

Imperfectivity – Some Evidence from Turkish

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The imperfective aspect in Russian is characterized by its huge variety of readings (častnye vidovye značenija). The appropriate interpretations have to be motivated by means of context and further pragmatic mechanisms. Padučeva (1996), for example, lists the following meanings of the ipf aspect, some of which can be further divided into subtypes: (i) aktual'no-dlitel'noe, (ii) kontinual'noe, (iii) postojanno-nepřeryvnoe, (iv) uzual'noe, (v) potencial'noe, (vi) mnogokratnoe, (vii) obščefaktičeskoe and (viii) durativnoe značenie. Furthermore, the ipf aspect can be used to denote situations which are not localized in time (vnevremennoe značenie), but this reading is usually regarded as not belonging to the aspectual system at all.

Analyses of the Russian aspectual system often have difficulties in adequately accounting for the obščefaktičeskoe značenie, and in most cases completely ignore the vnevremennoe značenie.

In this talk, I will show how the aspectual system of Turkish deals with this readings of the ipf aspect (cf. (1) and (2)). This might give some interesting insight in the structuring of the Russian imperfective system and help to clear the somewhat diffuse picture one is confronted with.

- (1) On govoril (ipf) po-arabski.
 - a. He was speaking Arabic. (actual, ongoing)
 - b. He spoke Arabic. (fact-denoting)
 - c. He spoke / was able to speak / used to speak Arabic. (non-actual, capability, property)

- (2)
 - a. Arapça konuşuyordu.
He was speaking Arabic. (actual, ongoing)
 - b. Arapça konuştu.
He spoke Arabic. (fact-denoting)
 - c. Arapça konuştu. (Aorist)
He spoke / was able to speak / used to speak Arabic. (non-actual, capability, property)

A closer look at the usages of the ipf aspect in Russian shows that the notion of an 'orientation point' (Padučeva: 'točka otčeta') is crucial for an adequate interpretation of the linguistic form. It has to be given contextually and interacts with the selectional / temporal-relational properties of the aspectual grammemes to yield the different readings.

For an adequate analysis of the Turkish aspectual system, the notion of 'orientation point O' has to be established as well. As Johanson (1971, 1994) states, in Turkish, it is not the events themselves, but rather the different perspectives on them, that are related to O. In (2a), the event is explicitly presented as ongoing within its boundaries (intraterminal), O being 'inside', whereas in (2b), O is located outside the event, which therefore may be presented as a whole.

Probably the most interesting item of the Turkish aspectual system is the so-called 'Aorist' (2c), which will be presented in more detail. I want to address one of the many questions related to this form, namely the question whether it is to be analyzed as generic, temporal or aspectual.

References

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