as ‘completeness of an action to a certain point of time’ in a verb form of perfect aspect and ‘incompleteness’ in an imperfect aspect form and focused mainly on morphological signs of aspect. Aspectual pairs were usually described as different lexical units. Vinogradov (2001) gave a solid outline of different apprehensions of this category in Russian grammar science of the XIX century and the first half of XX century. Vostokov, Avanesov, Sidorov believed aspectual forms mean ‘phase of an action’ – start/finish phase or middle phase. Brugman, Delbrück, Mazon, Meileet considered aspect as a form of an action, which could be described by dint of spatial analogy (point and vector scheme). Fortunatov defined aspectual meaning as generally as possible – ‘an action in relation to its existence in time’. Vinogradov characterized aspect as a basis of derivational and inflectional processes and more complex and diverse than any other verbal category (2001, p. 393).

The structural grammar tries to describe any opposition of grammar forms without standing a question about categorial meaning.

The functional grammar seeks for detailed definition of grammatical meaning of all categories and aspect as well putting forward ‘achievement of internal limit of an action’ and trying to differentiate aspectual semantic oppositions of weak – strong, internal – external, primary – secondary completeness / incompleteness of an action, see, for example (Knyazev, 2007, pp. 369-384). An intricacy of aspectual semantics generated a special branch of functional morphology – aspectology, a special subject of many monographies, articles, and conferences.

That formal category, which in traditional grammar, written according to Latin-Greek patterns, was called an aspect, as has long been known in Russian studies, has a more complex semantic structure than opposition on the basis of completeness – incompleteness of an action.

Topicality of the problem of aspectual semantics is confirmed by new publications, prepared as well on the base of a formal method (Panova, 2016), as well according to cognitive approach (Kravchenko, 2019).

2. Problem Statement

A problem we would like to put in this article is a possibility to explain grammar meaning of verbal aspect category in the context of communicative perspective of language. We believe aspectual semantics as well as any categorial semantics is better detected when a grammatical meaning is taken as a component of the whole language grammatical system. Another side of the same problem is relation between invariant categorial meaning and variant grammar senses of its forms. This problem was not put nether in formal nor in structural linguistic works and could be analyzed in frameworks of the systemic linguistics. The essence of the problem is nature of aspect meaning in the system of verb categories in Russian.

3. Research Questions

For solution of the stated problem, we have to examine next questions:

- the function of grammar in language system as a whole and in a certain type of system.
- the function of grammar meaning in language system of a certain morphological type and the function of grammar sense in utterance.
- typical inner form of utterance in the inflectional language.
- the aspectual category of verb in Russian in connection with the degree of actional duration category
- the function of aspect and duration in semantics of utterance.

3.1. The function of grammar and its categories in language system

In the light of systemic ideas grammar should be defined as a system of auxiliary senses which are necessary and sufficient for informational value of utterance in a language of a certain type in its concrete communicative conditions. These caused by systemic determinant of a given language regularly expressed auxiliary senses can be named grammar categories of the language. Grammar category, become a conventional sense of specialised meanings and relevant forms, is a formal category. Grammar category is organized as a system of meanings, which of them is “a communicatively meaningful generalized image” (Melnikov, 1978, p. 321), specialized for expressing of the category.

The systemic theory of language comes from the statement that a complex of categories of a language is not arbitrary but based on internal determinant of language system. The internal determinant is based in its turn on external language determinant. The concept of internal and external determinants was elaborated by Melnikov in his linguistic publications of 1960-90 years and systematized in a book prepared on the base of the doctor thesis of 1990 (Melnikov, 2003). External determinant is a complex of societal factors relevant to conditions of communication is a certain linguistic society. Internal determinant is its communicative perspective as a main factor of all language substantial, structural, and functional peculiarities. The notion of the internal determinant is a concretization of W. von Humboldt’s idea of “inner form of language”

Lipatova (2016, p. 29) noticed that in systemic linguistic the norm of inner form of inflective languages is a representation of any message in a picture of a developing event.

