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Aspect vs. Actionality: Why they should be kept apart

1. Introduction¹

1.1. Terminological matters

The aim of this paper is to show that the notions of “aspect” and “Aktionsart” (or “actionality” as we prefer to call it, following a recent tradition)² must be carefully distinguished. As is well known to all scholars working in the field, there is widespread disagreement, not to say confusion, on this matter. For some, the above statement will be self-evident; for others, it will barely make sense. This is also reflected in terminology. Those who adhere to the latter view often refer to the different verb classes as “aspectual” classes, whereas those holding our view introduce some sort of terminological distinction (“Aktionsart classes” “actional classes” or the like). The picture is further complicated by the tradition existing within the domain of Slavic studies, where scholars often use the term “aspect” to designate the basic lexical opposition to be observed in these languages (traditionally named “Perfective/Imperfective” Russian *soveršennyj/nesoveršennyj*), and the term “Aktionsart” to refer to further semantic groupings of verbal predicates (like: static, resultative, inchoative etc.). Obviously, we do not deny that further semantic classes exist in the Slavic languages, besides what we have called “basic opposition”; and it is quite natural that these classes belong, at least in part, to what we take to be the actional domain in the sense of Vendler (1957). However, we believe that even the basic opposition “Perfective/Imperfective” belongs to the domain of actionality rather than aspect proper, although it is intricately interrelated with the latter.³ We shall return to this in Section 4. For the moment, let us simply make it clear that we do not hold the view that Slavic languages provide the ideal prototype of an aspectual system: on the contrary, we maintain that Slavic languages represent a quite peculiar case, rarely manifested outside that language family.

Before we go any further, we feel it necessary to present a short sketch of the conceptual framework that we assume as background. Agreements or disagreements on what we are going to propose may be better directed, once purely terminological misunderstandings are put aside. To provide a fairly well-known reference, our approach to the domain of tense and aspect, as also developed in Bertinetto (1986), is very close to that advocated by Comrie (1976; 1985). We posit three main subdomains:

(i) *Temporal reference*: the localization of the event with respect to the speech point. This allows us to distinguish between past, present and future temporal reference. This is normally, but not invariably, achieved by means of grammatical devices, i.e. tenses; however, the notion "tense" does not coincide with that of temporal reference, as we shall soon verify.

(ii) *Aspect*: the specific perspective adopted by the speaker/writer. Typically, the event may be considered from a "global" or a "partial" point of view. This is the basis for the fundamental distinction between "perfective" and "imperfective" aspects. Although there may exist intermediate cases, these two compartments are normally quite distinct from each other. To the first belong, in particular, the "aoristic" (cf. the Simple Past in Romance) and the "perfect" aspect; to the latter, the "progressive" and the "habitual". This does not exhaust the inventory of the major aspectual distinctions, but it will suffice for our present purposes. Again, aspect is normally, but not invariably, expressed by means of grammatical devices (i.e., tenses or specific periphrases); see below for further qualifications.

(iii) *Actionality*: the type of event, specified according to a limited number of relevant properties. To make things simpler, here we shall refer exclusively to the well-known Vendlerian classes, although various refinements have been put forth in the literature. The basic oppositions (according to a number of authors) are those between "punctual" vs. "durative" events, "telic" vs. "atelic" and "static" vs. "dynamic".⁴ This allows us to isolate the following four classes: "states" (henceforth referred to as "statives"), "activities" "accomplishments" and "achievements". While the notions of temporal reference and aspect (although ultimately of a semantic nature) are primarily anchored to the inflectional specifications available in each language, actionality is essentially rooted in the lexicon. Thus, the last category normally lacks an overt morphological marking, but it may have one. This is typically the case with the verbal lexicon of Slavic languages, where the manifestation of the basic opposition "Perfective/Imperfective" (fundamentally ascribable, as we will show, to the category of actionality, rather than aspect proper) belongs, in most cases, to the domain of derivative morphology.

