

SLAVIC ASPECT IN NARRATIVE DISCOURSE

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Empirical data show that Russian and Czech differ in the way grammatical aspect is used in narrative discourse. Grammatical aspect in Russian is primarily concerned with the (external) temporal boundaries of a situation, whereas in Czech, it is focused on the (internal) event boundaries of the situation itself.

1 morphological (and syntactic) facts

1.1 grammatical aspect

Each Slavic verb form is either perfective or imperfective.

Motion verbs come in pairs: directed vs. non-directed (both imperfective).

In addition, Czech has iterative verbs (suffix *-va-*).

Aspectual information on the verb is provided by affixes (less often vowel alternation): perfectivizing prefixes (only one perfectivizing suffix *-nu-* / *-nou-*), imperfectivizing suffixes (Russian *-(y)va-*, Czech *-ova-*, *-va-*).

Morphological types of verbs¹:

1. imperfective simple²:
byt' – ‘to be’
znat' – ‘to know’
pisat' – ‘to write (s.th.)’
2. perfective prefixed:
uznat' – ‘to get to know, to find out’
On popisal. – ‘He wrote (for a while).’
napisat' – ‘to write s.th.’
podpisat' – ‘to sign’
3. imperfective prefixed-suffixed³:
uznavat' – ‘to get to know, to find out’
podpisyvat' – ‘to sign’
?napisyvat', **On popisyval.*
4. perfective suffixed:
kriknut' – ‘to shout (once)’
5. perfective simple:
dat' – ‘to give’
kupit' – ‘to buy’
sest' – ‘to sit down’
6. imperfective suffixed:
a) *davat'* – ‘to give’
sadit'sja – ‘to sit down’
b) *byvat'* – ‘to (usually) be’
Czech: *mívat* – ‘to (usually) have’
7. imperfective suffixed-suffixed (Czech only): *mívávat* – ‘to (usually) have’
8. perfective prefixed-prefixed (Czech only): *Poodstoupila.* – ‘She stepped aside a little.’
9. perfective prefixed-prefixed-suffixed (only Russian?, only with finite verb forms):
On povydaval knigi. – ‘He gave out (the) books (for a while)’ (distributively).

¹ I use Russian examples and refer to Czech examples where there are differences from Russian.

² Here, ‘simple verbs’ refers to verbs without any lexical or aspectual affixes and to verbs derived from non-verbal categories (nouns, adjectives etc.).

³ These verbs are called secondary imperfectives.

1.2 grammatical tense

all verbs: present tense, past tense

only imperfective verbs: (periphrastic) future tense

past tense: Russian has dropped the auxiliary, Czech still uses it in the 1st and 2nd person singular and plural.

Czech is a pro-drop language, Russian is not.

2 results of the research (dynamic episodes in past tense contexts)

temporal discourse relations

- succession (contingency, narrative continuation, causation)
- temporal overlap (background, elaboration)

Russian

➤ unique situations (no repetition):

foregrounded information, narrative continuation: perfective finite verb forms

background, elaboration: non-finite verb forms (gerunds)

➤ repeated situations:

same discourse strategies, additional suffix on every finite verb form.

Czech

almost exclusively finite verb forms (main clauses and subordinate clauses)

narrative continuation: perfective verbs and imperfective “simple” verbs

background, elaboration: imperfective verb forms

non-uniqueness is not marked on the verb

typical differences

- perception verbs: Russ. pf. *uvidel* / *posmotrel* vs. Czech ipf. *viděl* / *díval* (‘saw’ / ‘looked/watched’)
- directed motion verbs: Russ. pf. *pošel* vs. Czech ipf. *šel* (‘went’)
- state verbs in general: Russ. pf. copula verbs e.g. *okazalsja* vs. Czech *byl* – ‘was’ / *měl* – ‘had’
- Russian perfective temporal Aktionsart verbs (prefixes *po-*, *pro-*, *za-*) vs. Czech imperfective state and process verbs
- Russian gerunds vs. Czech finite verb forms (more subordinate clauses)
- repetition: Russian secondary imperfectives vs. Czech “simpler” verb forms

3 The data

Bulgakov, M. *The Master and Margarita*. (MM)

Bulgakov, M. *Fatal Eggs*. (RJ)

Dovlatov, S. *The Zone: A Prison Camp Guard's Story*. (Dov)

Hrabal, B. *Pink Clover*. (JR)

Hrabal, B. *The Mermaid*. (MP)

Hrabal, B. *The Sixth-Grader*. (Sext)

