Aspect beyond time: introduction

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Aspect beyond time: Introduction[1]

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Abstract. The collection of papers presented in this special issue specifically addresses the non-temporal import of aspectual constructions, in conventional and less conventional contexts and expression modes. In the final section of this introductory paper (Section 5), we will briefly summarize the individual contributions to this special issue and how they relate to the overall theme of the volume. First, however, we will give a general introduction to the notions of lexical and grammatical aspect (Section 2) and how they are traditionally analyzed in temporal accounts (Section 3). These sections, which are partly based on descriptions in De Wit (2017b: Chapter 2), aim to clarify relevant notions for those readers who are less familiar with a domain that is riddled with terminological confusion, thus explicating some of the underlying tenets of existing (temporal) accounts, which the papers in this special issue call into question. Section 4, then, is meant to demonstrate the need for an alternative approach to aspect that goes beyond time, based on insights coming from the discussion of various non-canonical constructions/uses in different languages and from different theoretical perspectives.

Keywords: aspect, epistemic modality, evidentiality, non-temporal uses

1. Introduction

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Glossing abbreviations follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules.

The purpose of this special issue – which springs from an international workshop organized at the University of Colorado at Boulder on 7–8 April 2017 – is to advance our understanding of how humans conceptualize situations through language and how they extend the use of linguistic resources available for state/event descriptions, i.e., aspectual constructions, for the expression of new, non-temporal functions. Examples of such aspectual constructions are, for instance, the English progressive, the French *imparfait* or the Russian perfective. Most accounts of such aspectual constructions presuppose a 'temporal' meaning (a situation's ongoingness or completion, or its location relative to some other situation or time point) as being prototypical and/or basic. Non-temporal uses, if considered at all, are typically treated as secondary, pragmatically derived. Consequently, while we have a relatively clear picture of the range of temporal meanings expressed by aspectual constructions in the languages of the world, we have as yet no general picture of the ways in which these constructions can be used for the expression of meanings beyond the category of aspect, such as evidential meanings, speaker stance, or aspects of information structure. Typically, moreover, language-specific and cross-linguistic semantic analyses of aspectual constructions tend to focus on canonical contexts of use (i.e., descriptions of actual states of affairs), thus overlooking usage types and contexts that are considered more marginal in the study of aspect, such as performative utterances, different types of instructions, or imperatives/directives. This focus on canonicity is furthermore reflected in the formal expression modes typically considered: while aspectual meaning is prototypically expressed through inflection on the verb or periphrastic constructions, there are various other syntactic forms (such as non-finite verbs or nouns) operating at different levels of the sentence – 'aspectual tiers', in the words of Sasse 2002 – that can also be recruited for the expression of aspectual and aspect-related meanings. Whether these less conventional types of aspect marking have different semantic features than instances of direct aspect marking on finite verbs remains unclear. The notion of aspectual tiers will serve as the main organizing principle for presenting the individual contributions to this special issue in Section 5.

2. Lexical and grammatical aspect

Aspectual categories generally involve 'different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation' (Comrie 1976: 3). A situation may, for instance, be viewed as unbounded, as punctual, or as recurring on several occasions in time. Traditionally, grammatical aspect is defined as the viewpoint a speaker adopts with regard to a situation (Smith 1997). The two main types of grammatical aspect are perfectivity (the situation is viewed from without and thus in its entirety) and imperfectivity (the situation is viewed from within and is thus construed as unbounded). Lexical aspect or actionality/Aktionsart, on the other hand, is traditionally said to pertain to the inherent properties of verbs or verb phrases.

There has been some discussion going on in the literature regarding the extent to which grammatical and lexical aspect can be distinguished from one another. Most traditional accounts of aspect adopt a bidimensional approach (Sasse 2002: 202–203), insisting on the distinction between the lexicon and grammar – cf., e.g., Comrie 1976, Dahl 1985, Depraetere 1995, Smith 1997, Bertinetto & Delfitto 2000, Tatevosov 2002. This bidimensional approach is criticized by Breu 1994 and Sasse (1991; 2002), who argue for a unidimensional approach, claiming that lexical and grammatical aspect

operate on the same cognitive domain 'of human perception of states of affairs in terms of situations and situation changes' (Sasse 1991: 37; see also cognitive-linguistic approaches by Michaelis (2004; 2011) and Langacker (1987: 254–267) for accounts within the same unidimensional spirit). Thus, boundedness distinctions that are lexicalized in one language may be expressed by grammatical morphemes/constructions in another, and vice versa. In German, for instance, lexical aspect plays a crucial role, since the language hardly possesses overt constructions for the marking of grammatical aspect. For example, since there is a clear lexical distinction between inchoative *sich verlieben* ('to fall in love') and stative *lieben* ('to love'), no additional grammatical markers are needed to signal this aspectual difference. Samoan, on the other hand, heavily relies on grammatical morphemes to express the aspectual contours of otherwise temporally underspecified conceptions of situations. For instance, the lexeme *alofa* can mean both 'fall in love' and 'love' – it takes additional aspect marking to signal which of these two meanings is intended in a given context (Sasse 1991: 38–42).

