1 Introduction

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Table 1: Aspectual differences between Russian and Czech

- Further differences not discussed here (non-exhaustive list):
  - Imperatives (Dokulil 1948; Eckert 1984; Alvestad 2014)
  - Negation (Eckert 1984; Stunová 1993; Dickey & Kresnin 2009)
  - Coincidence, instructions, commentaries, nominalisations (Dickey 2000)
  - Reflexive passives (Fehrmann et al. 2010)

- Results of a small parallel corpus study, based on (1) and (2) (Gehrke 2002, 2003)
  - Restricted to past tense contexts
  - Non-habitual (single-event) vs. habitual contexts
  - (Some considerations about the ‘general-factual’ IPF in both languages)


• Main findings / claims:
  – In both languages, (I)PF operate on (atemporal) event structures of various complexity, lexically provided by the verb (and its argument(s)).
  – Aspectual affixes can either be part of the event structure (e.g. internal prefixes) or they can (aspectually, temporally, spatially or otherwise) modify a given event without affecting the event structure (e.g. external prefixes, imperfectivising suffixes).
  – Differences between both languages are found in the use of external (but not internal) prefixes and imperfectivising suffixes, and in the role of finiteness. → Different interaction between inner and outer aspect.
  – Shortcoming of previous accounts of the differences: Non-compositional; ignore the interplay between (I)PF and event types by focusing exclusively on alleged 'invariant meaning' of one or the other aspect (usually of PF, treating IPF as unmarked).

2 The data
2.1 Unique events: chains of events and grounding
Main differences between Russian and Czech:
• Russian:
  – Chains of foregrounded unique events: exclusively PF finite verb forms (internal prefixes on telic events, external prefixes on atelic events)
  – No explicit distinction (on the verb form) between events in process or events of a particular duration, on the one hand, and changes of states, on the other
  – Backgrounded and temporally overlapping events: Non-finite verb forms (both IPF, PF)
• Czech:
  – No use of external prefixes; IPF with atelic events, PF with telic events; temporal boundedness of atelic events only deducible from the context
  – Possibility to use IPF to describe events in chains of events that are of a longer duration
  – Backgrounded and temporally overlapping events: Subordinate temporal or relative clauses

(3) a. [...] ale když se potom dal se mnou do řeči, cítila jsem
   but when REFL then gave.PF with me.INSTR in speech.GEN felt.IPF AUX1SG
   nájednou, jak se zaplatím, tak plácím, jak
   suddenly how REFL untangle.PRES1SG.IPF babble.PRES1SG.IPF how
   mluvím hloupě, a on když viděl, že jsem v rozpacích,
   speak.PRES1SG.IPF stupidly and he when saw.IPF that AUX1SG in awkwardnesses.PREP
   obrátil hned řeč na obyčejné věci [...]
   turned.PF immediately speech.ACC on ordinary.PL.ACC things.ACC
   ‘... but when he then started talking to me, I suddenly felt how I am becoming tangled up, am babbling, how I am saying stupid things, and when he saw that I was embarrassed he immediately changed the course of conversation to ordinary things ...’ ([CZ] Kun 25 / 30)
   b. [...] no stoilo emu zagovorit’ so mnoj kak ja vdrug
   but was-worthwhile.IPF him.HIM ZA-speak.INF.PF with me.INSTR how I suddenly
   počuvstvovala, čto sbivajus’, boltaju vsjakuju
   felt.PF that become-confused.PRES1SG.IPF babble.PRES1SG.IPF any.ACC
   čuš’, govorju glupo, a on, zametiv moju
   nonsense.ACC speak.PRES1SG.IPF stupidly and he realise.AP.PF my.ACC
   rasterjannost’, svernul razgovor na banal’nye temy [...]
Czech finite IPF vs. Russian non-finite form

- Adverbial participles [AP], e.g. zametiv ‘having realised’ in (3-b): productive in Russian, archaic in Czech; can be IPF (temporal overlap) or PF (temporal overlap of result state)
- (Other non-finite means in Russian, e.g. nominalisations, to render Czech finite IPF)

Differences in external prefixes:

(4) a. Blagodorja tomu, čto assistant otozval professor.ACC amoebas.NOM 
   proležali poltora časa pod dejstvím često luča i 
   polučilo's vět čto: [...] 
   ‘Thanks to the fact that the assistant called away the professor, the amoebas lay for one and a half hours under the impact of this ray and so this happened: ...’ ([RU] RJ393/16)

b. Díky tomu, že asistent profesora odvolal, měňavky 
   byly půlnu hodiny vystaveny 
   a výsledek byl následující: [...] 
   and result.NOM was.IPF following.NOM

