

## VERBAL ASPECT AND VERBAL COMPLEMENT(S)

by

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As early as in 1967, Anna Wierzbicka noted that 'there are several striking interdependences' between the aspect of the verb and the semantic structure of its collocations. It is safe to assume that those interdependencies (at least for Russian) have their origin in semantics, and they are caused by some essential ontological properties of the involved states of affairs. If those properties are appropriately accounted for by the lexicographic description of a given verb, then if the information on its aspectual characteristics is available, we can easily arrive at the way 'the "semantic concord" between the aspect of the verb and the structure of its object' (Wierzbicka 1967) is applied to that verb. However, the existing lexicographic descriptions of Russian verbs often give the wrong idea of the ontology of the involved states of affairs, and together with the nomenclative and conceptual inconsistency of current aspectological studies this leads to the result that many of the interdependencies in question have been overlooked or described inaccurately.

This is especially true in regard to the so-called aspectual pairs of Russian. According to current lexicographic practice, only one member of a pair is given an explicit definition, whereas the other is 'explained' by mere reference to its aspectual correlate (e.g. *решать* – impf. to *решить*; *понимать* – impf. to *понять*; *опаздывать* – impf. to *опоздать* –; *догадываться* – impf. to *догадаться* –, etc.).

This way of treatment of aspectual pairs does not allow the user to gain an adequate idea of all the semantic and grammatical peculiarities of the unexplained member. The members of an aspectual pair may differ in a non-trivial, sometimes idiosyncratic manner.

Thus, the perfective verb *решить* ('decide, make a decision') denotes a particular event, and its imperfective correlate *решать* may mean 'think something over trying to make a decision'), that is it may denote a process (or, rather, an activity) which culminates in the event named by the perfective member. But, e.g., *понимать* 'understand' can never denote any activity which would culminate in the event described by its perfective correlate *понять* 'realize; begin

to understand'. It is here rather the other way round: the imperfective member of the pair names a state which is the result of the previous event named by the perfective member.<sup>1</sup>

The verb *опаздывать* (e.g. *опаздывать на поезд* 'be late for the train') means neither an activity which would culminate in the event described by its perfective correlate *опоздать* (that is to the event of missing one's train), nor the state which has appeared as a result of the event *опоздать*. The utterance *Мы опаздываем на поезд* ('We are being late for our train') may rather denote a situation which is, so to say, fraught with the event of our missing the train. The semantic contrast between the perfective and imperfective *догадаться/догадываться* 'guess' is even more idiosyncratic: the imperfective verb signals a lesser grade of confidence compared with the perfective verb.

Those and similar facts might suggest that we should completely give up the treatment of aspectual pairs in the dictionary by means of cross reference and instead, define both members of a pair independently. Yet, such a solution is hardly plausible. It might be observed that beside multifarious semantic correlations between the members of aspectual pairs considered above, it is possible to reveal a regular relation between the perfective and the imperfective correlates of any aspectual pair.

According to the ontology of states of affairs put forward in (Bulygina 1982; 1983), all that can take place may be classified as either static or dynamic; the latter can be broken up further into processes (activities) and events (acts). The aspectual system of Russian verbs is such that imperfective verbs may denote either state (*умирает от нетерпения* 'is dying for impatience', *хворает* 'is ill', *чего-то ждет* 'is awaiting something'), or processes (*горит* 'is burning', *беседует с приятелем* 'is talking to a friend', *долго пишет письмо* 'is writing a letter for a long time'), or events (*внезапно понимает* 'suddenly realizes', *каждый день приходит* 'comes every day'), whereas perfective verbs can only be used in reference to events.<sup>2</sup>