Going one step further, Sasse 2002 argues that the aspectual meaning of a sentence is not only conveyed by the lexical class of a verb and by grammatical morphemes, but also by various other levels or ASPECTUAL TIERS (seven in total) that may interact in different ways in different languages:

- the inherent aspecto-temporal characteristics of the (simple or complex) situation-denoting lexical units that go into a sentence;
- the aspecto-temporal nuances of meaning brought in by overt morphological systems ('aspect operators' or 'aspect grams');
- the bounding potential of determinational and quantificational characteristics of arguments;
- the bounding potential of adverbials;
- the contribution of other types of phase markers such as 'begin', 'continue', 'finish', 'stop', etc. to bounding;
- the relational structure of the sentence: diathesis, causativity, thematic roles, etc.;
- interclausal relations between predicates in terms of 'taxis'.

(Sasse 2002: 263)

The first tier pertains to actionality, and the second to grammatical aspect. With respect to the first tier, it is important to note that verbs themselves do not as such possess inherent aspecto-temporal properties; rather, they inherit these properties from the situations to which they are taken to denote (cf. also Smith 1997 on situation types). Thus, lexical aspect has to be regarded as pertaining to the 'DEFAULT conceptualizations of the temporal qualities of the situations to which verbs refer' (Dickey 2000: 40; our emphasis), which, as defaults go, can be contextually overridden. The third aspectual tier – central to the work of Krifka (1992; 1998) and Verkuyl 1993 – is relevant for those verbs that exhibit different actional properties according to the characteristics of their arguments, as illustrated in (1):

(1) (a) He wrote a letter.

(b) He wrote letters.

In (1a), the argument is countable and thus quantized (cf. Krifka 1992; 1998). Therefore, the denoted situation has an inherent endpoint (i.e., the verb phrase is telic). The argument *letters* in (1b), on the other hand, is cumulative (like other indefinite plurals and singular mass nouns): if you add one letter, the overall result still remains 'letters'. Verb phrases with such cumulative arguments do not have an inherent endpoint and are therefore atelic (just like with intransitive uses of the same verb). Next, adverbials, such as *for X time* or *until today*, as well as phase markers can impose boundaries on a situation, or they can, conversely, trigger an unbounded construal (see Altshuler & Michaelis this volume), with both cases illustrating the potential of default expectations for being overridden. The final two tiers concern higher-order aspectual relations, such as the bounding quality of sequential events.

In fact, unidimensional and bidimensional approaches to aspect often exhibit certain overlapping assumptions (especially in their less extreme versions; cf. Sasse 2002: 202–203). Notably, the claim that aspectual meanings at the (more) lexical and (more) grammatical levels heavily interact and mutually define one another (e.g., stative verbs can be defined in relation to the progressive construction and vice versa) – explicitly supported by, e.g., Breu 1994 and in Michaelis's (2004; 2011) analysis of aspectual coercion – is also underscored by Bertinetto & Delfitto (2000: 191–192). Therefore, Croft 2012 and De Wit 2017b argue that lexical and grammatical aspect form a continuum rather than being sharply distinct. One group of languages where this continuous nature of aspect marking is clearly reflected is the Slavic languages. In these languages, the basic opposition between perfective and imperfective aspect is marked by means of *lexical* derivation (in the form of affixation) rather than inflection, such that Slavic verbs come in aspectual pairs. The unmarked Russian verb *znat'* ('know'), for instance, is imperfective, while its prefixed counterpart *uznat'* ('get to know, find out') is perfective (for more illustrations, see Dickey this volume). Dahl (1985: 89) refers to Slavic aspect as involving 'grammaticalized lexical categories', which can express the same aspectual meanings through derivation as other languages can via inflection. Thus, the central distinctive feature of the Slavic aspect system – compared, for instance, to that of English – is that aspectual values are 'grafted' onto the verb phrase before it interacts with tense and other grammatical constructions, whereas in English aspectual (e.g., progressive or perfect) marking always comes in constructions specified for tense (i.e., in English there is no such thing as a progressive/imperfective form of the verb that is neutral for tense).