On the basis of the framework sketched in (i–iii), it should become clear that, as a matter of principle, tense should not be confused with temporal reference. This is a very important distinction to be made. Indeed, all tenses (without exception) have both temporal and aspectual properties, differently manifested according to the language considered, just as (in inflectional languages) categories such as case, gender, number and declensional class may or may not fuse together in a single marker in adjectival forms.⁵ Thus, for instance, we may say that the Imperfect of Romance languages has past temporal reference (at least in its most typical uses) and imperfective aspect (in most of its uses); or that the German Past has past temporal reference and is neutral on aspectual grounds. Note that neutralization of a given feature does not mean that such feature is absent; indeed, the German Past may receive either a per-

fective or an imperfective reading, depending on the context. Moreover, it is sometimes the case (e.g. in classical Arabic) that tenses have a primarily aspectual value, with temporal reference being recovered by implication through contextual information (Cohen 1989). It would be utterly meaningless, in such cases, to take "tense" as the equivalent of "temporal reference". Indeed, the notion "tense" refers to specific morphological coalescences, which have developed in each particular language. This explains, by the way, why languages may fundamentally express the same sort of temporal and aspectual values, despite the dramatic differences in the number of morphological distinctions available in each tense system (compare a "rich" system such as that of Bulgarian with a "poor" system such as that of Classical Arabic). To close on this, we may note that the identification of tense with temporal reference would have the absurd consequence that the name of one category (the one here called "temporal reference") would also be used to designate another independent category (i.e. aspect). The choice of "tense" as a neuter term prevents this undesirable result.⁶

It is important to understand that our stressing the need, on theoretical grounds, to separate actional and aspectual categories does not mean that these categories may be separated in all circumstances. Indeed, there are several instances in tense-aspect systems where one observes an intricate interplay of notions belonging to different conceptual domains. To give an obvious example, take the so-called "imperfective paradox" arising from the interaction of the actional feature [+telic] and the aspectual opposition [±perfective]. While *he read a book* brings about the basic telicity of the predicate, *he was reading a book* obliterates this value, for there is no necessary implication of the future attainment of the goal. Although the opinions of the various scholars vary as to the interpretation of the latter sentence, we believe it legitimate to assert that the progressive aspect detelicizes the predicate (cf. Parsons 1989 and Bertinetto 1997, ch. 4, for a proposal in this sense). Clearly, if actional and aspectual categories were orthogonal to one another, we should not find similar interactions. However, we do not believe that linguistic categories need to act independently on all occasions in order to be treated as autonomous entities. According to the functional perspective that we are assuming, it is enough that they do so in a number of relevant cases. Indeed, on typological grounds, it often happens that two features, which are expressed independently of each other in language *x*, are fused together (or formally neutralized) in language *y*. If one had to judge the situation from the viewpoint of the latter type of language, one might be inclined to say that we have to make do with a single category. But a little cross-linguistic comparison would tell us that the given features, although neutralized in certain instances (or in certain languages), exist as autonomous conceptual entities. Bertinetto (1994) claims that situations of this sort (i.e., interaction and neutralization of categories) occur very frequently in the tense-aspect systems of natural languages, indeed not surprisingly, given the dramatic typological variability to be observed in this domain. In fact, al-

though there is a tendency to express the relevant semantic oppositions, it is difficult (if not impossible) to find a single language which manifests them all in its morphology. And even when such categories have independent existence in a given language, they often present some degree of interaction in specific contexts.⁷

One reason for the frequent difficulty of communication between scholars active in this field lies in the fact that some of the terms most commonly used may mean quite different things, sometimes even in the writings of one and the same scholar. The most obvious example (already alluded to in fn. 3) is provided by the pair “perfective/imperfective”. This is of course used to designate the basic lexical opposition, typical of Slavic languages, that opposes, e.g., predicates such as *čítat* ‘/pročítat’ ‘read ipf./pf.’, *pisat* ‘/napisat’ ‘write ipf./pf.’ etc. However, the same terms are also employed with respect to the basic aspectual opposition that is to be observed, e.g., in Romance languages between the Simple Past and the Imperfect. As claimed above, the latter use concerns the aspectual domain proper, while the former concerns by and large the actional domain. But note that this statement, as it stands, oversimplifies the data; in Section 4 we shall qualify it in a way that, we hope, will not sound outrageous to the followers of the Slavic tradition. At this point, we would like to ask the reader to delay her/his judgement until actual linguistic data have been considered. That is indeed the real test for any theory, above and beyond terminological disputes.