(5) a. On pomolčal nekotoroe vremja v smjatenni, vsmatravajás' v lunu, 
   he PO-was-silent.PF some time in confusion.PREP in-watch.AP.SI in moon.ACC 
   plyuščuju za rešetkoj, i zagovoril: [...] 
   swimming.PART.IPF behind bars.INSTR and ZA-spoke.PF 
   ‘He stayed silent for some time in confusion, watching the moon that swam behind the bars, and (then) said: ...’ ([RU] MM130/109)

b. Chvěli zaražené mlčel, sledoval plující měšic za 
   while.ACC confused.ADV was-silent.IPF followed.IPF swimming.ACC moon.ACC behind 
   a pak se zeptal: [...] 
   bars.INSTR and then REFL inquired.PF

(6) a. Pak holička po-od-stoupila [...] 
   then hairdresser.FEM.NOM PO-away-stepped.PF 
   ‘Then the hairdresser stepped (a bit) away ...’ ([CZ] Kun 13 / 16)

b. Potom parikmaxerša oto-šla čut' [...] 
   then hairdresser.FEM.NOM away-went.PF a bit

(Further differences with motion verbs)

Rare cases of IPF in Russian chains of events

- With verbs of saying as the last event in the chain
- With explicit interruption and then continuation of the chain by adverbials (7-a)

(7) a. Professor dobralsja do komnaty Pankrata i dolgo i bezuspešno 
   professor.NOM reached.PF to room.GEN Pankrat.GEN and long.ADV and unsuccessfully 
   stučal v nee. Nakonec za dver'ju poslyšalos' určan'e [...] 
   knocked.IPF in her.ACC finally behind door.INSTR heard.REFL.PF growl.NOM 
   ‘The professor reached Pankrat’s room und for a long time and unsuccessfully knocked on it. Finally, one could hear a growl behind the door ...’ ([RU] RJ 391 / 13)
b. Profesor **dotápal** až k Pankratovu pokojíku a **dlouho** bezúspěšně professor.NOM to-toddled.PF up to Pankrat’s room.DAT and **long**.ADV unsuccessfully **klepal** na dveře. **Konečně** se za dveřmi **ozvalo** knocked.IPF on door.ACC finally **REFL** behind door.INSTR sounded.REFL.PF cosi [...]

something.NOM

- Only Czech uses IPF to additionally express (on the verb) that the event was gradual:

(8) a. [...] **přidála** jsem se proto ze všech sil k Pavlovým in-joined.PF AUX 1SG REFL therefore out all.GEN forces.GEN to Pavel’s.DAT ústům a **přidávali** se další a další [...] mouth.DAT and in-joined.IPF(SI) REFL more.NOMPL and more.NOMPL ‘... therefore I joined in with Pavel’s chanting with all my force and more and more joined in ...’ ([CZ] Kun 20 / 22)

b. [...] i potomu **izo** vsej moči **stala podpevat’** Pavelu, k nam and therefore out all.GEN power.GEN began.PF along-sing.IPF Pavel.DAT to us **prisoedínílis**’ drugie, ešče i ešče [...] joined.REFL.PF others.NOM still and still

- Scene setting (backgrounding) vs. foregrounded chain of events:

(9) a. Když **přišlo** pozdní jaro, když **bylo** léto, když se when came.PF late.NOM spring.NOM when was.IPF summer.NOM when REFL **setmělo** a **byla** sobota, **přešel** jsem osvětlený got-dark.PF and was.IPF Saturday.NOM across-went.PF AUX 1SG illuminated.ACC most, pak **zahnul** k mlýnu a podle Staré rybárny jsem bridge.ACC then off-bent.PF to mill.DAT and past Old.ACC fisherman.ACC AUX 1SG kráčel kolem plotu farní zahrady. straddled.IPF around fence.GEN churchyard.GEN ‘When late spring arrived, when it was summer, when it got dark and it was Saturday, I crossed the illuminated bridge, then turned to the mill and past the Old Fisherman I strolled around the fence of the churchyard.’ ([CZ] JR 109)

b. Kogda vesnja **približalas’** k koncu, kogda **bylo** uže počti leto, wenn spring approached.IPF to end.DAT, when was.IPF already almost summer.NOM odnaždy v **subbotnie** sumerki ja **perešel** osvěšcennyj once in Saturday-.PLACC twilights.ACC I across-went.PF illuminated.ACC most, a potom **svernul** k mel’nice i **zašagal** mimo starogo bridge.ACC and then off-bent.PF to mill.DAT and ZA-straddled.PF past old.GEN ‘Rybnogo podvorOja’ vdol’ ogrady cerkovnogo sada. Fisherman’s-Inn.GEN along fence.GEN churchyard.GEN

