



The Manifestation of Aspectuality in Slavic Languages: A Theoretical Overview of the Concepts of "Aspect" and "Actionality"

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ABSTRACT	ARTICLE HISTORY	
<p>The article provides an in-depth analysis of aspectuality and its manifestation in Slavic languages. Aspectuality, a functional-semantic category, is explored as a universal linguistic phenomenon expressed through various grammatical, lexical, syntactic, and contextual means. The study highlights the central role of aspect in Slavic languages, distinguishing between perfective and imperfective verbs and the concept of bi-aspectual verbs that function in both aspects depending on context. The article demonstrates the interrelationship between aspect and actionality, analyzing their theoretical foundations and expression features. Actionality, a lexico-grammatical category, describes the internal temporal structure of situations influenced by the semantics of verbal lexemes and phrases. The interaction between aspect and actionality provides a multifaceted expression of aspectual meanings in Slavic languages. The author discusses the historical development of aspectuality, comparing it to other language families, and highlights the classification of actional types proposed by Z. Vendler. This classification is based on dynamism, telicity, and duration parameters, differentiating between states, atelic processes, telic processes, and events. The article concludes that studying aspect and actionality in Slavic languages contributes to a deeper understanding of semantic processes and the interaction between lexical and grammatical categories, which is crucial for developing aspectology and linguistic science.</p>	<p>Received Revised Accepted Published</p>	<p>01th February 2024 29th April 2024 31th May 2024 28th June 2024</p>
<p>Copyright © 2024, Cherkas O. This open-access article is distributed and licensed under the Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-SA 4.0) license.</p> 	<p>KEYWORDS <i>aspectuality, aspect, actionality, Slavic languages, grammatical category, temporal structure, semantics</i></p> <p>HOW TO CITE? Cherkas, O. (2024). The Manifestation of Aspectuality in Slavic Languages: A Theoretical Overview of the Concepts of "Aspect" and "Actionality". <i>Acta Humanitatis</i>, 2(1), 4–15. https://doi.org/10.5709/ah-02.01.2024-01</p>	

1. Introduction.

Aspectuality as a functional-semantic category is universal, although it is expressed differently across various languages. It encompasses all linguistic means (grammatical, lexical, syntactic, contextual) and their combinations that determine the qualitative and quantitative parameters of the action's progression in time, thus representing the fundamental time category (Bondarko, 1987, p. 40). Despite its language-specific nature, aspectuality is a universal concept that allows for varying degrees of identifying fundamental aspectual semantic features inherent to all languages.

Research into aspectuality in Slavic languages reveals its central role in the grammatical category of aspect, which contrasts with languages such as German, where the focus is on the lexico-grammatical category of limitativity (Pavlov, 1984, p. 49; Rizaev, 2013, p. 141). This forms the basis for a more detailed study of aspect and actionality within the framework of aspectology.

Yu. Maslov and O. Bondarko proposed a comprehensive set of aspectual features, such as boundedness/unboundedness, process in development/complete fact, action/state, and the relevance of the action's consequences for future time, among others (Bondarko, 2001, p. 78; Maslov, 2004b, pp. 305–364). In Slavic languages, these features create a complex system of grammatical aspects, which divides verbs into perfective and imperfective and also includes bi-aspectual verbs that can function in both aspects depending on the context.

Additionally, actionality as a lexico-grammatical category describes the internal temporal structure of situations, determined by the semantics of verbal lexemes and phrases (Sasse, 2006, p. 535). It interacts with aspect, providing a multifaceted and flexible expression of aspectual meanings in Slavic languages.

2. Aim and Objectives.

The article demonstrates the interrelationship between aspect and actionality in Slavic languages, their theoretical foundations, and expression features. It is essential to analyze how these two categories interact and influence the internal temporal structure of situations described by verbs, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of language semantic processes.

Objectives:

- to analyze "aspect" as a grammatical category in Slavic languages within contemporary linguistics;
- to provide characteristics of the phenomenon of "actionality" and trace its manifestation at the grammatical level in Slavic languages.

3. Aspect as a Grammatical Category in Slavic Languages.

The term "aspect" derives from the Latin word "aspectus" (meaning "view, appearance," from "aspicere" meaning "to look at, observe"). It was first introduced by the Swiss scholar F. Reiff in 1828 as a translation of the Russian term "вид" (lit. *kind*) (Mazon, 1958, p. 32). Aspect denotes the speaker's perspective on the described situation (SIS, 1974, p. 60).