We can say that when referring to states or processes, the choice of the imperfective aspect is predetermined, while 'the competition of aspects' arises only when referring to events. In the latter case the choice of the imperfective aspect may be due to the intention to express the sense of repetition, 'vividness' (as in praesens historicum), to the context of negation etc. A pair of competing verbs is called an aspectual pair. Hence, the criterion for bringing together an imperfective and a perfective verb as members of the same aspectual

pair is their capability to denote the same event (apart from those 'additional' senses of 'vividness', repetition, etc.). The 'eventive' senses of the imperfective member of an aspectual pair are 'trivial' for their existence as a trivial consequence of the fact that an imperfective verb does form an aspectual pair with its perfective counterpart (one might also say that the possibility for an imperfective verb to have an 'eventive' sense is a condition for it to be recognized as taking part in aspectual correlation). But beside 'trivial', 'eventive' senses the imperfective member of an aspectual pair may have, as noted above, 'non-trivial' senses – those of a process or a state. Consider *решать* (correlative with *решить*): it has an eventive sense in praesens historicum (e.g. *Он легко решает первую задачу и приступает ко второй* 'He solves the first problem easily and proceeds to the second one') and a processual sense referring to an activity which culminates in the event in question. The trivial sense of the verb *опаздывать* (consider *Ты всегда опаздывать на полчаса* 'You are always half an hour late') is responsible for bringing it together with *опоздать* as members of the same aspectual pair; but beside that, the verb *опаздывать* has a 'stative' sense referring to a situation open to one's being late (consider *Кажется, мы опаздываем* 'It seems that we are being late').

Which of such 'non-trivial' senses the imperfective verb in question would have may often be predicted from the type of the corresponding aspectual pair (it has been suggested in a number of works – see, e.g., Bulygina 1982; 1983 – that such a classification of aspectual pairs would essentially correlate with the temporal classification of English verbs proposed by Z. Vendler 1967). Thus the imperfective member of a pair corresponding to 'accomplishment' verbs of Vendler (such as *решить/решать*) may denote an activity culminating in the event referred to by the perfective member (and by the imperfective member in its trivial sense). The imperfective member of aspectual pairs partly corresponding to Vendler's achievements (to be more exact – to a subclass of 'achievements'), such as *найти/находить* 'find', does not have any other senses but 'trivial'. In aspectual pairs corresponding to Vendler's 'states', the imperfective member may denote a state resulting from an event named by the perfective member. Thus *понимать* may refer to an event (*Внезапно я понимаю ...* 'Suddenly I realize ...'), and therefore *понять – понимать* form an aspectual pair. But *понимать* may also refer to the resulting state (stative verbs in Russian do not often take

part in aspectual correlation, though). The classification by Vendler should be made more detailed to have more predictive force – consider e.g. such pairs as *опоздать/опаздывать*, *умереть/умирать*, *выиграть/выигрывать* (so called 'end-in-sight' – see Bulygina 1983; Kučera 1983): trivial senses of their members refer to predictable events, and non-trivial – to pre-existing states having led one to expect those events.

It can be said that Vendler's achievements are nothing but 'eventiva tantum', whereas Vendler's activities are simply 'processiva tantum', and Vendler's accomplishments are the predicates (corresponding to Russian aspectual pairs) that may be used to refer to both events and processes. The predicates (aspectual pairs) that may be used both as eventive and stative belong either to Vendler's states or to the 'end-in-sight' predicates.

Vendler's classification may be made even more detailed (worthy of mention are e.g. the predicates of 'progressive change' like *увеличиться/увеличиваться*, closely related to accomplishments). In all such cases, however, the relationship between the trivial and non-trivial senses in an aspectual pair is regular and deducible, in principle, from the semantics of the predicate by means of some general rules.

Yet, there are pairs wherein non-trivial senses of the imperfective member are highly specific (such as *догадаться/догадываться*). In addition to trivial senses (e.g. *И тут я внезапно догадываюсь* 'Here, I suddenly guess'), the imperfective verb *догадываться* has very peculiar non-trivial senses. It cannot refer to an activity directed to a result in the event denoted by *догадаться*; neither can it refer to the state resulting from that event (the state in question is described by *знать* rather than *догадываться*). One of the most essential differences between *Х догадался* and *Х догадывается* is that the former suggests that X's mental state is close to certain knowledge, while the non-trivial senses of the latter suggest that it is no more than a guess. *Догадываться* is commonly combined with *только*, *лишь* 'just'; *смутно* 'vaguely'; typical of *догадаться* are such collocations as *легко*, *без труда* 'easily'.