Kundera, M. *The Joke*. (Kun)

PF: perfective aspect
 IPF: imperfective aspect (simple verbs)
 SI: secondary imperfectives
 DIR: directed motion verbs (imperfective verbs)
 NDIR: non-directed motion verbs (imperfective verbs)
 IT: iterative verbs
 AA: Aktionsart verbs PO: delimitative (temporal)
 PRO: perdurative (temporal)
 ZA: ingressive (temporal) (Russian only)
 ZA2: semelfactive (Czech only)

AP / GER: gerund
 PART: participle

3.1 Unique situations

- (1) On **pomolčal**^{PAA} nektoroe vremja v smjatenii, **vsmatrivajas**^{iAP} v lunu,
he PO-be-quiet-PAST some time in confusion, SI-look-into-GER in moon-ACC,
 plyvuščuju za rešetkoj, i **zagovori**^{PAA}: [...] (MM)
swimming behind bars, and ZA-say-PAST

Chvíli zaraženě **mlčel**ⁱ, **sledoval**ⁱ plující měsíc
for-a-while bewildered IPF-be-quiet-PAST, IPF-follow-PAST swimming moon-ACC
 za mříží, a **pak** se **zeptal**^P: [...]

behind bars, and then REFL PF-ask

‘Bewildered, he was quiet for a while, looking at the moon, which was shimmering behind the bars, and then he said: ...’

- (2) Jedna ta vytetovaná plachetka se mi tak **líbila**ⁱ, že jsem si
one that tattooed sailing boat REFL me so IPF-please-PAST, that AUX-1sg REFL
přálⁱ **mít**ⁱ ji vytetovanou na prsou taky. (MP)
IPF-wish-PAST IPF-have-INF it tattooed on chest also

Odin parusnik tak mne **ponravilsja**^P, čto ja **zachotel**^{PAA}, čtoby u menja
one sailing boat so me PF-please-PAST-REFL, that I ZA-want-PAST, so-that with me
 na grudi tože **byl**ⁱ takoj že.
on chest also IPF-be-PAST the same kind

‘I liked one sailing boat tattoo so much, that I wanted one just like it tattooed on my chest.’

- (3) On **nadel**^P šapočku i **pokazalsja**^P Ivanu i v profil‘ i v
he PF-put-on-PAST cap and PF-show-PAST-REFL Ivan-DAT and in profile and in
fas, čtoby dokazat‘, čto on – master. – Ona svoimi rukami
front,so-that PF-show-INF, that he (be) master-NOM. She own-INST.PL hands-INST

ššila^P ee mne, - tainstvenno **dobavil^P** on. (MM)
PF-sew-PAST it me-DAT, - mysteriously PF-add-PAST he-NOM.

[...], **nasadil^P** si ji a **předvádělⁱ** se
PF-put-on-PAST REFL it-ACC and SI-demonstrate(=before/in front of+lead) REFL
ze všech stran, aby dokázal, že je Mistr. „Tu čepičku
out-of all sides-GEN,so-that PF-show-(MOD), that is master-NOM. This-cap-ACC
mi vlastnoručně **ušila^P** **dodal^P** tajemně.
me-DAT own-handly PF-sew-PAST PF-add-PAST mysteriously

‘He put on the cap and showed himself to Ivan from the side and from the front to show that he was the master. “She sewed it for me with her own hands”, he said mysteriously.’

- (4) Když **přišlo^P** pozdní jaro, když **byloⁱ** léto,
when PF-come(to+go)-PAST late-spring-NOM, when IPF-be-PAST summer-NOM,
když se **setmělo^P** a **bylaⁱ** **sobota**,
when REFL PF-grow-dark-PAST and IPF-be-PAST Saturday-NOM,
přešel^P jsem osvětlený most, pak **zahnul^P** k
PF-cross(across+go)-PAST AUX-1Sg illuminated-bridge-ACC, then PF-turn-PAST to
mlýnu a podle Staré rybárny jsem **kráčelⁱ** kolem plotu farní zahrady. (JR)
mill and past Old fisher’s AUX-1Sg IPF-stride-PAST around fence church-yard-GEN
Kogda vesnja **približalasⁱ** k koncu, kogda **byloⁱ** uže počti
when spring-NOM SI-approach-PAST-REFL to end, when IPF-be-PAST already almost
leto, odnaždy **v subbotnie sumerki** ja **perešel^P** osveščennyj most,
summer, once in saturday twilight I PF-cross(across+go)-PAST illuminated-bridge,
a potom **svernul^P** k mel’nice i **zašagal^{PAA}** mimo starogo „Rybnogo podvor’ja“
and then PF-turn-PAST to mill and ZA-stride-PAST past old Fisher’s inn
vdol’ ogrady cerkovnogo sada.
along fence church-yard-GEN

‘When it was close to the end of spring, when it was almost summer, when it grew dark and it was Saturday, I crossed the illuminated bridge, then turned towards the mill and strode past The Old Fisher’s Inn along the churchyard fence.’