3.2. Aspect and degree of duration

Pavskij was the first who opened specifics of Russian verbal categories, described aspect as a meaning of 3 degrees of an action, and put this category in the center of Russian verb system. His idea is illustrated in table 1.

Table 1. Degrees of action according to Pavskij

Degree	Grammar meaning	Russian examples	Lexical meaning
1	instant	mel'knut', skaknut', ujtj	flash, jump, go away
2	multiple	melkat', skakat', khodit'	flash, jump, go
3	multiple further	mel'kivat' ² , skakivat', khazhivat'	flash, jump, walk

Pavskij also offered to differ some semantic aspects of degree of an action: 1) a degree of force, 2) a degree of spatial latitude, 3) a degree of duration, 4) a degree of proximity – apartness. This concept of verbal degree can be defined as spatial-temporal system of meanings.

Nekrasov gave another – purely temporal concept of verbal degree. He viewed aspect forms as variants of one verbal lexeme as it is shown in table 2.

Table 2. Degrees of action according to N.P. Nekrasov

Degree	Grammar meaning	Russian examples	Lexical meaning
1	short	dvinit', makhnut'	move, flap
2	extended	dvigat', makhat'	move, flap
3	multiple	dvigivat', makhivat'	move, flap

These ideas of Pavskij and Nekrasov further developed by Potebnja, who gave a deep and comprehensive survey of all previous theories of Russian verb, offered to differ categories of aspect and duration and analyzed formal and semantic relations of verbs of different degree

4. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose is to find a determinant concept in the Russian verbal aspect category and at the same time investigate explanatory possibilities of systemic linguistic method proposed in the Russian linguistics by Melnikov as further development of ideas of Pavskij, Nekrasov, and Potebnja.

5. Research Methods

The basic method used in the article is the systemic typological method. In developed by Melnikov the systemic typology of languages, the features of the language system - phonetic, grammatical, lexical – all of them – are explained on the basis oof the concept of the inner form of the language type, that is, its communicative aspect of the language, which reflects such features of the form in the predicative act, which in typical communicative conditions in a given language collective will be optimal.

The systemic typological method was successfully employed in studies on inner form of Russian compound words, Russian case category (Dremov, 2019), functional semantics (Lipatova, 2016), correlations of language typological features and societal structures (Danylenko, 2018a, pp. 81-96), diachronic changes in tense systems (Danylenko, 2018b, pp. 113-129), grammaticalization of resultative forms in North Slavic (Danylenko, 2020), active tendencies in Russian parts of speech system (Kirov, 2019).

The inner form of languages of the inflectional type is defined in systemic typology as the adaptability of units of all levels to the expression of any content through a statement, the nominative meaning of which fits into the scheme of a developing event.

6. Findings

6.1. The degree of duration

The inflectional system was formed only in the Indo-European languages, but only the Slavic languages retained and developed the original inflectional structure of the Indo-European system. Therefore, the binary grammatical category of the aspect, which was formed only in Slavic languages, must be considered as a consequence of the eventual internal form of inflectional languages in the most developed stage of development of inflectional language.

The grammatical system of Slavic languages developed in such a direction that the emerging grammatical categories, especially verb categories, contributed to the ever more complete correspondence of the scheme of the nominative meaning of the utterance to the canon of the developing event, preparing the appearance of the category of the aspect.

In order to bring the nominative meaning of the statement to the canon of a developing event when performing any communicative plan, already at the initial stages of the formation of the Indo-European system, signs with a material meaning are split into nouns and verbs to indicate the most important characteristics of the simplest event: who or what is changing, what is this change. The opposition of a noun and a verb even at the stage of the common Indo-European system was formally expressed at the level of the construction of roots: the proto-verbal root was most often represented by a syllable with an e-shaped vowel, and to express varieties of nominal semantics with the same consonant composition, a mutation based on reduction, lengthening or labialization of the root vowel: *beru* 'I take', *otbor* 'selection', *sobranije* 'collection', *sobirat* 'to collect'.