Any situation is localized in space and time and possesses certain progression features regarding its structuring, qualitative, and quantitative parameters—traits traditionally considered aspectual. The definition of aspect interprets it as a domain of grammatical meanings indicating the nature of a situation's progression over time (Comrie, 1976, p. 3; Dahl, 1985, p. 24; Plungyan, 2000, p. 292; Zaliznyak, 2000, p. 11).

A situation is an action or state that can be realized in the natural or virtual world, corresponding to the term "state of affairs" in functional grammar (Dik, 1994, p. 28). Aspect is closely related to the concept of time; however, unlike time, aspect does not locate the situation on the temporal axis relative to the moment of speech but characterizes its "internal" (implicit) time (Guillaume, 1992, p. 11; Hockett, 1958, p. 237).

Grammatical time is a deictic category that localizes situations in time, usually relative to the moment of speech. Conversely, the aspect concerns the problem's internal temporal structure, distinguishing its course over time (Comrie, 1976, p. 5; Vykhovanets, 1988, p. 102). Unlike the objectivity of time, the aspect is subjective-objective, reflecting the actual state of affairs through the speaker's perspective (Karolyak, 2006, p. 45; Maslov, 2004d, p. 550).

C. Hockett notes that aspects have nothing to do with the placement of an event in time but with its distribution over time or temporal structure (Hockett, 1958, p. 237). Yu. Kuryłowicz also contrasts time as a deictic category and aspect as a semantic category (Kuryłowicz, 1972).

Aspect can be qualified as anaphoric, as it points to the internal coordinates of the speech flow (Bühler, 2000, p. 111).

In his theory of temporal relations, H. Reichenbach describes three key points: the time of the event (E), the moment of speech (S), and the reference point (R). The relations between these points define temporal correlations, which can influence aspects (Reichenbach, 1999, pp. 273–284). W. Klein uses similar parameters: time of situation, time of utterance, and topic time, which determine temporal and aspectual meanings (Klein, 1994, p. 3).

In Slavic languages, aspect divides verbs into perfective (P) and imperfective (I). The perfective aspect expresses an action as completed and often associated with reaching a specific limit (e.g., "to bandage", "to read", "to finish writing"). In contrast, the imperfective aspect presents an action as ongoing (e.g., "to be bandaging", "to be reading", "to be writing") (Ulrich, 1999, p. 586). Perfective and imperfective verbs perform different primary and additional functions. Perfective verbs can express a concrete-factual or potential action, depending on the context, while imperfective verbs typically describe a processual, non-complete action that extends over time (Maslov, 1962, p. 20; Vykhovanets' & Horodens'ka, 2004, p. 224). The meanings of perfective and imperfective verbs are realized through aspectual pairs, where one verb in the pair expresses a completed action and the other an ongoing action, e.g., "to open" (I) and "to be opening" (P) (LED, 1990, p. 83).

Slavic languages also feature bi-aspectual (dual-aspect) verbs that can function as both perfective and imperfective, depending on the context, e.g., "to amputate," "to marry," "to investigate" (Vykhovanets' & Horodens'ka, 2004, p. 226; Rusanivsky, 1971, pp. 218–219).

Yu. Maslov notes the functional similarity between aspects in Slavic languages and the aorist present in Ancient Greek. However, he indicates insufficient data for similar conclusions about the Proto-Indo-European language (Maslov, 1962, pp. 22–23). Researchers also argue that perfectivity and imperfectivity in Slavic languages are neologisms that emerged during the historical development of these languages (Van-Veyk, 1962, p. 244; Maslov, 1962: 23–24). In Proto-Indo-European, verbal forms conveyed aspectual meaning by distinguishing the present, aorist, and perfect, focusing on aspectual characteristics rather than temporal ones (Gašiorowski, 2001).

Despite the absence of a universal definition of aspect, it is often associated with the ontological categories of time, space, and motion. Linguistics considers the qualitative and quantitative characteristics of motion, reflected in the internal structure of verbal forms (Brugger & Schönedort, 2010). The verbal aspect describes the dynamics or distribution of action over time (LED, 1990, p. 83). G. Bußmann (2002) also defines aspect as "the expression of the internal temporal structure or other semantic features of verbal meaning" (p. 99).