- (5) A **vztyčil^P** jsem se, a **běžel^{idir}** jsem po vrchní
and PF-get-up-PAST AUX-1sg REFL, and DIR-run-PAST AUX-1sg along upper
fošně železničního mostu, tam na druhé straně řeky **nakládaliⁱ**
wooden-path railway-bridge-GEN, there on other side river-GEN SI-pile-up-PAST
jetel růžák, a když jsem **přeběhl^P** most a

clover-pink-ACC, and when AUX-1sg PF-cross-run-PAST bridge-ACC and
dívalⁱ jsem se dolů, vidělⁱ jsem, že ten muž
IPF-look-PAST AUX-1sg REFL down, IPF-see-PAST AUX-1sg, that that man
 v bílé košili **neníⁱ** nikdo jiný než pan děkan. (JR)
in white shirt not-is no-one other than Mr. dean

Potom ja **vstal^P** i **pobežal^P** po verchnemu nastilu
then I PF-get-up-PAST and PF-run-PAST along upper wooden-path
 železnodorožnogo mosta; na toj storone reki **ukladyvaliⁱ** na voz
railway-bridge-GEN, on other side river-GEN SI-pile-up-PAST on cart-ACC
 rozovjy klevor, i ja, **minovav^{PAP}** most i **posmotrev^{PAP}** vniz,
pink-clover-ACC, and I, PF-cross-GER bridge-ACC and PF-look-GER down,
uvidel^P, čto mužčina v beloij rubaške – ne kto inoj, kak gospodin nastojatel’.
PF-see-PAST, that man in white shirt (be) not who other, how Mr. dean

‘Then I got up and ran along the upper wooden path of the railway bridge. There, on the other side of the river, they collected pink clover, and when I crossed the bridge and looked down, I saw that the man in the white shirt was noone else than our dean.’

3.2 Repeated situations

- (6) Balodis **služilⁱ** povarom. Glavnoj ego zabotoj **bylaⁱ** prodovol’stvennaja kladovaja. Tam **chranilisⁱ** salo, džem, muka. Ključí Balodis celyj den’ **nosilⁱ** v rukach.

Zasypaja^{iAP}, **privjazovalⁱ** ich špagatom k svoemu detorodnomu organu.
IPF-go-to-sleep-GER, SI-to-tie-PAST them string-INST to his(own) childbearing organ
 Èto ne **pomogaloⁱ**. Nočnaja smena dvaždy **otvjazyvalaⁱ** ključí i
this not SI-help-PAST night-shift-NOM twice SI-un-tie-PAST keys-ACC and
vorovalaⁱ produkty. Daže muka **bylaⁱ s“edena^{Ppart}** ... (Dov)
IPF-steal-PAST provisions even flour-NOM IPF-be-PAST PF-eaten-up

Balodis v lágru **pracovalⁱ** jako kuchař. Jeho hlavní každodenní starostí **bylⁱ** sklad potravin. Tam **mělⁱ uložen^{Ppart}** veškerý proviant včetně špeku, džemu a mouky. Klíče od skladu Balodis po celý den **nedal^P** z ruky.

Nežⁱ šel^{idir} **spát**, **přivazovalⁱ** si je provázkem k
than DIR-go-PAST IPF-sleep-INF, SI-to-tie-PAST REFL them string-INST to
 přirození. **Nepomáhaloⁱ** to. Noční směně se dvakrát
natural-NOUN-DAT SI-not-help-PAST this night-shift-DAT REFL twice
podářilo^P klíče **odvázat^P** a potraviny si **nakrást^P**.
PF-succeed-PAST keys-ACC PF-un-tie-INF and provisions REFL PF-steal-INF

Dokonce i mouku **sežrali**^P...
even and flour-ACC PF-away-devour-PAST

‘Balodis worked as a cook. His main duty was to look after the pantry. There they kept bacon, jam, flour. Balodis carried the keys in his hands all day long. Before going to sleep, he tied them with a string around his “childbearing organ”. That did not help. People on the night shift untied the keys twice and stole the food. They even ate the flour.’