3. Classic approaches to grammatical and lexical aspect

3.1 *Grammatical aspect: Temporal definitions and classifications*

The two main (i.e., conceptually most general and typologically widespread) categories of grammatical aspect are perfectivity and imperfectivity. A whole set of related, yet not identical temporal definitions of these categories are to be found in the literature. The perfective/imperfective opposition is characterized by Comrie (1976: 16) as follows: 'perfectivity indicates the view of a situation as a single whole, without distinction of the various separate phases that make up that situation; while the imperfective pays essential

attention to the internal structure of the situation.' Similar definitions based on a situation's (lack of) completeness can be found in, e.g., Dahl (1985: 78) and Smith (1997: 3, 66), who points out that a perfective viewpoint involves a total view of a situation, while an imperfective viewpoint implies a partial view. This viewpoint opposition can be understood as an opposition between an 'external' (perfective) and an 'internal' (imperfective) perspective (Michaelis 1998). Closely related to these are definitions in terms of boundedness (perfective) and unboundedness (imperfective), proposed by, for instance, Chung & Timberlake 1985 and hinted at by Smith (1997: 301–302). These two types of theory (i.e., completeness and boundedness) are subsumed by Dickey 2000 under the term 'synoptic theories'. Formalizations of these synoptic theories have been suggested in, for instance, Klein 1994 and other neo-Reichenbachean approaches to aspect, where perfective aspect is analyzed as indicating the full inclusion of the event time (ET) in the reference or topic time (TT), while imperfective aspect involves the full inclusion of TT within ET.

An important body of work has been devoted to going beyond these purely temporal, synoptic theories, by concentrating on the discourse functions that aspect markers can take on. Central accounts in this respect are Hopper (1979; 1982) and analyses within the formal framework of Discourse Representation Theory, such as Partee 1984 and Kamp & Reyle 1993. The use of (tense and) aspect markers (like the perfect) to index participants (see, e.g., Lakoff 1970) also belongs in this group. Perfective markers are typically said to foreground situations and to move the narrative time forward by referring to events as part of a temporal sequence, while imperfective markers have more of a backgrounding function, in that they set the scene against which other events take place. Not unrelated to these discursive accounts is the analysis in Dickey 2000 of eastern Slavic aspect in terms of temporal (in)definiteness. According to this analysis, perfective aspect in, e.g., Russian indicates temporal definiteness, i.e. the unique temporal location of a situation, for instance as a consequence of it being part of a sequence. Conversely, imperfective aspect is said to signal temporal indefiniteness (see Dickey this volume for more details). While these discursive and temporal-definiteness accounts undeniably constitute important advancements in a more inclusive conception of aspectual meaning, we should point out that (most of) these accounts still center around the relation between one situation and other situations *in time*, i.e., they presuppose a temporal basis for the semantics of aspect.

Beside perfective and imperfective aspect, other more specific subtypes of grammatical aspect can be distinguished. According to Comrie (1976: 28), the category IMPERFECTIVE comprises two subtypes: habitual and progressive aspect. As we have already observed for perfective and imperfective aspect, definitions of progressive aspect comprise many related temporal concepts (sometimes specifically proposed for the meaning of the English progressive), including continuity at a particular reference point (Comrie 1976), ongoing activity (Dahl 1985), dynamicity (Rydén 1997), time framing (Jespersen 1931), incompleteness (Leech 2004), and limited duration (Quirk et al. 1985). There seems to be a general agreement nowadays, at least among non-formalist accounts, that the progressive is used to zoom in (i.e., create an imperfective perspective) on a dynamic event. By zooming in on an event, very similarly to what happens when one continually closes up on a visual object (like a cow), that segment of the situation that is focused upon becomes unbounded and homogeneous, just like with the conception of a state. According to Michaelis 2004, the progressive in fact selects state phases in the

temporal configuration of events, i.e., it selects the state that lies in between an event's boundaries, where states change quality (Altshuler & Michaelis this volume provide more details regarding such stativization processes). Habitual aspect is expressed by dedicated grammatical constructions in some languages (e.g., English *used to/would* for past habits), but it can also be expressed by more general imperfective or progressive constructions. Habitual situations involve a series of repeated tokens of an event type that is considered to be 'characteristic of an extended period of time, so extended in fact that the situation referred to is viewed not as an incidental property of the moment but, precisely, as a characteristic feature of a whole period' (Comrie 1976: 27–28). Expressions of habituality, such as (2), are related to generic statements, such as (3), the only difference being that the latter involve non-specific subjects (Bybee et al. 1994: 151–152):

(2) Our dog eats twice per day.

(3) Dogs like to play.