Both members of the pair in question are factive. In other words, if any of them is used together with *that*-complement, that means that the speaker considers the corresponding proposition true. Hence, the statement *Х догадывается, что p* (if the meaning of

*догадывается* is non-trivial) expresses two different attitudes to  $p$  –  $X$  only suggests that  $p$ , and the speaker knows (or believes to know) that for certain.<sup>3</sup> Those considerations explain the fact that *Я догадываюсь, что p* cannot have non-trivial senses (in particular, it cannot refer to the speaker's mental state in the moment of speech). The peculiarities of combinations of the verbs under consideration with indirect questions are discussed in some detail in Bulygina & Shmelev (1988; 1989).

The grammatical properties of imperfective verbs in trivial senses, as a rule, are the same as those of their perfective correlates (with the exception of properties which are wholly determined by the aspectual status of the verb). As for glossemes with non-trivial senses, their syntactic properties may be essentially different. Thus, *решить* (and *решать* in trivial senses) may take both an indirect question and *that*-complement (*решить/решать, что p*), while *решать* in non-trivial senses only takes an indirect question. Similarly, *решать вопрос* may be understood either in an eventive or a processual sense, but *решать вопрос в положительную сторону* 'make a positive decision' only in the eventive sense. Consider the humorous effect resulting from the use of the phrase in question in processual meaning: ... *в Этот момент занят был тем, что решал в положительную сторону вопрос о бессмертии души своей лошади, суля ей участь, уготованную на том свете нераскаянным грешникам* (from the Russian translation of *A Night in New Arabia*, a short story by O. Henry; cf. in the original text: ... *was at that moment engaged in conceding immortality to his horse and calling down upon him the ultimate fate of the wicked*).

Those regularities are attributable to the general rules of linguistic behaviour of the predicates governing indirect questions. Only in combination with an 'ignorative' predicate, an indirect question refers to an unresolved problem in the mind of the subject of that predicate; being combined with what we called 'a predicate of positive judgement', it presupposes that the subject knows the 'answer', so it disguises a full proposition. Consider *Интересно, куда он пошел* 'I wonder where he has gone' vs. *Мне известно, куда он пошел* 'I know where he has gone' (for more detail see Bulygina & Shmelev 1988). The perfective *решить* (as well as *решать* in its trivial senses) should be considered a predicate of positive judgement,<sup>4</sup> while *решать* in non-trivial senses is an ignorative predicate.

The regularities under consideration may be overlooked because both *решить* and *решать* collocate with both indirect questions and *that*-complement. Yet there are restrictions on the possible interpretation of those collocations. Since *решить* always presupposes a positive judgement, its combination with an indirect question implies that the latter is a 'guise' for a full proposition. On the other hand, *решать* in combination with *that*-complement is always interpreted in some of the trivial senses. Only *решать* in combination with an indirect question is potentially ambiguous, yet its interpretation as an ignorative (that is, in a non-trivial sense) is usually more probable.

Consider also the verb *продолжать* ( $\approx$  'continue'). M. Glovinskaja (1982: 101) has noted that this verb used to denote a process has a meaning quite different from the meaning of the verb *продолжить* ('resume'): *продолжить p*  $\approx$  'resume p after some interruption', and *продолжать p*  $\approx$  'not to cease p'. We might add that syntactical properties of those two verbs are as well different: in *продолжать p* the complementation (*p*) may be either a noun or an infinitive, but in *продолжить p* – only a noun.

A. Wierzbicka (1988: 352) has pointed out that in sentences like *Он выпил молока* 'He drank some milk', a partitive object may be taken by the verbs in the perfective aspect, whereas the imperfective *пить* requires an accusative object *Он пил молоко* (\**молока*) 'He was drinking milk'. That is undeniably true since *пить* 'drink<sub>IMPF</sub>' can never be used as a trivial counterpart of *выпить* 'drink up<sub>PERF</sub>'. Consider, however, the imperfective verb *выпивать* which is a trivial correlate of *выпить* and forms with the latter an aspectual pair. One may expect that it can collocate with a partitive object, and that is the case. To cite an example, *На другой день Василий Панков выпивает коньяку* [praesens historicum] *на какой-то станции и возвращается в вагон веселый* 'The next day, Vassily Pankov drinks a little cognac at some station and returns to his car in good spirits' (Ю. Казаков, 'Лёгкая жизнь' [Yu. Kazakov, *Easy Life*]).