It should be noted that aspect is not related to the deictic temporal localization of an action but emphasizes its internal "temporal structure," based on how the action is interpreted by the speaker (Kałny, 2000, p. 247; Koschmider, 1962, p. 83). Different languages highlight different aspectual oppositions. In Slavic languages, the grammatical distinction is made between perfective and imperfective aspects, known internationally as the perfective and imperfective aspects (LED, 1990, p. 83). To create a grammatical opposition, at least two factors are needed, which include the general-specific relationship (Thieroff, 1992, p. 71).

The Slavic aspectual system is a unique form of the universal category of aspect, raising questions about its subordination to the general categories of perfective and imperfective (Dahl, 1981, pp. 79–90; Dahl, 1985, p. 69). Aspectual meanings have grammatical expression, acting as oppositions in a significant portion of the verbal lexicon (Koschmider, 1962, pp. 105–106; Maslov, 1984, pp. 9–10; Zaliznyak et al., 2010, p. 3).

In conclusion, aspect in Slavic languages is a complex grammatical category that allows for more precise expression of action nuances in various contexts, providing speakers with expressiveness and accuracy in communication. It divides verbs into perfective and imperfective, including bi-aspectual verbs that adapt to the usage context.

4. Actionality and its Grammatical Manifestation in Slavic Languages.

Actionality is one of the central concepts in aspectology, analyzed alongside aspect to reveal the internal temporal structure of situations described by verbs. The notion of actionality, or "Aktionsart", is often considered a "situational type" or "lexical aspect." This concept describes the internal temporal structure of situations, which is determined by the semantics of verbal lexemes and verb phrases (Sasse, 2006, p. 535).

Unlike aspect, which is a grammatical category, actionality represents a lexical or lexico-grammatical category closely tied to the meaning of the verbal lexeme (Comrie, 1976, p. 31). Both categories express the internal temporal structure of situations: aspect reflects the speaker's viewpoint on the situation, while actionality indicates the internal organization of the action, independent of grammatical markers. The idea of distinguishing between aspect and actionality, first proposed by the Swedish Slavicist S. Agrell (1908), has become widely recognized in linguistics. However, some studies consider them under a single term, "aspect," differentiating between subjective and objective aspects or without such differentiation (Comrie, 1976; Gvozdanović, 2012; García Hernández, 1976; Hermann, 1927).

Despite their autonomy, aspect and actionality interact with each other. This interaction is characteristic of languages with aspectual morphology (Slavic, Uralic) and where aspectual distinctions are expressed through inflections (Romance, some Germanic languages). Aspect depends on the internal structure of the situation, explaining why some verbs in specific languages are limited in their aspects (Plungyan, 2011).

Actionality has two main interpretations: narrow and broad. In the narrow sense, actionality is considered an analog of aspect at the lexical level, characterizing verbs in terms of "atelicity" / "telicity" (Martin, 1971; Sasse, 1991). The broad interpretation of actionality encompasses additional semantic features such as dynamism and duration (Bertinetto, 2000; Comrie, 1976; Lyons, 1990). It is also important to note that boundedness/unboundedness is a significant aspect of actionality. This concept indicates the presence or absence of an internal boundary in the action, the achievement of which signifies the action's completion (Bondarko, 1991; Maslov, 2004). The verb's semantics determine "boundedness" and belongs to the phenomena of "covert grammar" (Bondarko, 2002). For instance, in Japanese, all verbs are divided into bounded and unbounded without formal markers (Kholodovich, 1979).

Actionality is examined through the division of verbs into bounded and unbounded. Bounded verbs denote situations with an internal boundary, after which the action is completed, for example, Latin *venire* (lit. *to come*) and Latin *vincere* (lit. *to win*). Unbounded verbs lack an internal boundary, such as Latin *esse* (lit. *to be*) and Latin *loqui* (lit. *to speak*). Bounded verbs include:



– Directed action verbs: Latin *claudere* (lit. *to close*), Latin *ornare* (lit. *to decorate*), Latin *accurrere* (lit. *to run up*);

– Transformative verbs: Latin *nascere* (lit. *to be born*), Latin *arescere* (lit. *to dry up*);

– Verbs of the initial or final phase of action: Latin *adamare* (lit. *to fall in love*), Latin *egredi* (lit. *to go out*), Latin *efficere* (lit. *to accomplish*).