- (7) **Mnogie** iz 30 tysjač mehaničeskich ekipažej, **begavšie**^{idirPart} v 28-m
Many-NOM-PL out-of 30 thousand mechanical carriages, DIR-run-pastactpart in 28th
godu po Moskve, **proskakivali**ⁱ po ulice Hercena, **šurša**^{iAP}
year along Moscow, SI-through-jump-PAST along street Hercen-GEN, IPF-rush-GER
po glatkim torcam, i čerez každuju minutu s gulom i skrežetom
over smooth pavement and through every minute with din and squeak
skatyvalsjaⁱ s Hercena k Mochovoj tramvaj 16, 22, 48 ili
SI-down-roll-PAST from Hercen-GEN to Mochovaja-DAT tram 16, 22, 48 or
53-go maršruta. (RJ)
53rd-GEN line-GEN

Mnohé z třiceti tisíc drožek, **které** v osmadvacátém **jezdily**^{indir}
Many-NOM-PL out-of 30 thousand carriages, which-PL in 28th NDIR-drive-PAST
po Moskvě, **proklouzly**^P Gercenovou ulicí a **zasvištěly**^{PAA} na
along Moscow, PF-through-glide-PAST Hercen-street-acc and ZA2-whiz-PAST on
hladkém dřevěném dláždění; každou minutu se s řinkotem a skřípěním
smooth wooden pavement; every-minute-ACC REFL with din and squeak
přehnala^P od Gercenovy ulice k Mechové tramvaj číslo 16, 22, 48 nebo 53.
PF-over-chase-PAST from Hercen-street to Mechova-DAT tram No. 16, 22, 48 or 53

‘Many of the 30 thousand mechanical carriages, which drove around Moscow in 1928, ran along Herzen Street, rushing over the smooth pavement, and each minute tram line 16, 22, 48, or 53 chased from Herzen Street to Moss Street with a din and a squeak.’

- (8) Ona **prichodila**ⁱ ko mne každýj den‘, a **ždat**ⁱ ee ja **načinal**ⁱ s utra. Ožidanie èto **vyražalos**ⁱ v tom, čto ja **perestavljal**ⁱ na stole predmety. Za desjat‘ minut ja **sadilsja**ⁱ k okoncu i **načinal**ⁱ **prislušivat’sja**ⁱ, ne stuknet li vetchaja kalitka. I kak kur’ezno: do vstreči moej s neju v naš dvorik, malo kto **prichodil**ⁱ, prosto skazat‘, **nikto ne prichodil**ⁱ, a teper‘ mne **kazalos**ⁱ, čto ves‘ gorod ustremilsja v nego. [...] Ona **vchodila**ⁱ v kalitku odin raz, a bienij serdca do togo ja **ispytyval**ⁱ ne menea desjati. Ja ne ljgu. **A potom**, kogda **prichodil**ⁱ ee čas i strelka **pokazyvala**ⁱ polden‘, ono daže i ne prestavaloⁱ stučat‘ do tech por, poka bez stuka, počti sovsem besšumno, ne **ravnjalis**ⁱ

s oknom tuflí s černými zamševými nakladkami-bantami, stjanutými stal'nými prjažkami.

Inogda ona **šalila**ⁱ i, **zaderžavšis**^{6PAP} u vtorogo okonca, **postukivala**ⁱ noskom v steklo. Ja v tu že sekundu **okazyvalsja**ⁱ u ètogo okna, no **isčezala**ⁱ tuflja, černyj šelk, zaslonavšij svet, **isčezal**ⁱ, - ja **šel**^{indir} ej **otkrivat**ⁱ.

Nikto ne **znal**ⁱ o našej svjazi, za èto ja vam **ručajus**ⁱ, chotja tak nikogda i ne **byvaet**ⁱ. Ne **znal**ⁱ ee muž, ne **znali**ⁱ znakomye. V staren'kom osobnjačke, gde mne **prinadležal**ⁱ ètot podval, **znali**ⁱ, konečno, **videli**ⁱ, čto **prichodit**ⁱ ko mne kakaja-to ženščina, no imeni ee ne **znali**ⁱ. (MM)