In the eventful presentation of the content of the utterance, it was necessary to express the spatial and temporal characteristics of the event, and for this it was necessary to establish a reliably identifiable common origin of coordinates. Therefore, as the core of an utterance with an eventful inner form, not only the verbal root, as a sign of the initial dynamics of the event, had to be formed, but also morphemes - clarifiers of its dynamic parameters. The personal conjugation specifies from whom the initial impulse emanates and binds the named utterance to the referential event – to the act of speaking with its obvious spatial and temporal characteristics. First, a personal athematic conjugation is formed, reflecting the spatial characteristics of the named event, then thematic conjugation is formed. The thematic morpheme indicates that the initial impulse of the described event proceeds against the background of an act of communication observed and carried out by the communicants themselves. The thematic affix also emphasizes the spatial parameters of the event, which are implicitly consistent with the temporal ones – the speaking situation. Therefore, the main grammatical opposition of the Slavic verbal system "present tense – aorist" expressed not so much the time of the event as it was, as the place: the events taking place here and there, that is, outside the field of communication.

To emphasize the difference in the duration of "local" events, forms of imperfect develop, and this has led to the mobilization of means of emphasizing duration in present tense. Proto-nominal roots begin to be drawn into the system, which receive a secondary, verbal function, which is indicated by the introduction of special affixes into the word form, expressing the degree of duration of the action indicated by the verb, emphasizing its increase or decrease in comparison with the original duration,

expressed by the word form with a proto-verbal root. Absence of an affix of duration in the original word form began to be perceived as the presence of a zero affix of duration.

Initially, the spatial characteristics of the named event are grammaticalized. The temporal parameters of the named event are first expressed implicitly, and grammaticalized much later. Moreover, at first the absolute time coordinate indicated not when, but for how long, and the relative coordinate was expressed implicitly – through the spatial reference of the named event with the reference event, the speaking situation. At the same time, the events taking place here were correlated with the current course, and the events taking place there were perceived only as spatially distant. In the systemic typology of languages, such ambiguity is interpreted as a possible reason for the loss of the aorist and imperfect and the development of verb forms that express the actual past and proper future tense in relation to the moment of speaking.

The formal expression of temporal characteristics began to form the means of opposing verb forms according to the degree of duration of the named action as the nucleus of the depicted event. Therefore, the opposition of verb forms in terms of the degree of duration and the difference between the duration they designate from the original word form with a proto-verbal root formed the basis for the formation of all subsequent verbal and verbal-based oppositions in the course of tuning the Slavic language system in accordance with the eventual inner form. So are the functions, means and meaning the category of the aspect, which is interpreted as a result of the transition of the Slavic languages to a higher degree of attunement of linguistic technology to reflect the developing event, cannot be established without taking into account the content and means of opposing verbs according to the degree of duration they denote. Please replace this text with context of your paper.

6.2. The relationship between the degrees of the duration of the verb and the aspect

Degree of duration changes develop into aspectual changes. Five gradations of duration, the need to distinguish which was substantiated by Melnikov, are expressed by five power suffixes: -н-, -ѡ-, -ѣ-, -а-, -ба- [-н-, -ѡ-, -ѣ-, -а-, -ва] where the left consonant suffix signals a decrease in the degree of duration in comparison with the original form, and the right vocal suffixes with an increasing degree of vocality indicate that the resulting duration of the action expressed by the verb increases (Melnikov, 1997, p. 136). Depending on the semantics of the root and the presence of prefixes at one stage or another, there is an aspectual boundary that divides the duration series of verbs into two zones. In one zone there are perfective verbs, and in the other - imperfective verbs. If the same prefix is added to each verb of the duration series, then the semantics of these verbs will narrow and the degree of expressed duration will decrease, which means that the aspectual boundary will shift towards the expansion of the zone of the perfect form due to the narrowing of the zone of the imperfect form. And vice versa: if a certain verb needs to be transferred to the imperfective zone, then the duration suffix of this verb must be changed to suffixes of increasing duration of the verb action until the verb has crossed the aspectual border.