It is sometimes argued that both imperfective and perfective aspect can be split up into more specific temporal subcategories, as is suggested by Bybee et al. (1994: Chapter 3). However, while Comrie 1976 proposes that imperfectivity, progressivity, and habituality (and related senses) may be conceptually ordered as a hierarchy – imperfectivity being the more general category –, Bybee et al. 1994 focus on the diachronic semantic links between categories associated with perfectivity and imperfectivity, respectively. Thus, the categories COMPLETIVE, PERFECT, RESULTATIVE, PERFECTIVE (i.e., uses that are not subject to the restrictions characterizing the three previous categories), and, finally, indefinite anterior and definite past-tense uses are analyzed as constituting various stages in the typical diachronic development of perfective markers, reflecting progressive degrees of grammaticalization with increasingly less specific usage conditions. Completive aspect markers can be considered as types of perfective markers that emphasize the final boundary of a situation. Defining the grammatical category of perfect as a subtype of perfective aspect may be more complicated, in view of its tense-like properties (see, e.g., Ritz 2012). Very generally, the perfect – which can appear in combination with past-, present-, and future-tense constructions – is said to indicate the continuing relevance (Comrie 1976: 52) of a prior situation at reference time. In some languages, such as German, French, and Dutch, the perfect has evolved into a definite past-tense construction (i.e., more general than indefinite anterior uses). But even for languages where a perfect construction still has a clear aspectual profile (e.g., focusing on an event's state of completion), the strong link with temporal location (e.g., anteriority vis-à-vis a reference time) turns perfect constructions into potential rivals of past-tense markers in the domain of past-time reference. Yet the fact that the perfect can combine with tense marking is a good reason to regard it as an aspectual construction nonetheless. On top of this formal argument, a semantic motivation is given by Michaelis (1998; 2004), who analyzes the perfect, just like the progressive, as a stativizing type-shifting construction, selecting states in the temporal configuration of events, such that a situation involving a dynamic event is given

an overall stative profile. The difference between the progressive and the perfect is that the latter involves the selection of a posterior state rather than a medial one.

3.2 *Lexical aspect: Definitions and classification*

Since issues of lexical aspect are less central to most of the analyses presented in this special issue, we will touch upon this topic only briefly, even though, of course, the distinctions between states and events and telic and atelic situations constitute pivotal building blocks for any general aspectual account. One of the most commonly employed actional classifications is that of Vendler 1967[1957], who divides English verbal predicates into four classes – states, activities, accomplishments, and achievements – on the basis of the features [± stativity], [± telicity], and [± duration]. Other classifications, related more or less closely to Vendler's, include Verkuyl 1993, Bache 1995, Smith 1997, and Dik 1997 (see also Croft 2012: 45–52 for an overview). It is generally agreed upon that the most basic actional distinction is that between states and dynamic events (although there is less agreement on how to operationalize this distinction), echoing the general grammatical categories of imperfective vs perfective aspect. Events can be further subdivided on the basis of additional distinctions such as inceptive/non-inceptive or homogeneous/heterogeneous. Stative verbs, a relatively less heterogeneous collection, are also sometimes classified into different subtypes along temporal parameters, for instance on the basis of their temporal extension (Croft 2012: 58). One of the most fine-grained actional classifications to date can be found in Croft 2012, who incidentally also takes into account qualitative differences between situation types, rather than only temporal parameters.

In contrast with the study of grammatical aspect marking, many if not most available classifications of lexical aspect historically show 'but little typological awareness' (Tatevosov 2002: 322). That is, classes of actionality are frequently defined on the basis of a set of universal semantic features, as is done by Vendler and his followers, and it is tacitly assumed that this classification (usually established on the basis of English data) is not subject to cross-linguistic variation: all languages will fundamentally have recourse to (a subset of) the predicted possible classes. However, substantial cross-linguistic variation among classes of lexical aspect is not uncommon (Tatevosov 2002; Croft 2012: 50; Bar-El 2015), and it remains a particularly thorny issue to define actional classes in a typologically relevant fashion, i.e., such that allowance is made for peculiar, language-specific (possibly unique) ways of organizing the temporal profiles of situation types (see Crane et al. 2019).

An equally challenging, and ultimately highly related issue is whether it is possible to classify a verb as by definition belonging to only one given actional class, or whether instead the lexical aspect of a verb (phrase) always needs to be defined in context (implying that it is inherently variable (see the discussion on coercion in Section 4.2 for more details).

4. ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES

In the previous two sections we provided a brief overview of those accounts that build on the assumption that aspectual semantics can be essentially captured in terms of temporal

notions. Yet this overview constitutes but a partial representation of the body of literature on aspect, which contains an increasing number of observations regarding the less than purely temporal nature of aspect. In what follows, we will present some representative studies of various (often non-Western) languages that focus, respectively, on non-temporally motivated uses of aspectual constructions (Section 4.1), the effects of non-canonical contexts on aspectual interpretation (Section 4.2), and non-canonical aspectual encoding strategies of aspect (Section 4.3).