2.2 Event plurality, habitual contexts

- The differences in a nutshell

Russian:

- Received view: Non-unique events are incompatible with PF. ⇒ HAB requires IPF.
- Finite verb forms in habitual chains of events are all IPF: simple IPFs for atelic events (i.e. no use of external prefixes anymore), SIs for telic events.
New with atelic events: frequent periphrastic expression of ingressivity (e.g. IPF \načinit' \textquotesingle begin\textquotesingle + lexical verb)

However, the same discourse strategies hold for temporally overlapping and backgrounded events: non-finite verb forms (both IPF, PF).

Czech:

– Habituality does not require the IPF.

– More or less the same use of (I)PF as with unique events (IPF for atelic events and telic events of some duration; PF for telic events; backgrounding etc. by subordinate clauses).

– In addition: Whole passages can be (probably optionally) flagged once for habituality by IPF forms that are additionally specialised for expressing event repetition: frequentatives, indeterminate motion verbs.

(The frequentative suffix \textit{-va-} (+ vowel lengthening) is added to an already IPF verb; not productive anymore in Russian, only with by-va-t' \textquotesingle be.FREQ\textquotesingle; e.g. (10))

\begin{enumerate}
\item \hline
\begin{multicols}{2}
\begin{enumerate}
\item a. \textit{býval} jsem bezradný
was.FREQ.IPF AUX1SG helpless.NOM
\textquoteleft... I was (habitually) helpless ...	extquoteright\ ([CZ] Kun 34 / 39)
\item b. \textit{stanovil\v{s}ja} bespomo\v{c}ným
became.SI helpless.INSTR
\textquoteleft... I became helpless ...	extquoteright
\end{enumerate}
\end{multicols}
\end{enumerate}

\begin{enumerate}
\item \hline
\begin{multicols}{2}
\begin{enumerate}
\item a. Ona \textit{prixodila} ke mne každý den', a \textit{zd\acute{a}t'} ee ja \textit{na\v{c}inal} s
she.NOM to-went.SI to me \textit{every day} and wait.INF.IPF her.GEN I began.SI from
utra. \textquoteleft\textaccentuml{u}\text{\v{O}}zidanie \hfill \textaccentuml{e\o}\text{\v{t}o} \text{vyra\v{z}alos'} \textquoteright\ v tom, \textquoteleft\textaccentuml{e}t\text{\v{z}o} ja
morning.GEN expectation.NOM this.NOM expressed.REFL.SI in that \textquoteleft\textaccentuml{I} \textit{perestavljal} na stole \textit{predmety.} \textquoteleft\textaccentuml{Za des\acute{j}at'} minut ja \textit{sadilsja} \textit{na}
rearranged.SI on table.PREP things.ACC within ten minutes I down-sat.SI to
okoncu i \textit{na\v{c}inal prislu\v{s}ivat\v{s}ja}, ne stuknet li vetxaja kalitka.
window.DAT and began.SI listen.INF.SI not clatters.PRES.PF PRT old.NOM gate.NOM
\textquoteleft She came to me every day, and I started waiting for her from morning onwards. This
waiting consisted in me rearranging things on the table. Within ten minutes \textquoteleft [of her
arrival] I sat next to the window and started listening whether the gate clatters.' ([RU]
MM135/112f.)
\item b. \textit{Chodila} ke mně denně za poledne a já na ni \textit{\v{c}ekával}
went.INDET.IPF to me \textit{daily} during midday.ACC and I \textit{on her waited}.FREQ.IPF
u\textacute{z} od rána. \textquoteleft
\textaccentuml{\v{C}ekání spo\v{c}valo v tom, \textquoteleft\textaccentuml{\v{z}} jsem \textit{přestavoval} na
already from morning.GEN waiting consisted.IPF in that that AUX1SG rearranged.SI on
stole věci. Deset minut před tím, než měla přijít, table.PREP things ten minutes before that when had.FEM(3SG).IPF come.IND.PF
jsem se \textit{uchýlil} k oknu a napjatě \textit{poslouchal}, kdy
AUX1SG REFL proceeded.PF to window and attentively listened.IPF when
klapne \textit{omšelá} \textit{branka.}
clatters.PRES.PF moss-covered.NOM gate.NOM
\end{enumerate}
\end{multicols}
\end{enumerate}