Unbounded verbs include:

– Being verbs: Latin *esse* (lit. *to be*), Latin *patere* (lit. *to extend*), Latin *vivere* (lit. *to live*);

– Static verbs: Latin *habere* (lit. *to have*), Latin *tenere* (lit. *to hold*), Latin *regnare* (lit. *to reign*), Latin *amare* (lit. *to love*);

– Dynamic verbs: Latin *laborare* (lit. *to work*), Latin *ludere* (lit. *to play*);

– Verbs of diverse movement: Latin *ambulare* (lit. *to walk*), Latin *errare* (lit. *to wander*), Latin *gradi* (lit. *to stride*).

Actional features can change depending on the context. For example, the Latin verb *ire* (lit. *to go*) in one context can be unbounded and in another bounded, depending on the presence or absence of direction. Similarly, the Latin verb *bibere* (lit. *to drink*) can be bounded with a direct object and unbounded in a general context. Grammatical forms also affect the actionality of verbs. For instance, the Latin bounded verb *relinquere* (lit. *to leave*) in passive form can mean "to remain", aligning it with unbounded verbs.

Given the variability of actional features depending on the context, it is reasonable to consider actionality not at the verbal lexemes level but at the predicates level. In this context, actual Boundedness can be viewed as a particular case of telicity, and unbounded verbs can be telic depending on the context (Arkadyev, 2015).

Z. Vendler's classification of actional types includes states, atelic processes, telic processes, and events. This classification is based on parameters of dynamism, telicity, and duration:

– *Statives*: non-dynamic, atelic, durative;

– *Atelic processes*: dynamic, atelic, durative;

– *Telic processes*: dynamic, telic, durative;

– *Eventuales*: dynamic, telic, punctual.



The relationship between aspect and actionality can be interpreted differently depending on the approach. H.-J. Sasse distinguishes two approaches: aspect-oriented and action-oriented. The first approach focuses on the grammatical category of aspect (Koschmieder, 1962), while the second approach focuses on the actional characteristics of predicates (Jespersen et al.) (cit. in Sasse, 2001).

The two-component theory of aspect considers aspect and actionality as equal components of aspectuality. This approach distinguishes between grammatical aspectual meanings (temporal perspectives) and actional meanings of predicates (situational type) (Smith 1991, 1997; Breu, 1994, 2000). This theory proposes two stages: selecting the predicate type (situational type) and selecting a specific aspectual form (perspective).

Thus, actionality in Slavic languages is an essential component of the semantic structure of verbs, determining the internal temporal organization of action. It interacts with grammatical aspects, influencing the expression of aspectual meanings in language. Studying actionality allows for a deeper understanding of semantic processes in various languages and the interaction between lexical and grammatical categories.

5. Concluding Remarks.

In conclusion, aspectuality as a functional-semantic category is universal despite the specificity of its expression in different languages. In Slavic languages, aspect plays a central role in the grammatical category of aspect, which divides verbs into perfective and imperfective, with the possibility of bi-aspectual verbs that can function in both aspects depending on the context. Therefore, aspect as a grammatical category defines the internal temporal structure of situations, not localizing them on the temporal axis relative to the moment of speech but characterizing their "internal" time. This allows for more precise expression of action nuances in various contexts, providing speakers with expressiveness and accuracy in communication.

Meanwhile, actionality is a lexico-grammatical category that describes the internal temporal structure of situations determined by the semantics of verbal lexemes and phrases. It interacts with aspect, ensuring the multifaceted and flexible expression of aspectual meanings in Slavic languages. Actionality can change depending on the context, and it is appropriate to consider it at the level of predicates.



Z. Vendler's classification of actional types is based on the parameters of dynamism, telicity, and duration, allowing for the differentiation of states, atelic processes, telic processes, and events. This approach confirms the importance of actionality in determining the internal temporal organization of action.

Thus, the study of aspect and actionality in Slavic languages contributes to a deeper understanding of semantic processes in languages and the interaction between lexical and grammatical categories. This is crucial for further developing the theory of aspectology and linguistic science in general.

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Oleksandr Cherkas contributed to the design and implementation of the research article, the analysis of the results, and the writing of the manuscript.

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