Potebnja considered a verb in Slavic languages to be the minimum of a sentence. A sentence in the Slavic language, as follows from an event-based communicative perspective, gives a picture of a developing event, in which the verb form (especially personal) through the meaning of the person names the initiator of the event, the meanings of the prefixes call the presence of actions of some other

participants in the event, the degree of verb duration is the time of the event, verb tense – precedence, coincidence or adherence of the named event to the moment of speech. Thus, the content of the word form of the Slavic verb is the content of a micro drama, with a set, culmination and denouement.

A perfect aspect gives an image of eventful completion, that is, a micro drama that has a set and culmination ends with a denouement. But the meaning of perfection is not always the same:

On zagovoril o dele ‘He began to speak about the case’ – a perfection is related to the initiator of the event and is related to the beginning of the event.

On progovoril privetstvie ‘He uttered a greeting’ – a perfection is correlated with the patient of the event, with the direct object.

Oni progovorili ves’ vecher ‘They talked all evening’ – a perfection corresponds to the temporal interval and coincides with the end of the event.

Now it is clear that the perfection of the eventful content of the sentence is combined with both the incompleteness and the completion of the event expressed by the sentence. Thus, the concepts of perfection and complete completeness are independent. The perfect form expresses not performance, completeness, not limit, not integrity (although it can implicitly express these characteristics of the event referred to), but draws an image of eventful perfection, that is, an image of a micro drama with a setting, culmination and an obligatory denouement.

The determinant approach in the study of one of the most complex grammatical categories, to which the category of the aspect in the Slavic languages belongs, allows us to see a chain of interconnected logically grounded patterns in what seemed to be undefined, scattered and even chaotic.

The category of the aspect, like other grammatical categories, was formed in the inflectional Slavic languages in accordance with their internal determinant: so that the scheme of the nominative meaning of the utterance most fully corresponds to the canon of the developing event.

In the course of the determinantal analysis, it was possible to clarify the meaning of the category of the aspect: the perfect form creates an image of the perfection of the event with a set, culmination and obligatory denouement, and the meanings of perfection, incompleteness, limitation, integrity, attributed to the perfect form, can sometimes express implicitly as additional meanings.

It was also possible to determine the main stages and logic of historical changes along the way of improving the language system in the depiction of a developing event: the opposition of a noun and a verb at the root level – grammaticalization of the spatial characteristics of an event through the development of thematic affixes and opposition of a present and aorist – a grammaticalization of the temporal characteristics of an event (opposition of verb forms according to the degree of duration of the action referred to as the nucleus of the depicted event and the growth of durative differences into aspectual). The principle of the ratio of the degrees of duration and aspect and its difference of the 1st and 2^d type of conjugation (lines **a**) and **b**) in Russian is reflected in the table 3 (Melnikov, 1997, p. 136).

Table 3. Degrees of durations according to Melnikov

	I	II	III	IV	V
a)	-n-	-ø-	-b-	-a-	-yva-
b)	-ŋ-n-	-ŋ-ø-	-ŋ-b-	-ŋ-a-	-ŋ-yva-

7. Conclusion

In systemic linguistics, the verb is considered as a typical predicate of an inflectional utterance, since it serves as the most appropriate means of depicting a developing event, which is required by the internal determinant of an inflectional language. For the most effective performance of this nominative function, the verb requires a system of grammatical categories that would reflect more fully the spatial, temporal, and structural parameters of the event.

The Russian language, like other Slavic languages, which went much further along the path of implementing the eventual internal form in the entire structure of the utterance and in each part of speech separately, required a more complex system of verb categories than the system of times developed in the Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Slavic languages.

The systemic linguistics is based on the concept of determinant - the main organizing principle under the influence of which language is formed as an integral system. The share and nature of information that is socialized from personal experience, and typical obstacles to the depiction of this information by language means form an external determinant. The internal determinant is a feature of the inner form of utterances, which is characterized by the traditional perspective of the image of socialized information. The formation of both grammatical categories and the formal means of expressing them is determined by the internal determinant of the language. The improvement of the scheme of a developing event, which requires the development of means of expressing not only the spatial, but also the temporal characteristics of the depicted event, led to the formation in the inflectional Slavic languages of the category of the aspect, whose appearance was prepared by the appearance of degrees of the duration of the action expressed by the verb. Thus, the categories of aspect and duration turn out to be interconnected: depending on the semantics of the root and the presence of prefixes at one stage or another, the aspect boundary passes, which divides the duration series of verbs into zones of the perfect and imperfect form.