The triplet *есть* - *съесть* - *съеда́ть* ('eat<sub>IMPF</sub> - eat up<sub>PERF</sub> - eat up<sub>IMPF</sub>') has only partial resemblance with the one that had been just discussed (*пить* - *выпить* - *выпивать*). The verbs *съесть* and *съеда́ть* forming a genuine aspectual pair have a causative meaning: 'by eating X cause X to no longer exist'. Exactly as *выпить/выпивать*, the pair in question belongs not to accomplishments, but rather to achievements: *съеда́ть* can normally have only the trivial senses of

imperfective verbs, i.e. refer to the caused event (in context of seriality, of praesens historicum, etc.) and does not have any non-trivial senses (such as e.g. activity). This restriction can be given a semantic motivation: one could hardly imagine a person who would deliberately be engaged in the activity of eating with the single goal to cause the object to no longer exist – yet this very sense should have been expressed by the verb *съеда́ть*, should it be possible for it to refer to a process (an activity).

The causative component in the semantics of the verbs *съесть* - *съеда́ть* explains a number of idiosyncrasies that distinguish them from, e.g., English *eat* or French *manger*. Thus, an utterance *Не ешь пирог* 'Don't eat (Don't touch) the pie' means the prohibition to eat even the smallest part of it; *Не съедай (весь) пирог* ('Don't eat up the whole pie') means an order (or a request) to leave a part of the pie not-eaten.

In contrast to *выпить*, the verb *съесть* cannot be used in combination with a partitive object *?Он съел каши* is hardly acceptable. Therefore, the French *Qui a mangé du gâteau?* is to be translated into Russian as *Кто ел<sub>IMPF</sub> пирога<sub>ACC?</sub>* rather than \**Кто съел<sub>PERF</sub> пирога<sub>PART?</sub>* notwithstanding the fact that usually the French passé composé corresponds to Russian perfective verbs, and phrases with a partitive article – to Russian phrases with 'genitivus partitivus' (observed by J. Groën).

It is clear from what has been said why it is that in the Russian folk-tale 'Kolobok' the titular character answering the Fox' threat to eat him up (*Колобок, Колобок, я тебя съем<sub>PERF</sub>*) with a request not to do it, uses the imperfective verb *есть* (*Не ешь меня, лиса*) rather than the verb *съеда́ть*, the imperfective correlate of *съесть* used by the Fox. The fact is that *Не съедай меня, лиса* could have been understood as an invitation: 'eat me partially, but don't eat the whole of me'.

What are the lexicographic implications of all the facts mentioned above?

The function of the label 'imperf. to ...' should be meant as an indication of trivial (eventive) senses of an imperfective verb corresponding to the meaning of the perfective correlate referred to. The consequent use of the label in question in that very function should be regarded not only as legitimate but as highly appropriate.

As for non-trivial (processual and stative) senses of imperfective verbs, they might be represented in the dictionary in a double way. The first way is to explain all the non-trivial senses independently of the trivial ones. In other words, if *умереть* is defined as 'cease to live; become dead' then *умиpать* will get the following definitions: 1) impf. to *умереть*; 2) be dying, be on the verge of death.<sup>5</sup> The second way is to give (in a grammatical supplement?) the explicit rules which would allow to deduce from the definition given in the corresponding entry of the perfective verb: (1) all the regular non-trivial senses of the imperfective correlate and (2) its grammatical (syntactical) properties while it is used in those non-trivial senses. In the latter case, the label 'imperf. to ...' would indirectly indicate not only trivial, but regular non-trivial senses of the imperfective verb as well, and only non-regular non-trivial senses of such verbs as e.g. *догадываться* or *продолжать* should be explained independently.