4.1 *Non-temporal meanings of aspectual constructions*

Non-temporal uses of aspectual constructions have been especially prominent in analyses of general imperfective and progressive constructions. Typological and language-specific data from, among others, Fleischman 1995, Iatridou 2000, Brisard 2010, and Patard (2011; 2014) show that (specifically past) imperfective constructions are often recruited to evoke hypothetical or irreal situations rather than establishing actual past-time reference. This is clearly illustrated in pretense-play contexts, such as (4), in which children use a past imperfective (the *imparfait* in French) to describe what is happening in the game they are playing at the time of speaking:

(4) Moi, j' **étais** le gendarme et tu **avais**
me 1SG be.PST.IPFV DEF.SG.M cop and 2SG have.PST.IPFV
volé une voiture.
steal.PST.PTCP INDEF.SG.F car
'Me, I was the cop, and you had stolen a car.' (Grevisse 1986: 1292, cited in Brisard 2010: 494)

Other uses in which the *imparfait* or analogous tenses in other languages are used to refer to situations that are not (presented as) real or known at the time of speaking are found in, among others, protases of conditional clauses, wishes, and politeness contexts (see Brisard 2010 for an overview). Since these uses pertain to the (construed) reality status of the reported situation, they can be called modal (epistemic) uses of the constructions under consideration. A central point of discussion is whether these modal uses constitute pragmatic extensions of the temporal semantics of these imperfective constructions in interaction with (non-temporal) features of the context, as is argued by, for instance, James 1982, Fleischman 1989, and Patard 2014. In Cognitive Grammar, the question pertains to whether these uses reflect GROUNDING properties of the aspectual constructions at issue: grounding predications like tense basically involve epistemic concerns, which makes modal uses of such predications anything but 'pragmatic'. The issue, as noted with respect to the hybrid tense/aspect status of certain constructions, is then whether aspect markers (themselves grounded by tense) may also qualify as grounding predications in some respects, or in certain contexts (cf. Brisard forthcoming).

A similar controversy surrounds non-aspectual uses of the (specifically present) progressive, which have been described for French, Dutch, and English in, respectively, De Wit et al. 2013, Anthonissen et al. 2019, and De Wit & Brisard 2014. Such non-aspectual uses are for instance attested in certain performative utterances in English (De Wit et al. 2018):

(5) Oh, cicadas, I'**m begging** you, please, get out of my trees and go home.

The fact that the (more canonical) simple present and the present progressive can be used interchangeably in this context illustrates that the progressive is not used for aspectual reasons but rather has some expressive/qualifying function here. While these non-temporal uses are typically considered subsidiary (if they are considered at all in studies of performativity), they are taken to reflect a fundamental non-aspectual meaning in, among others, analyses within the French enunciativist tradition (e.g., Adamczewski 1978), as well as by Williams 2002 and De Wit & Brisard 2014. De Wit et al. 2018 also show more generally that the choice of aspectual marking for performative statements in a given language crucially depends on other than temporal considerations that could broadly be called epistemic. Overall, many aspect-related phenomena that have been observed in the literature (including in formal-semantic accounts), such as the IMPERFECTIVE PARADOX (Dowty 1979, Portner 1998) or the SUB-INTERVAL property of stative predicates, pertain to issues of (mis)alignment between the observation/conception of a situation and its simultaneous (complete) identification and report, which is clearly a matter of qualifying a state of affairs and thus of construing a modal assessment.

Moving beyond the realm of modality, it has been observed that certain aspectual constructions, most notoriously the perfect, can develop evidential and mirative meanings – notions that are of course not unrelated to modality (see, e.g., DeLancey 2001, De Wit 2017a). That is, perfect constructions can be recruited to indicate the source of information or a feeling of surprise on the part of the speaker. A particularly interesting construction in this respect is the Turkish perfect suffix *-miş*, which – in contrast to its unmarked counterpart in the past-time paradigm *-di* – expresses a sense of indirectness (Johanson 2018). More specifically, as the following illustration by Slobin & Aksu (1982: 187) shows, *-miş* can convey inference, hearsay, and/or surprise:

(6) Kemal gel-miş.

Kemal come-PRF

'Kemal has come.'

(a) Inference: The speaker sees Kemal's coat hanging in the front hall, but has not yet seen Kemal.

(b) Hearsay: The speaker has been told that Kemal has arrived, but has not yet seen Kemal.

(c) Surprise: The speaker hears someone approach, opens the door, and sees Kemal – a totally unexpected visitor.