• Zooming in on explicit marking of HAB in Czech; out of roughly 500 verb forms:
  – 16 frequentative verb forms (vs. three occurrences of \textit{by-va-t'} \textquotesingle be.FREQ\textquotesingle in Russian)
  – 3 indeterminate verbs of motion (e.g. (11-b))
  – 3 prefixed indeterminate verbs of motion (SIs)
– 9 SIs that have the same suffix as frequentatives (-va- + vowel lengthening)
– 3 SIs with other suffixes: all in the translation of Dovlatov

3 Previous proposals to explain the differences and their problems

• Older approaches (e.g. Bondarko 1958; Křížková 1955, 1958, 1961; Širokova 1963, 1971)
  – Common assumption: PF is semantically marked (e.g. for some feature A, i.e. +A), IPF is unmarked (either –A or ±A).
  – ‘The aspectual opposition’ can be neutralised in particular contexts, leading to the use of the unmarked member of the opposition, the IPF.
  – Neutralisation is obligatory (in a given context) in Russian but optional in Czech.

Problems of these approaches:

– Negative reason for the occurrence of IPF (because it is unmarked it can express anything)
– Optional neutralization in Czech: suggests arbitrariness (at least there is no explanation for why and when it is ‘optional’)

(No distinction between inner and outer aspect, no compositionality, disregarding different levels of morphological complexity)

• Petrušina (2000, 63-76)
  – Russian: obligatory neutralisation of the opposition atelic-telic (the ‘objective circumstances’ of a given situation) to favour a ‘subjective interpretation of its temporal contour’ by the speaker
  – Czech: This neutralisation is optional.

Problems, again: why and when is it optional, what are the circumstances?

• Stunová (1993) (similarly also Petrušina)
  – Aspect operates on different levels in the two languages.
  – Czech: on the level of word formation (the internal structure of an event) → Czech morphological aspect is more lexical and expresses an inner aspectual opposition.
  – Russian: on the sentence level → higher degree of grammaticalisation
  – It would be preferable to assume the universal functional hierarchy in (12).
  – Grammatical aspect in both languages should be located somewhere in the vicinity of AspP, rather than relegating it to VP in Czech and to AspP in Russian.

(12) [TP [AspP [VP]]]

• Dickey (2000): Differences between 10 Slavic languages → west-east isogloss
  – Eastern aspect system: prototype Russian (also: Belorussian, Ukranian, Bulgarian)
    * Invariant meaning of PF: temporal definiteness (in the sense of Leinonen 1982)
    * Invariant meaning of IPF: qualitative temporal indefiniteness
  – Western aspect system: prototype Czech (also: Sorbian, Slovak, Slovenian)
    * Invariant meaning of PF: totality
    * Invariant meaning of IPF: quantitative temporal indefiniteness
  – Peripheral types: Polish (closer to West) and Serbo-Croatian (closer to East)
Problems: These invariant meanings are too vague to be useful. (No distinction between inner and outer aspect, no compositionality, disregarding different levels of morphological complexity)

- **Eckert (1984, 1985, 1991):**
  - The only approach that takes the distinction between inner and outer aspect into serious consideration in her account of the differences.
  - However, her classification of verbs is too intertwined with grammatical aspect, and she does not keep both levels apart clearly enough.

→ Again, this makes a compositional analysis impossible.

- **Gehrke (2002)**
  - The quest for invariant meanings is not helpful; but if one has to ‘define’ them: (non)delimitedness This is interpreted temporally in Russian and ‘actionally’ in Czech. [still too vague to be useful]
  - Considering the IPF unmarked so that it pops up whenever the PF is not possible is also not helpful.
  - The morphology should be taken more seriously.
  - The differences lie at the level of the interaction between inner and outer aspect.

[but not worked out compositionally etc.]

- **Back to 2020:**
  - The crux lies in the area between AspP and VP, and how to situate the event time in the atemporal event structure.
  - What is the role of finiteness in Russian?
  - (Third chapter in Gehrke 2002 about differences in the factual IPF – needs to be explored further)

- **Quantitative corpus work (but no compositional analysis): Dübbers (2015)**

References