We believe it would be pointless, at the present stage of development of these studies, to try to persuade one group or the other (i.e., Slavists and non-Slavists) to renounce their own terminological habits. Accordingly, in this contribution we shall pursue a different line. We would like to propose two alternative pairs of terms to be used in the actional and the aspectual domain respectively, replacing the glorious but quite opaque terms perfective/imperfective. As to these, we suggest that they be taken as cover terms both within the aspectual domain proper and for the basic lexical oppositions to be observed in the Slavic languages. We believe that this move should be welcome to anybody, for there is evidently an intuitive sense in which both a “perfective” tense in a language like, for example, English and a Slavic “Perfective” verb converge towards a similar result. In fact, this ought to be so, once we realize that Slavic “Perfective” verbs correspond, by and large, to telic verbs in the actional classification. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conflate the notions “perfective” and “telic” because:

(a) Events may be viewed from a perfective or an imperfective point of view, regardless of whether they are telic or atelic, as shown by the following French examples:

/= perfective, atelic/
il a dormi ‘he slept (Compound Past)’

/= imperfective, atelic/
il dormait ‘he slept (Imperfect)’
 /= perfective, telic/
il a écrit sa thèse ‘he wrote (Compound Past) his thesis’
 /= imperfective, telic/
il écrivait sa thèse ‘he wrote (Imperfect) his thesis’

(b) Telic predicates fulfill their inherent character only in perfective situations. Thus, although *écrire sa thèse* is, from the standpoint of its intrinsic lexical meaning, a telic event, *il écrivait sa thèse* depicts, strictly speaking, a detelicized situation, i.e., a situation in which the inherently telic predicate loses its distinctive feature (remember once more the so-called “imperfective paradox”). In fact, in such a case it would be more appropriate to qualify the event as “lexically telic but contextually atelic”. For brevity, we shall henceforth simply use the term “detelicized” (which stands for “contextually detelicized”) with respect to the actional qualification of telic events viewed imperfectively.

Here then is our proposal. The terms perfective/imperfective may retain much of their usefulness as cover terms, and indeed we consider it legitimate to give special status to the term “aspectology” as having comprehensive meaning, embracing both aspect proper and actionality. However, there are also good reasons to maintain that the terms perfective/imperfective should be avoided whenever they may cause misunderstandings. In order to avoid these undesirable consequences, which often obscure the intended meaning of the writer, we suggest adopting a neat terminological distinction. We shall employ the pair “terminative/nonterminative” when referring to the aspectual domain proper, and “bounded/unbounded” when referring to the lexical oppositions available in the Slavic languages. As it happens, this distinction will turn out to be very useful in Section 4, when we compare the structure of Slavic and non-Slavic languages. We are of course aware that this solution may hide its own traps. Both bounded/unbounded and terminative/nonterminative are not new terms, and may appear somehow biased to a number of readers (the second pair, in particular, has been used with respect to telic/atelic verbs by some scholars writing in German). However, we believe it will not be difficult to grasp our intention. It should be clear, for instance, that “terminative” does not mean “telic” for any event may be viewed as terminated, irrespective of whether or not it is directed towards an inherent goal (cf., the examples under (a) above). For us, terminative is nothing else but a handy way to designate a “global” aspectual perspective whereby the event is viewed in its entirety. Obviously, one may conceive of alternative pairs of terms, and we would not insist on our own if better ones were to be proposed. What really matters to us is that a higher degree of understanding is reached among the scholars of the field. A small amount of flexibility may be an acceptable price to pay to achieve this goal.

Note, finally, that we do not intend to suggest that the pair terminative/nonterminative should be used on every occasion. In most cases, when describing an individual language (or a homogeneous group of languages), there is no reason to use these terms, for it should then be quite clear what we mean by perfective/imperfective. The difficulty arises when we compare tense-aspect systems as different as the Slavic on the one hand, and the Romance or Germanic on the other; or when we describe a rich system such as that of Bulgarian, which obviously demands subtler terminological distinctions. Apart from these obvious situations, it must be taken for granted that the effort towards conceptual clarity should not be disjoint from the requirement of terminological parsimony.