In order to unify the analysis of various uses of the *-miş* perfect, Slobin & Aksu 1982 argue we need to look beyond its temporal import and instead, again, come up with a knowledge-based analysis: as they put it, 'the essence of all uses of *-miş* is to encode situations for which the speaker is not somehow prepared – situations on the fringe of consciousness, learned of indirectly, or not immediately assimilable to the mental sets of the moment' (Slobin & Aksu 1982: 195). More generally, there appears to be a straightforward semantic connection between evidentiality and the perfect, in the sense that both convey a sense of indirectness in terms of acquiring knowledge of a situation (DeLancey 2001: 378). The perfect involves past situations of which the conceptualizer witnesses some current consequences (e.g., in the form of a result). A sense of indirectness is equally central to evidential statements, which 'are indirect in the sense that the narrated event is not stated directly, but in an indirect way, by reference to its reception by a conscious subject, a recipient' (Johanson 2018: 511). Hence, it makes sense that languages should recruit the same construction to convey these two meanings. By extension, mirative interpretations follow naturally from the evidential meanings: as DeLancey (2001: 378) observes, 'a fact which one knows only when ones sees secondary evidence for it is necessarily unexpected to some degree'. This evidential/mirative/aspectual polyfunctionality of perfect constructions makes one wonder to what extent we can still speak of constructions that are purely or primarily aspectual.

The above-noted use of (past) imperfective constructions for the expression of politeness or, more generally, mitigation (e.g., of illocutionary force) as well as the attested mirative uses of the perfect point to the exploitation of various aspectual constructions for interactional/interpersonal purposes. Other interpersonal meanings that have been associated with aspectual constructions are authority, necessity, and obligation. In her analysis of the Russian perfective/imperfective contrast with verbs of communication, Israeli 2001 notes that one motivation for selecting a perfective rather than an imperfective marker is that the former can convey a sense of authority that is absent in the case of the latter. Interpersonal functions can also motivate the use of verbless statives in Modern Standard Arabic (Mansouri 2016: Chapter 4). In (7), for instance, the stative predication is interpreted as having a sense of obligation or necessity:

(7) alay-ki qirāʾatu hāðā l-kitaba

on-you reading.NOM this the-book.ACC

'Reading this book is (incumbent) upon you (or, you should/must read this book).' (Mansouri 2016: 107)

Still other non-temporal, pragmatically motivated extensions of the use of aspect markers are connected with information structure. This has been observed by Güldemann 2003 for progressive constructions in Bantu, which have evolved out of focus

constructions and can still express this focal meaning (see De Wit et al. this volume). Aspectual constructions can furthermore be used as clause-chaining devices – indicating different types of inter-clausal dependency. This is elaborately discussed by Robert 2010 for various aspectual constructions in the Niger-Congo language Wolof. Similarly, François 2010 notes that the so-called Background perfect can be used to mark subordination in its own right (i.e., without needing other subordination markers such as conjunctions) in the Oceanic languages Hiw and Lo-Toga (see Bril 2010 for additional illustrations of aspectual means for indicating clause hierarchy).

In sum, aspectual constructions can function as markers of modality, evidentiality, mirativity, authority, necessity, obligation, focus, and clausal structure. Integrating these non-temporal functions within a general semantics of aspect requires us to move away from an exclusively temporal analysis and identify the basic features in the conceptual schemes evoked that are responsible for the many extended uses that are attested. For that, it seems plausible to turn to the relation between types of temporal profiles (e.g., stative vs dynamic) and implications in terms of how knowledge of them can be construed (as is done in the contributions of Dickey, Altshuler and De Wit et al. to this volume).

4.2 *The use of aspectual encoding in non-canonical contexts*

The crucial role of context cannot be overstated when analyzing aspectual semantics. One notion that immediately comes to mind in this respect is that of coercion. Coercion effects come about when there is a semantic mismatch between a higher-order construction and a (lexical) element embedded in that construction (see, e.g., de Swart 1998; Michaelis 2004, 2011). Aspectual coercion can occur when a canonically stative verb combines with the progressive in English, as in *I'm loving it*. In cases such as this, the verb is exceptionally construed as being dynamic, i.e., *in this context*, it gets a different, non-canonical meaning. Instances of coercion indicate the need for a context-based approach to actional classification, in which we recognize the potential of verbs to shift lexical class depending on the context in which they appear and abandon the idea of a 'natural' aspectual class (at least for certain verb types). But context also plays a role in the analysis of grammatical aspectual constructions, which can, as we have seen in Section 4.2, be remarkably polysemous. A notable case in this respect is the Japanese *-te iru* construction, which may, depending on the context (e.g., the lexical aspect of the verb), take on stative, progressive, and perfect meanings (see Ebert 1995 for other examples of such contextually triggered progressive–perfect ambiguities). Contextual effects can also consist of one aspectual construction affecting another one within the same verb phrase. This phenomenon, which is known as ASPECTUAL STACKING (cf., e.g., Altshuler 2016: 155–158), often seems to seems to go hand in hand with a meaning shift of (at least) one of the two constructions (De Wit 2018: 228–229). For example, in Russian, the perfective prefix *pere-* can be added to the imperfective verb stem *pisat'* ('write') to form the perfective *perepisat'* ('rewrite'). Yet by adding the suffix *-yvaj* to *perepisat'*, such that we get *perepisyvat'*, the derived perfective value of the construction is undone, so to speak, and the meaning becomes imperfective again ('being in the course of rewriting'). Still within the context of the verb phrase, aspectual meaning is furthermore determined by tense. For instance, the English progressive might have a prototypical meaning of ongoingness in present- or past-time contexts, but when it is used in combination with *will* (as in *Your train will be stopping in Manchester*), it typically gets a non-aspectual,

