Metaphor in Grammar: Conceptualization of Time

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Overview

- Matter provides the source domain for the metaphor that motivates aspect in Russian
- PERFECTIVE IS A DISCRETE SOLID OBJECT vs. IMPERFECTIVE IS A FLUID SUBSTANCE
- Correlation between aspectual distinctions and count/mass, number distinctions
Slavic Aspect:

- Contrasts perfective vs. imperfective (no progressive and no neutral aspect)
- Is independent of tense and other verbal categories
- Implements imperfective (as unmarked) where other languages would have perfective
- Has a complex and seemingly incoherent array of uses
Traditional Feature Analyses

- Boundedness, Totality, Definiteness, Change vs. Stability, Sequencing vs. Simultaneity, Exterior vs. Interior, Figure vs. Ground, Punctuality vs. Durativity, Resultative
- Lack intricacy needed to account for uses
- Are ultimately new synonyms for perfective vs. imperfective
The ICM of Matter

- Conflates notions of count vs. mass, solid vs. fluid, hard vs. soft, shaped vs. formless, etc.
- Both more narrow and more richly textured than count vs. mass (basic level)
- Russian has made a heavy morphological investment in nominal distinctions relating to this ICM (individuation)
The Two Types of Matter

- **Discrete Solid Object:**
  - Nut
  - Apple
  - Chair
  - Pail
  - Truck

- **Fluid substance:**
  - Sand
  - Water
  - Air
  - Smoke
The Two Types of Matter

- **Discrete Solid Object:**
  - Chair
  - Apple
  - Toy truck

- **Fluid substance:**
  - Sand
  - Water
Temporal Metaphors from General to Specific:

- **TIME IS SPACE** (well-documented, cf. Haspelmaphath 1997)
- **A SITUATION IS A MATERIAL ENTITY** (cf. comparisons of perfective vs. imperfective to count vs. mass)
- **PERFECTIVE IS A DISCRETE SOLID OBJECT vs. IMPERFECTIVE IS A FLUID SUBSTANCE**
Russian Investments in Individuation

- Number is overt, obligatory, intricate, and marked on all inflected words as sg or pl (no default general number)
- Russian categorizes as masses items that other languages categorize as individuals (fruits, ethnonyms)
- Collective and singulative suffixes
- Genitive/Locative singular –u for mass nouns
Parallels between Russian Nominal and Verbal Morphology

- Perfective vs. Imperfective is obligatory and ubiquitous like sg vs. pl
- Semelfactive -nu- parallels singulative -in(k)-a
- Imperfectivizing suffixes parallel collective suffixes (cf. –stvo in učitel’stvo)
- Delimitatives in po- parallel quantification of masses
The Human Observer

- NOW is a point in the timeline, but it is occupied by a human observer
- The Human Observer is not a point, and interacts with situations the way that a discrete solid interacts with material entities
- This is important for distinguishing future time from present time, and for gnomic vs. non-gnomic
Properties of Matter and Parameters of Aspect

- Inherent Properties -- correspond to inherent structure of situations and act as default values
- Interactional Properties -- correspond to discourse structure, and can override Inherent Properties
- Human Interactional Properties -- correspond to pragmatic structure, and can override Inherent Properties
Analysis of Russian Aspect

- See the Table and the examples in your handout.

- The letters on the Table correspond to the lettered headings of the examples.

- The numbers correspond to the numbered examples on the handout.
A. – G.: Properties inherent to types of matter

A. Edges
B. Shape
C. Integrity
D. Countability
E. Streamability
F. Penetrability
G. Conversions
A. Edges

- Perfective:
  - Has edges
  
- Imperfective:
  - Has no edges

[Image: A hand holding a deck of cards with a cross symbol suggesting the absence of edges in Imperfective.]
B. Shape

- **Perfective**
  - Can have various shapes 3), 4), 5)

- **Imperfective**
  - Has no shape but can spread 6), 7), 8), 9)
C. Integrity

- Perfective:
  - A unique occurrence 10)

- Imperfective:
  - Continuous processes and repetitions 11), 12)
D. Countability

- **Perfective:**
  - Quantified 13), 14)

- **Imperfective:**
  - Not inherently quantified, can fill 15), 16), X
E. Streamability

- Perfective:
  - Gestalt 18)

- Imperfective:
  - Gradual accumulation 19), determined motion verbs
F. Penetrability

- Perfective:
- Imperfective: Internal descriptions 20)
G. Conversions

- **Perfective:**
  - *-nu-*
  - singularization, packaging (23)

- **Imperfective:**
  - pulverization & piling of repetition 21), 22)
H. – K.: Interactions of types of matter and discourse structure

H. Compatibility
I. Dynamicity
J. Salience
K. Contiguity
H. Compatibility

- Perfective: Sequencing and future 24), 25), 26)
- Imperfective: Simultaneity and present 27), 28), 29), 30)
H. Compatibility, cont’d.

- Perfective embedded in imperfective:
  Interruption of ongoing action 31)
I. Dynamicity

- Perfective: moves story along 32)
- Imperfective slows story down 32)
J. Salience

- Perfective: obvious, foregrounded events 32)

- Imperfective: backgrounded events 32), 33)
K. Contiguity

- Combination of perfective edges with imperfective masses 34), 35), 36)
L. – N.: Interactions of humans with types of matter and pragmatic structure

L. Stability
M. Texture
N. Implied conversions
L. Stability

- Perfective: satisfying stability 37), 38), 39)
- Imperfective: nothing to grab onto 40), 41)
M. Texture

- Perfective: forceful 42)
- Imperfective: Generalized 43) and polite
N. Implied conversions

- Perfective: Trying and succeeding 44)
- Imperfective: Previous result no longer there 45)
Beyond Slavic

- French: more perfective than imperfective; motivated more by closed vs. open or discrete vs. filling; attenuated number
- Chinese: perfective, imperfective and neutral aspect, probably motivated from various sources; reduced number and no formal count vs. mass distinction
- Navajo: Similar to Chinese, and with no number distinction
How did this system evolve?

- In 2011–2012 we will have our research group at the Academy of Sciences in Oslo
- We will focus on:
  - The evolution of concepts of time
  - Relation of linguistic concepts to concepts in other domains (science, belief, art)