An abstract for the main session/aspect
Perfective, Counter-perfective and Non-perfective

The Perfective and Imperfective aspects, found in Slavic and many other languages (Hartmann & Stock 1972; Binnick 1991), are usually defined as reporting complete and incomplete situations, respectively (Comrie 1976). However, it has been observed that while the Perfective, indeed, can only depict complete situations, the Imperfective does not always depict an incomplete one. Forsyth (1970) illustrates the phenomenon from Russian:

(1) ja uzhe chital etu knigu. ja bral.
    I already read that book. I borrowed: IMPERFECTIVE
    ee v biblioteke
    it from library
    'I have already read that book. I borrowed it from the library.'

Although it reports a complete situation, *bral* 'borrowed' carries the Imperfective aspect.

I suggest that the traditional binary categorization of Perfective-Imperfective is inadequate, replacing it by a three-way distinction: Perfective, Counter-perfective and Non-perfective. The Perfective and the Counter-perfective can only depict complete and incomplete situations, respectively, while the Non-perfective is underspecified, so that it can depict either kind of situation. The intuitive property of completeness, however, has been shown to be hard to define formally (Klein 1995). The definitions suggested in (2) below, using the notion of Reference-time (introduced by Reichenbach 1949), are more formal (R stands for Reference-time and E for Event (=situation) time):

(2) a. <u>Perfective</u>
        denotes a situation which is included in its respective reference-time.
        $E \subseteq R$
    b. <u>Counter-perfective</u>
        denotes a situation which includes its reference-time.
        $R \subseteq E$
    c. <u>Non-perfective</u>
        denotes a situation that may include its reference-time or be included in it.
        $E \subseteq R \lor R \subseteq E$

Languages may have all three aspects or only some of them.

I argue that languages like Russian have two aspects: (i) the Perfective; and (ii) what is traditionally called the Imperfective is actually the underspecified Non-perfective (cf. Borek 2006).

Languages like English also have two aspects: the Counter- and Non-perfective. The progressive, which can only depict ongoing situations that include their reference-time, is the Counter-perfective. What is referred to as the Simple tenses constitute the

Non-perfective, as the situations they can depict may include their respective reference-time or be included in it.

Finally, languages like Biblical Hebrew seem to have all three possible aspects. The form *wayyiqtol* and its modal counterpart *weqatal* can be characterized as Perfective, as they always depict situations whose time is included in their respective reference-time. The *qotel* can be regarded as a Counter-perfective form, as it can only depict ongoing situations which include their reference-time. And the *qatal* and its modal counterpart *yiqtol* are Non-perfective forms, as they can depict both kinds of situations.

The choice of the underspecified Non-perfective instead of a specific aspect, I show, is marked; pragmatically conditioned. In particular, to comply with Grice's (1975) maxim of quantity, I argue, the specific forms would be used, unless there is a reason to use the underspecified ones. E.g., Forsyth explains that the Non-perfective (the Imperfective, in his terminology) in (1) is used to imply that the book has been returned.

References

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