

# The Representation of Aspect

## 4: Radical variability in feature content

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### 1 Aspect in Slavic

Basic description of aspectual morphology in Russian:

- Underived roots are generally **imperfective** (small set of exceptions).
- **Prefixes** create **perfective** stems, often with additional changes in meaning.
- The **imperfective suffix** (*-yva*) attaches to perfective stems and derives an imperfective stem. It cannot appear on simple imperfective roots.

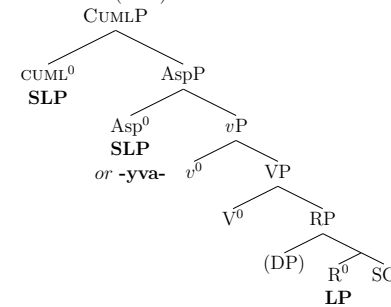
- (1) Russian (Tatevosov, 2011)
- |         |         |   |            |                      |
|---------|---------|---|------------|----------------------|
| pisat'  | 'write' | → | za-pisat'  | 'record, write down' |
| ryt'    | 'dig'   | → | za-ryt'    | 'dig in'             |
| ljubit' | 'love'  | → | po-ljubit' | 'fall in love'       |
| bit'    | 'beat'  | → | po-bit'    | 'beat up'            |

- Prefixes are generally divided into **lexical prefixes (LP)** and **superlexical prefixes (SLP)**.
- LPs can affect the lexical meaning and/or argument structure of the verb.
- SLPs do not affect argument structure, and have more transparently compositional meanings.

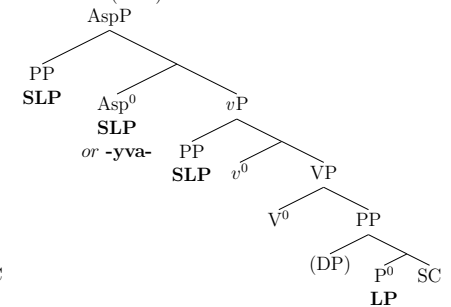
- (2) Russian (Tatevosov, 2011)
- rubit' derevja / drova / ??plennogo  
chop.INF trees.ACC firewood.ACC captive.ACC  
"chop trees/firewood/??a captive."
  - s-rubit' derevja / \*drova / \*plennogo **LP**  
S-chop.INF trees.ACC firewood.ACC captive.ACC  
"chop down the trees/\*the firewood/\*the captive."
  - za-rubit' \*derevja / \*drova / plennogo **LP**  
ZA-chop.INF trees.ACC firewood.ACC captive.ACC  
"slash \*the trees/\*the firewood/the captive."
  - na-rubit' derevjev / drov / ??plennyx **SLP**  
NA-chop.INF trees.GEN firewood.GEN ??captives.GEN  
"chop (down) a quantity of trees/\*the firewood/\*the captive."

- (3) Russian "Secondary Imperfective" **-yva** (Svenonius, 2005)
- v-sta-t'  
IN-stand-INF
  - v-sta-va-t'  
IN-stand-IMPF-INF  
"stand up."
- It is possible for prefixes to co-occur. Usually fairly limited, but consider the following example (Imperfective *-yva* claimed to attach outside prefix *do-* "completive"):
- (4) Vasja po-na-do-pere-za-pis-yva-l diskov  
Vasja DISTR-CUM-COMPL-REP-ZA-write-YVA-PAST.3SG DVD-GEN.PL  
"Vasja accumulated a quantity of DVDs, which he finished recording again, this having happened at distinct times or locations."

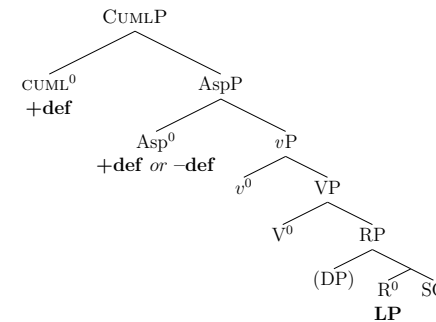
Ramchand (2005):



Svenonius (2005)



Ramchand (2005): features



For Ramchand, the feature [±definite] in Asp<sup>0</sup> corresponds to viewpoint (cf. boundedness):

- imperfective is *indefinite*
- perfective is *definite*.

The feature can result from one of several things:

- Default is [-def]
- LP results in [+def]
- Can be specified [-def] (= *-yva* =)
- Higher SLP can re-assert [+def]

Two puzzles

1. How do lexical prefixes control the value of Asp<sup>0</sup>?
2. Why does *-yva* only occur in *derived* imperfectives?

Emphasis mine:

“I will assume that the existence of this lexically specified transition [from the lexical prefixes], introduces **presuppositional structure to the aspectual head**, to the effect that it creates a **definite** rather than an indefinite time moment in Asp.” (Ramchand, 2005, p. 349)

“the difference between Germanic and Slavic here can be stated in terms of the perfectivizing function of the Slavic prefix, which is not a **grammaticized function** of the Germanic participle.” (Svenonius, 2005, p. 229)

## 2 Radical variability in feature content

**Ritter and Wiltschko (2009, 2010):** The **function** of a category like  $\text{Infl}^0$  is universal/invariant across languages. Plays the role of *anchoring* a clause to the context ( $[±\text{coincidence}]$ ).

Variation in the interpretive **content** of the category.

- English = **time**
- Halkomelem = **place**
- Blackfoot = **participant**

Wiltschko and Ritter (2014) on other inflectional features:

**English:** tense, viewpoint aspect, and situation aspect are all about *time* in the clausal domain. Situation aspect is about **boundedness** (=telicity) and dimensionality (=process).

situation aspect	→	[+bounded]	[-bounded]
nominal domain		<i>count</i>	<i>mass</i>
verbal domain		<i>telic</i>	<i>atelic</i>

**Blackfoot:** tense, viewpoint aspect, and situation aspect are all about *person* in the clausal domain. Situation aspect is about **animacy** and **transitivity** (instead of telicity and duration).

Louie (2008):

	[+animate]	[-animate]
[+transitive]	Transitive Animate (TA)	Transitive Inanimate (TI)
[-transitive]	Intransitive Animate (AI)	Intransitive Inanimate (II)

**What does it mean to have participant-based viewpoint aspect?** In English we can ask “does this event take place over a period of time?”

In Blackfoot: “Does the event have more than one participant/argument?”

- (5) Blackfoot (*Wiltschko and Ritter, 2014*)
- na-oo-wat-yii-wa amo mamii  
PAST-eat-**TA**-DIR-3SG DEM fish.AN  
“S/he ate this fish.”
  - na-oo-yi-wa  
PAST-eat-**AI**-3SG

**Ritter and Rosen. (2010):** Blackfoot lacks detectable effects of telicity.

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