

Differences between Russian and Czech in the use of aspectual affixes in narrative discourse
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1 Introduction

	<i>Russian</i>	<i>Czech</i>
Unique chains of events	PF	IPF, PF
Iterativity	(almost excl.) IPF	IPF, PF; frequentatives
Habituality	(almost excl.) IPF	IPF, PF; frequentatives
Historical Present	(almost excl.) IPF	IPF, PF
Past passive participles	(almost excl.) PF	IPF, PF
Reflexive passives	(almost excl.) IPF	IPF, PF
Nominalisations in <i>-nie/-ní</i> and <i>-tie/-tí</i>	(almost excl.) IPF	IPF, PF

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)
 - Present tense: habitual, historical, scenic/gnomic (Bondarko 1958, 1959; Křížková 1955, 1958; Širokova 1963; Petrušina 1978, 1983, 1998, 2000; Eckert 1984, 1985; Stunová 1991, 1993, 1994; Dickey 2000)
 - 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)

- (1)
- a. **(MM)**: Bulgakov, Mixail: Master i Margarita. In Bulgakov, Mixail: *Master i Margarita. Rokovye jajca. Sobač'e serdce: Roman, povesti*. Irkutsk 1988, p. 3-382.
translation: Bulgakov, Michail: *Mistr a Markétka*. Prague 1990.
 - b. **(RJ)**: Bulgakov, Mixail: Rokovye jajca. In Bulgakov, Mixail: *Master i Margarita. Rokovye jajca. Sobač'e serdce: Roman, povesti*. Irkutsk 1988, p. 383-456.
translation: Bulgakov, Michail: *Osudná vejce*. Prague 2000.
 - c. **(Dov)**: Dovlatov, Sergej: Zona: Zapiski nadziratelja. In Dovlatov, Sergej: *Sobranie prozy v trex tomax*. Saint Petersburg 1993, Tom 1, p. 25-172.
translation: Dovlatov, Sergej: *Lágr*. Prague 1988.
- (2)
- a. **(JR)**: Hrabal, Bohumil: Jetel růžak. In Hrabal, Bohumil: *Sebrané spisy 10*. Prague 1994, p. 106-112.
translation: Grabal, Bogumil: Rozovjy klevr. In Biblioteka Maksima Moškova (<http://lib.ru/>): Inostrannaja literatura 4 (2001).
 - b. **(MP)**: Hrabal, Bohumil: Mořská panna. In Hrabal, Bohumil: *Sebrané spisy 10*. Prague 1994, p. 9-17.
translation: Grabal, Bogumil: Rusalka. In Biblioteka Maksima Moškova (<http://lib.ru/>): Inostrannaja literatura 4 (2001).
 - c. **(RP)**: Hrabal, Bohumil: Rukovět Pábitelského učně. In Hrabal, Bohumil: *Sebrané spisy 10*. Prague 1994, p. 179-182.
translation: Grabal, Bogumil: Rukovodstvo Il'ja učenika Pabitelja. In Biblioteka Maksima Moškova (<http://lib.ru/>): Inostrannaja literatura 4 (2001).
 - d. **(Sext)**: Hrabal, Bohumil: Sextánka. In Hrabal, Bohumil: *Sebrané spisy 10*. Prague 1994, p. 145-153.
translation: Grabal, Bogumil: Šestiklassnica. In Biblioteka Maksima Moškova (<http://lib.ru/>): Inostrannaja literatura 4 (2001).
 - e. **(Kun)**: Kundera, Milan: *Žert*. Prague 1967.
translation: Kundera, Milan: *Šutka*. Saint Petersburg 1999.