matter-of-course meaning (Celle & Smith 2010). More generally, interactions of certain aspectual constructions with present- (but less with other) tense marking often leads to the kinds of phenomena noted above with respect to epistemic status (the use of progressives to mark incongruity) or tense-like behavior (the use of perfects as preterites).

Aspectual constructions may also exhibit special behavior in certain non-canonical contexts, as with non-finite verb forms (infinitives and participles), imperatives, conditionals and other types of subclauses, performatives, and specific types of text, such as narratives or instructions. For instance, in their analysis of wine reviews, Hommerberg & Paradis demonstrate that aspect choice contributes to 'the construal of the tasting event as a joint writer–reader enterprise' (2014: 218), a matter of stance. Similarly, both De Wit et al. 2018 and Fortuin 2019 argue that, in many languages, performative contexts involve distinct forms of aspectual behavior, reflecting the alternative, non-temporal function aspectual constructions fulfill in such contexts (see example 5).

Once more, these observations indicate that we need to reflect on whether or not we can come up with a uniform semantic analysis of a given aspectual construction, incorporating this wide range of contextually induced variation.

4.3 *Non-canonical aspect marking: Beyond the verb*

As indicated in Section 2, a central tenet of unidimensional approaches to aspect is that aspectual meaning can be expressed at various levels of the utterance (see the seven aspectual tiers distinguished by Sasse 2002: 263). Encoding strategies that rely on linguistic tools beyond the (finite) verb are typically considered more marginal, and they are often neglected in overviews of aspectual meaning and marking. Yet such alternative types of grammatical marking forces us to explore the limits of aspectual semantics (as a category associated with (finite) verbs) and to investigate possible links between certain types of aspectual meaning and certain expression forms.

For instance, light verb constructions are said to fulfill an aspectual function, in that they impose a telic construal (Wierzbicka 1982, Bonial this volume). This is illustrated in the following opposition:

(8) (a) He was drinking.

(b) He was having a drink.

While (8a) involves an unbounded viewpoint, the use of the light verb *have* invokes an inherent endpoint to the denoted event. Similarly, reduplication constitutes yet another tool to express aspectual meaning. In Mandarin Chinese, for instance, it serves 'a delimitative function, i.e., it expresses that a situation continued for some (relatively brief) period of time' (Dickey 2016: 345). This is illustrated in example (9):

(9) ta xiao-le xiao shuo [...]

he smile-PF smile say

'He smiled a little and said [...].' (Xiao & McEnery 2004: 138)

Beyond the verb proper, it has been noted that tense, aspect, and modality can also be marked on nominals and modifiers within an NP (Nordlinger & Sadler 2004). Although Nordlinger & Sadler 2004 primarily appear to focus on tense and mood distinctions, they also cite examples showing that aspect marking can be done within the confines of the noun phrase, possibly in combination with verbal aspect marking, as is the case in the following example from Sirionó (Tupí-Guaraní, Bolivia):

(10) Áe osó-ke-rv ií-rv.

he go-PAST-PERF water-PERF

'He went to the water.' (Firestone 1965: 35, cited in Nordlinger & Sadler 2004: 599)

Note, finally, that adverbials (e.g., in the form of prepositional phrases) can carry aspectual meaning as well (Sasse's fourth tier). This is amply demonstrated for the adverb *already* by Michaelis 1996 and temporal adverbs such as *now* by Altshuler (forthcoming), as well as in the joint contribution of these two authors to the current volume.

5. CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Each paper contributes to one or more of the topics raised in Section 4. Thus, the topic of non-temporal uses of aspectual constructions features prominently in the paper by De Wit et al., which argues that the progressive construction is recruited for the expression of EXTRAVAGANCE (i.e., the representation of a situation as in some way non-canonical or remarkable) in a wide variety of languages and across various stages of its development. This suggests that there is something inherent about the semantics of this construction that lends itself naturally to such primarily modal usage types – primarily, because the motivation for using the construction in the contexts at hand consists in the speaker qualifying a state of affairs, rather than marking an 'objective' property of its internal temporal make-up. The authors conclude that this type of non-temporal use of an aspectual construction cannot be reduced to a pragmatically derived extension of a basically temporal semantic schema, since it typically occurs right from the start in the course of its grammaticalization and is actually a crucial factor in promoting its spread during the first stages of development.