1.2. Design of the analysis

What we need, when faced with a theoretically intricate situation, is to collect empirical data. Temporal adverbials notoriously provide us with a highly manageable test for assessing aspectual values. Indeed, they have frequently been exploited for this purpose. From our point of view, however, they render an even more valuable service, for they enable us to differentiate clearly between aspect and actionality. In Section 2 we offer a sketch of this classificatory procedure, which has major theoretical consequences. Of course, temporal adverbials have often been exploited in the definition of verbal classes. However, it is worth stressing that, to the best of our knowledge, the particular point of view adopted here (i.e., contrasting aspect and actionality) has not been exploited before, at least not in a comparably systematic way.⁸

To keep the discussion as short as possible, we shall examine the behaviour (i.e., the varying degrees of compatibility) of a selection of temporal adverbials with respect to a representative subset of actional and aspectual values. In particular, we shall consider the dichotomy [\pm telic] as a typical actional discriminator, and the dichotomy [\pm terminative] as an aspectual discriminator. Our aim is to show that, in a considerable number of cases, these two oppositions behave as two completely independent variables. Needless to say, [\pm telic] is not the only relevant feature for actional classification. However, it is crucial in natural languages, for it discriminates two major classes: "achievements + accomplishments" vs. "activities + states". This will suffice for our purposes, especially considering that it is precisely this opposition that is mostly focussed upon in the Slavic languages by the contrast bounded/unbounded. For the moment, however, we shall restrict the discussion to English and some Romance languages (namely Italian and Spanish), delaying the scrutiny of Slavic languages until Section 4.

In order to simplify the designation of the various types of adverbial, we shall make use of the following conventions. The expression 'X Time' stands for any

quantified (conventional) unit of time; e.g., *two hours, nine and a half weeks, five years*, and the like. The expressions ' t_x ' and ' t_y ' stand for different instants of time. For the sake of clarity, we shall group the adverbials into four types, although we shall point to specific differences within each type. Note that the following classification is simply based on the morphological shape that these adverbials take in languages such as English or Italian; still, it is interesting to observe that, over and above their formal appearance, they tend by and large to maintain the same semantic behaviour cross-linguistically:

- I "until t_x ", "from t_x to t_y ", "since t_x "
- II "in X Time", "for X Time", It. "da X Tempo"
- III *already, still*
- IV *gradually, little by little*

2. Durative temporal adverbials, and their aspectual and actional values

For convenience, throughout this section the reader is invited to keep an eye on Table 1 of Section 3.1, which sums up the observations developed here. As explained above, we restrict our attention to the following oppositions: [\pm terminative] as an illustration of aspectual distinctions, [\pm telic] as an instance of actional distinctions. It must be borne in mind that the notion "nonterminative" should specifically be interpreted here in the sense of the progressive aspect, which may be regarded as the prototypical nonterminative value. In fact, for reasons that will soon become clear (cf. Section 2.1.1), the habitual value of the nonterminative aspect is less typical, in as much as it also shares some properties of the terminative aspect. As to actionality, although we disregard here the other salient features within this category, it goes without saying that the opposition [\pm durative] plays a major role too. Indeed, all the adverbials considered in this paper demand [+durative] verbs.

2.1. Type I adverbials

2.1.1. Until t_x

Consider first the durative adverbial type "until t_x " (It. "*fino a t_x*", Sp. "*hasta t_x*"). We are going to show that this adverbial has the following inclinations: it is actionally atelic, and aspectually terminative. In fact, it is clearly incompatible with telic verbs. When accomplishments are used in conjunction with it, they lose their telic character, unless telicity is inseparable from the very nature of the verb (or, more properly, of the VP), as with *exhaust*, *eat up*, *solve a problem* etc.; in which case, the resulting sentence is ungrammatical (but cf. fn. 31). As to achievements, they are obviously

incompatible with “*until t_x*” due to their basically non-durative nature; however, to make things simpler, in this paper we shall only consider accomplishment verbs as illustrations of [+telic] predicates. As to the aspectual point of view, the adverbial expression examined here allows only for terminativity.

To prove this, consider the following examples (cf. below for further qualifications concerning sentences (b) and (d)).⁹

- (1) a. /= atelic, terminative/
Mary danced until midnight.
b. /= atelic, nonterminative/
(??)Mary was dancing until midnight.
c. /= detelicized, terminative/
Mary painted the wall until midnight.
d. /= detelicized, nonterminative/
(??)Mary was painting the wall until midnight.