- 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, **cítla** jsem
 but when REFL then gave.PF with me.INSTR in speech.GEN felt.IPF AUX 1 SG
najednou, jak se zaplétám, plácám, jak
 suddenly how REFL untangle.PRES 1 SG.IPF babble.PRES 1 SG.IPF how
 mluvím hloupě, a on **když viděl**, že jsem v rozpacích,
 speak.PRES 1 SG.IPF stupidly and he when saw.IPF that AUX 1 SG 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.PRES 1 SG.IPF babble.PRES 1 SG.IPF any.ACC
 čuš', govorju glupo, a on, **zametiv** moju
 nonsense.ACC speak.PRES 1 SG.IPF stupidly and he realise.AP.PF my.ACC
 rasterjannost', **svernul** razgovor na banal'nye temy [...]
 confusion.ACC turned.PF conversation.ACC on banal.PL.ACC topics.ACC

- 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 assistent otozval professora, ameby
thanks that.DAT that assistant.NOM away-called.PF professor.ACC amoebas.NOM
proležali poltora časa pod dejstviem éтого luča i
PRO-lay.PF one and a half hour.GEN under action.INSTR this.GEN ray.GEN and
polučilos’ vot čto: [...] [
happened.PF there what.NOM
‘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
thanks that.DAT that assistant.NOM professor.ACC away-called.PF amoebas.NOM
byly půldruhé hodiny **vystaveny** účinkům toho paprsku
were.IPF one and a half hour.GEN exposed.PART.PASS.PF impacts.DAT this.GEN ray.GEN
a výsledek **byl** následující: [...] [
and result.NOM was.IPF following.NOM
- (5) a. On **ptomolčal** nekotoroe vremja v smjatenii, **vsmatrivajas’** v lunu,
he PO-was-silent.PF some time in confusion.PREP in-watch.AP.SI in moon.ACC
plyvuščuju 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. Chvíli zaraženě **mľcel**, **sledoval** plující měsíc za
while.ACC confused.ADV was-silent.IPF followed.IPF swimming.ACC moon.ACC behind
mříží, 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 and 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. [...] **přidala** jsem se proto ze všech sil k Pavlovým
 in-joined.PF AUX 1 SG 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'** Pavlu, k nam
 and therefore out all.GEN power.GEN began.PF along-sing.IPF Pavel.DAT to us
prisoedinilis' 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 1 SG 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 1 SG
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** osveščennyj
 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 podvorŔja' 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 ingressive (e.g. IPF *načínat* ‘begin’ + 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 *-va-* (+ vowel lengthening) is added to an already IPF verb; not productive anymore in Russian, only with *by-va-t* ‘be.FREQ’; e.g. (10))

- (10) a. [...] **býval** jsem bezradný [...]
 was.FREQ.IPF AUX 1SG helpless.NOM
 ‘... I was (habitually) helpless ...’ ([CZ] Kun 34 / 39)
- b. [...] **stanovilsja** bospomoščnym [...]
 became.SI helpless.INSTR
 ‘... I became helpless ...’
- (11) a. Ona **prixodila** ko mne každýj den’, a **ždat’** ee ja **načínal** s
 she.NOM to-went.SI to me every day and wait.INF.IPF her.GEN I began.SI from
 utra. Ožidanie èto vyražalos’ v tom, čo ja
 morning.GEN expectation.NOM this.NOM expressed.REFL.SI in that that I
 perestavljaj na stole predmety. Za desjat’ minut ja **sadilsja** k
 rearranged.SI on table.PREP things.ACC within ten minutes I down-sat.SI to
 okoncu i **načínal prislušivat’sja**, ne stuknet li vetxaja kalitka.
 window.DAT and began.SI listen.INF.SI not clatters.PRES.PF PRT old.NOM gate.NOM
 ‘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 [of her
 arrival] I sat next to the window and started listening whether the gate clatters.’ ([RU]
 MM135/112f.)
- b. **Chodila** ke mně denně za poledne a já na ni **čekával**
 went.INDET.IPF to me daily during midday.ACC and I on her waited.FREQ.IPF
 už od rána. Čekání spočvalo v tom, že jsem **přestavoval** na
 already from morning.GEN waiting consisted.IPF in that that AUX 1SG 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.INF.PF
 jsem se **uchýlil** k oknu a napjatě **poslouchal**, kdy
 AUX 1SG REFL proceeded.PF to window and attentively listened.IPF when
 klapne omšelá branka.
 clatters.PRES.PF moss-covered.NOM gate.NOM

- Zooming in on explicit marking of HAB in Czech; out of roughly 500 verb forms:
 - 16 frequentative verb forms (vs. three occurrences of *by-va-t* ‘be.FREQ’ 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 Dvlatov

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)

- **Petruxina (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 Petruxina)
 - 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, Ukrainian, 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): **Dübbbers (2015)**

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