For various reasons (briefly alluded to in Section 4.2), the non-temporal/modal qualities of the progressive construction (and perhaps of other aspectual ones as well, like the perfect) come out most dramatically in the present-tense paradigm. The same holds for the type of sentences analyzed in the paper by Altshuler & Michaelis, viz., state sentences containing *by* temporal adverbs (BTAs). By virtue of the interaction between their stative aspect and the (intensional) meaning of the BTA, these exhibit both aspectual and epistemic features that merge as the result of a semantic reconciliation procedure

most clearly brought out by the inclusion of an epistemic modal. If the key aspectual requirement of a BTA sentence is that some unspecified time preceding the time described by the adverb (in the case of *by now*, the time of speaking) overlap with the onset of a resultant state holding at the time of the adverb, it is the indefiniteness of this unspecified time that is responsible for the subsequent evidential inferences that BTA reports generate, as they typically express conjectures, guesses, or suppositions, i.e. epistemic qualifications arising naturally from the specific temporal construal proffered by the construction.

Such epistemic qualifications are equally relevant for the Russian aspectual opposition discussed by Dickey. In his paper, the author illustrates how the three topics showcased here – i.e., non-temporal meanings, non-canonical (specifically non-narrative) contexts, and alternative encoding – can converge in the description of one grammatical phenomenon. The phenomenon at issue is the opposition between perfective and imperfective aspect in the Russian imperative. In terms of encoding, this opposition is expressed lexically in Slavic languages, by means of affixes on the verb. This means that it also occurs with non-finite verb forms, such as the imperative. The question then is whether traditional accounts of the Russian/Slavic perfective–imperfective opposition in terms of TOTALITY VS NON-TOTALITY in tensed contexts (particularly involving past-tense usages in narratives) can be extended to cover aspectual usage of imperatives in non-narrative contexts, i.e., conversational discourse, where pragmatic factors are in play that complicate the full interpretation of these directives. The suggested answer is that, while a unified analysis is still possible in terms of sequential links – with the perfective asserting temporal sequencing (definiteness) and the imperfective canceling these links (indefiniteness) (see also Section 3.1) –, the interplay between basic temporal schema and contextual assumptions results in a wide range (especially with imperfectives) of interactional functions that focus on issues of politeness and agentivity. These extended uses, while expressing non-temporal concerns, are demonstrably motivated, the author argues, by the two alternative temporal construals of situations that these aspectual opposites introduce in any context in which they occur.

Finally, the focus of the paper by Bonial & Pollard is the alleged aspectual nature of the contrast between Light Verb Constructions (LVCs) and their synthetic counterparts. This has traditionally been taken as an alternative encoding of aspect (available in English and Romance languages), not even strictly covered in Sasse's tiers, providing a telic alternative for an otherwise atelic synthetic verb. The results from a large-scale analysis of annotated LVCs and their synthetic counterparts in the English PropBank corpus indicate that the primary factor for favoring a description that features an LVC is the possibility of expanding the nominal complement, by adding determiners and/or various types of modifying expressions. Their most obvious functions pertain to rhetorical/stylistic effects, but especially with determiners, the choice of whether to add one (rather than use a bare noun) and if so, which one ((in)definite article, possessive, demonstrative, …) allows speakers to modulate event aspect. It seems, then, that aspectual concerns may motivate the use of LVCs in certain contexts, but that their main function is rhetorical. What 'encodes' aspect in those cases where it is relevant is the combination of the LVC with an adnominal determiner.

Together, these contributions are meant to demonstrate the viability of turning to uses of aspectual constructions that are motivated more by subjective matters of construal

(involving the speaker's qualification of a state of affairs) than by the objective temporal properties of the situation referred to. Not only may this lead to a more complete description of the category of aspect and the wide range of functions it covers, it also allows us to think about how certain non-temporal concerns, typically of an epistemic or evidential nature, go hand in hand with certain types of temporal configurations and thus come with them naturally, instead of being the product of the interaction between a basic temporal schema and contextual features. This in turn can help us explain why such extended uses are not necessarily pragmatically derived, but can be seen as part and parcel of the semantics of grammatical aspect (regardless of how it is formally expressed). Ultimately, we hope to show that conceptions of time in general, as illustrated by the different aspectual constructions discussed in the present issue, always come with non-temporal (we could call them 'existential') considerations, a (putative) fact that can be attributed to the fundamentally experiential basis of human cognition.

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