Acknowledgments

The reported study was funded by RFBR according to the research project № 19-012-00014 «Reconstruction of the content of the conceptual fields of systemic linguistics».

References

- Danylenko, A. (2020). On the grammaticalization of the -(v)ši- resultative in North Slavic. In B. Drinka (Ed.) *Historical Linguistics 2017*. Selected papers from the 23rd International Conference on Historical Linguistics, San Antonio, Texas, 31 July – 4 August 2017 (pp. 293–316). Philadelphia, USA: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Danylenko, A. (2018a). The correlation of linguistic patterning and societal structures in systemic typology. *Studia Linguistica Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis*, 135(1), 81–96. <https://doi.org/10.4467/20834624SL.18.007.8167>
- Danylenko, A. (2018b). Complexity development and simplification in systemic typology: types of changes in the internal determinant. *Studia Linguistica Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis*, 135(2), 113–129. <https://doi.org/10.4467/20834624SL.18.010.8469>
- Dremov, A. F. (2019). Ponjatija prostogo i prostejshego predlozhenija v sistemnoj teorii padezha [The concepts of the simplest and simple sentences in the systemic theory of case]. *RUDN Journal of*

- Language Studies, Semiotics and Semantics*, 10(1), 43-62. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-2299-2019-10-1-43-62> [in Rus.].
- Kirov, E. F. (2019). Aktivnye protsessy v grammatike russkogo jazyka [Active processes in Russian grammar]. *Russian Language Abroad*, 2, 42-51. [in Rus.].
- Knyazev, Ju. P. (2007). *Grammaticheskaja semantika: Russkij Jazyk v tipologicheskoj perspective* [Grammar semantics: Russian language in typological perspective]. *Jazyki slavjanskikh kultur*. [in Rus.].
- Kravchenko, A. V. (2019). Naskolko ekzotichen “printsip neposredstvennosti vosprijatija” v jazyke piraha? [How exotic is the “immediacy of experience principle” in Pirahã?]. *Siberian Journal of Philology*, 1, 148-160. <https://doi.org/10.17223/18137083/66/13> [in Rus.].
- Lipatova, T. V. (2016). Smysloobrazovanie i funkcionalnaja motivirovannost semantiki edinitj jazyka [The formation of meaning and functional motivation of language units' semantics]. *RUDN Journal of Language Studies, Semiotics and Semantics*, 1, 25-31.
- Melnikov, G. P. (1997). Kategorija stepeni dlitelnosti glagolnogo dejstvija i eje svjaz s kategoriej vida [The category of the degree of duration of the verb action and its relationship with the category of the aspect]. In Chertkova M.Ju. (ed.) *Trudy aspectologičeskogo seminaru filologičeskogo fakulteta MGU im. M.V. Lomonosova* [Proceedings of the Aspectological Seminar of Philological School M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University] Vol. 1. Izdatelstvo MGU. [in Rus.].
- Melnikov, G. P. (2003). *Sistemnaja tipologija jazykov. Printsipy, metody, modeli* [Systemic typology of Languages. Principles, methods, models]. Nauka. [in Rus.].
- Melnikov, G. P. (1978). *Systemologija i jazykovye aspekt kibernetiki* [Systemology and linguistic aspects of cybernetics]. Sovetskoje radio. [in Rus.].
- Panova, G. I. (2016). O formalnom vyrazhenii vida i vremeni russkogo glagola [On the formal expression of the aspect and tense of the Russian verb]. *Siberian Journal of Philology*, 4, 228-240. <https://doi.org/10.17223/18137083/57/20> [in Rus.].
- Vinogradov, V. V. (2001). *Russkij jazyk* [Russian language]. Moscow – Leningrad: Uchpedgiz [in Rus.].