Chodila^{indir} ke mně denně za poledne a já na ni **čekával**^{it} už od rána. Čekání **spočivalo**ⁱ v tom, že jsem **přestavoval**ⁱ na stole věci. Deset minut před tím, než **měla**ⁱ **přijít**^p, jsem se **uchýlil**^p k oknu a napjatě **poslouchal**^p, kdy klapne omšelá branka. A kupodivu: než jsme se poznali, málokdo **zabloudil**^p na náš dvorek, prostě **nikdo nepřišel**^p, a ted' se mi **zdálo**ⁱ, že se k nám hrne celé město. [...] Než jedenkrát **vešla**^p, **rozbušilo**^{pAA} se mi nejméně desetkrát srdce, **nelžu**ⁱ vám. **Vždycky** když se **přiblížila**^p hodina schůzky a ručička **ukazovala**ⁱ poledne, **nepřestávalo**ⁱ mi srdce tlouct jako na poplach až do chvíle, kdy se bez jediného klapnutí, téměř neslyšně **objevily**^p v okně střešičky s černými semišovými ozdobami v podobě mašlí, sepnutých kovovými přezkami.

Někdy se uličnický **zastavila**^p u sousedního okna a **poklepávala**ⁱ špičkou na sklo. **Rozběhl**^p jsem se tam, ale mezitím **zmizel**^p střešiček i černý hedvábný stín a já **šel**^{indir} **otevřít**^p.

Nikdo **nevěděl**ⁱ o našem vztahu, **jsem**ⁱ si jistý, ačkoli se to **nestává**ⁱ. Nic **netušil**ⁱ ani její muž, ani známi. Ve staré vilce, kde jsem **bydlel**ⁱ ve sklepním bytě, to samozřejmě **věděl**ⁱ, **všimli**^p se, že ke mně **chodí**^{indir} nějaká žena, ale **neznali**ⁱ její jméno.

'She came to me every day (in the afternoon) and I started waiting for her from the morning on. Waiting meant that I re-arranged things on the table. Within ten minutes (before she was about to arrive) I sat down at the window and started listening, to see if the old gate didn't slam. And how strange: up until I met her, hardly anyone had entered our yard, actually, noone had come, and now it seemed to me that the whole city flocked to it. [...] One time she entered the gate and my heart was beating not less than ten times. I am not lying. And then, when her time had arrived and the hands of the clock were pointing to noon, it (the heart) only stopped bounding when, without a slam, almost without a sound, the shoes with the black velvet ribbons showed up at my window.

Sometimes, she would tease me and hide close to the neighbour's window and knock on the glass with a stick. I would show up at the window at the same time, but the shoe, the black silk, would disappear and I would go to open the door for her.

Nobody knew about our relationship, I swear, although that kind of thing never happens. Her husband did not know, acquaintants did not know. In the old building in which I owned this basement flat, people knew, of course. They saw, that some woman came to me, but they did not know her name.'

4 general issues

4.1 How do we account for the composition of aspectual and temporal information at different levels?

verb, predicate, argument structure, thematic relations, affixes, Tense, adverbials, connectives, world knowledge (e.g. causation) etc.

➤ **Literature on aspect:**

- predicational aspect, argument structure (Krifka, Ramchand, Verkuyl)
- discourse theories: already “derived” events and states (Kamp/Reyle)
connection between these theories?

4.2 What creates temporal boundedness at the discourse level?

➤ **grammatical aspect vs. telicity and temporal boundedness**

- **telicity**: predicational aspect – intrinsic culmination point (Kamp/Reyle (1993)) / set terminal point (quantized) (Krifka (1992))
- **(temporal) boundedness**: at sentence and discourse level (different means)
- **grammatical aspect**: part-whole relation (viewpoint) (Filip (1993/99))

Predicational and grammatical aspect interact and - together with other means - contribute to the aspectual and temporal interpretation of situations in context, i.e. their interpretation as bounded or unbounded.

Aspectual-temporal informations obtained at lower levels are not obscured by other such informations obtained at higher levels.

➤ **internal vs. external prefixes** (Di Sciullo/Slabakova (forthcoming))

- internal prefixes: telicity markers
- external prefixes: supply external temporal boundaries (Aktionsart verbs)

➤ **three groups of Slavic verbs:**

- telic verbs (with internal prefixes)
- verbs underspecified with respect to telicity (telic interpretation only with a quantized incremental theme argument as in Krifka (1992), Filip (1993/99))
- atelic verbs (without internal prefixes or incremental theme argument)

➤ **secondary imperfectives:**

- internal prefix (telicity marker) plus suffix (imperfectivity marker)
- meaning: realisation or instantiation of a part of an eventuality type with an intrinsic point of change
- several possible interpretations: process, iterativity, habituality

4.3 How should non-finite verb forms be treated in a discourse theory?

4.4 Iterativity in Czech

Not only with atelic, but also with telic verbs?

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