

The extensive literature dedicated to the history of Slavic verb in most cases tackles the issue of the rise of the Slavic category of aspect, i.e., the perfective/imperfective opposition. However, a different perspective can provide new insights into the history of Slavic TAM features. The aim of the present study is two-fold. First, I intend to present a corpus-driven account of the history of Russian actional classes in the Vendlerian sense on the basis of the standard tests, namely, ‘for X time’ and ‘in X time’. The key question here is how (a)telicity was encoded, to what extent it was overtly expressed within different verb stems and how the system evolved later on. Another issue is whether potentially ambiguous predicates, e.g., characterized by activity/accomplishment or semelfactive/activity syncretism, and aspectual coercion were possible. Second, I account for the history of the aspectual modifiers themselves. All the contemporary Slavic languages distinguish ‘for X time_{RES}’, taking scope over the resultant state of telic predicates, from ‘for X time_{DUR}’, modifying atelic durative predicates. The former are headed by the preposition *na* in all the East and West Slavic languages and in Serbo-Croatian, whereas the latter are expressed all over Slavic by bare adverbials. Bulgarian, Macedonian and Slovene are exceptional in that in these languages ‘in X time’ and ‘for X time_{RES}’ adverbials coincide, being headed by the preposition *za*. In Early Old Russian *za*-adverbials could measure out the duration of atelic predicates (about 25% of all the ‘for X time_{DUR}’ occurrences in the ‘Povest’ vremennyx let’ chronicle, beginning of the 12th cent.). At the same time they could co-occur with telic predicates, like in contemporary Russian. This syncretism must have been possible because there was a tendency towards overt expression of telicity within the verbal lexeme, which, in its turn, excluded aspectual coercion of the type we find in such languages as English, where the same verb can systematically exhibit atelic or telic readings depending on the context; as it was not the case in Old Russian, probably there was no need of a strong telicity-inducing adverbial modifier in order to disambiguate between telic and atelic situations.

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