Worthy of mention are verbs derived from processual imperfectives with the prefix *по-*. As stated above, the model in question is perfectly regular (consider *порешать задачу*), and it does not give rise to a genuine aspectual pair. Yet some of the verbs formed with the prefix *по-* are consistently used as a sort of quasi-correlates of the corresponding imperfective verbs (*поесть* matched with 'intransitive' *есть*, *поговорить* *скем-либо* 'have a conversation with smb.' matched with one of the meanings of *говорить* 'talk' etc.). It is precisely these verbs with *по-* that should be put into the dictionary, which would reflect their relationship with the corresponding imperfective verbs along with the features peculiar to each of the resulting 'pairs'.

Now we are in a position to return to the two lexicographic approaches mentioned above. If the label 'imperf. to ...' indirectly indicates both trivial and non-trivial senses, it will turn out that the same lexical meaning integrates completely different states of affairs – an event and a process or an event and a state. This corresponds to what is sometimes called 'the imperfective paradox'. Indeed, the identification of so dissimilar entities as e.g. a process and its result (event) may seem paradoxical and illogical. But that 'paradox' is ontologically conditioned. To be able to state that someone is writing the summary of his or her paper or composing a symphony, we do not need to wait until he or she has finished his or her activity. There are certain 'requirements of the genre' which distinguish summarizing from writing an article or a piece of fiction, and

composing a symphony is an activity different from composing a romance. In a sense, the resulting event is predetermined.

The same approach applies to such pairs as *решить/решать*. When we are engaged in an activity of solving a problem, we already know which problem will be solved if we succeed, so we can predict the resulting event. That may explain why *решать* in combination with a genuine indirect question has not only trivial, but also non-trivial senses. On the other hand, when we are solving a problem, the answer may only be known post factum, when the resulting event has already happened. That explains why *решать* in combination with a *that*-complement, can have but trivial senses. In that, the pair *решить/решать* (что р) closely parallels such pairs as *выпить/выпивать* (три чашки кофе) 'drink (three cups of coffee)', *пробежать/пробегать* (два километра) 'run (two kilometers)'. The imperfective members of those pairs can never be used in processual meaning (see Wierzbicka 1967). The explanation is the same; the associated situations can be only considered as such post factum. No earlier than after someone has drunk a certain quantity of coffee, we can know for sure how much will be drunk<sup>6</sup>. In that sense, one might say that the rules of deducing non-trivial senses of the imperfective are of ontological nature.

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#### Notes

1. The semantic relation between *понять/понимать* and between *увидеть/видеть* ('to catch sight of/to see') is close to that between *узнать* 'come to know' – *знать* 'know' or between *вспомнить* 'bring back to mind, recollect in memory' – *помнить* 'keep in mind', but the last two pairs of verbs are not regarded as aspectual pairs, the aspectual correlate of *узнать* being *узнавать* and that of *вспомнить* – *вспоминать*.
2. Two special cases should be mentioned. First, perfectives derived from 'processive' verbs by means of the prefix *по-* denote events which only imply that a certain portion of the corresponding process has taken place (cp. *погулять* 'have a walk'). Second, some perfective verbs may occasionally refer to a state as if it had resulted from the corresponding event (*река раскинулась* 'a river spread out'). Both cases are of marginal nature.

3. The same is true if X is a 'stage' of the speaker at some earlier point (that is, when the verb is in the past).
4. Needless to say that under the scope of negation both *решить* and *решать* may be used as ignorative predicates.
5. We do not mean that the definitions should look like that. They are given just as an illustration of the structure of lexical entries.
6. Consider also the opposition between the processual meaning of *добирается* in *Спартак поворачивает на Юг и три дня добирается до Сиракуз* 'Spartacus turns south and for three days, he is trying to get to Syracuse' and the eventive meaning of the same verb in *Спартак поворачивает на Юг и в три дня добирается до Сиракуз* 'Spartacus turns south and in three days, he gets to Syracuse'. Yu. Apresjan (1978) noticed the dependence of the interpretation of the verb on the type of temporal adverbial expression. It may be added that the opposition in question occurs only if the situation is described post factum (that is, in the context of praesens historicum and similar contexts), and the above considerations account for that fact.

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