The question marks accompanying sentences (1b) and (1d) are within parentheses, for the English progressive allows for a “prospective” or “future time reference” reading (to be interpreted here as future-in-the-past), in which case these sentences would be grammatical. However, and not surprisingly given the inclinations of the adverbials employed, this would turn the aspectual value into terminative. Apart from this idiosyncratic detail, connected with the specific properties of the English progressive,¹⁰ the same actional and aspectual observations made above hold for Italian (and Romance languages in general), with the additional qualification that the Imperfect might be admitted in these contexts with a habitual meaning. This might seem to contradict the basically terminative nature of this adverbial. In fact, it does not do so, because one typical feature of the habitual aspect is that it admits terminative adverbials as long as they simply modify each single occurrence of the event, rather than the whole event. Indeed, the core of the habitual aspect lies in the indeterminacy of the total number of occurrences, rather than in the indeterminate duration of each occurrence. This is enough to guarantee its basic interminativity. Thus, one can find Italian utterances such as:

- (2) Italian
a. /= atelic, habitual/
Ogni sabato sera, Maria ballava fino a mezzanotte.
every Saturday evening Mary dance:IMPF until midnight
‘Every Saturday evening, Mary used to dance until midnight.’

- b. /= detelicized, habitual/
Ogni sabato sera, Maria puliva il giardino fino a
every Saturday evening, Mary clean:IMPF the garden until
mezzanotte.
midnight
‘Every Saturday evening, Mary used to clean the garden until midnight.’

where it is clear that the number of occurrences constituting the whole event is undetermined, for we do not know how many Saturdays are involved. Consequently, the whole event cannot be viewed terminatively, despite the terminative characterization of the single occurrences. We can make sense of this apparent paradox by saying that a habitual situation consists of a nonterminative macroevent composed of a series of terminative microevents. The adverbial “*until t_x*” in (2) refers of course to the single occurrences, which are thus perfectly compatible with its aspectual character. These observations extend to other adverbials, as we shall see.

The basically terminative nature of this adverbial is proved by the fact that in Italian the progressive periphrasis is totally excluded in these contexts. Spanish, however, is an interesting case in this respect, for in this language we may find the Simple Past with the progressive periphrasis, as in:

- (3) Spanish
a. /= atelic, terminative/
María *estuvo bailando* hasta la media noche.
Mary was:SP dancing until the middle night
‘Mary kept dancing until midnight.’
b. /= detelicized, terminative/
María *estuvo pintando* la pared hasta la media noche.
Mary was:SP painting the wall until the middle night
‘Mary kept painting the wall until midnight.’

This would not be possible with the Imperfect (except, as already noted for Italian, where it has habitual meaning). This is an important feature of Spanish (and Ibero-Romance languages in general), to which we shall return in Section 3.2.

2.1.2. From *t_x* to *t_y*

Next, consider the adverbial type “*from t_x to t_y*” (It. “*da t_x a t_y*” Sp. “*desde t_x hasta t_y*”). Here, Italian and Spanish essentially behave as before, while English is more flexible, and tolerates to some extent nonterminative sentences, which sound acceptable to many speakers (as suggested by the diacritic):

- (4) %Mary was dancing from 10 p.m. to midnight.

The insertion of further temporal specifications enhances the acceptability of these sentences:

- (5) Yesterday, during the maths class, i.e. from 9 to 10, Mary and John *were playing cards*; in fact, they went on playing even afterwards.

Note here that the relationship between adverbial and verb is only indirect, owing to the intermediation of a temporal clause, which attenuates the impact of the competing features. Thus, it is no wonder that in such contexts the Romance Imperfect, and even to some extent the progressive periphrasis, is not excluded:

- (6) Italian
Ieri, dalle 2 alle 3, quando tu credevi che stes-
se yesterday from 2 to 3 when you thought that was:SUBJ
studiando, in realtà Maria giocava / stava giocando a
studying in fact Mary play:IMPF / was:IMPF playing at
tennis.
tennis
'Yesterday, from 2 to 3 o'clock, when you thought that she was studying,
Mary was in fact playing tennis.'

We may thus state that this adverbial, besides being atelic from the actional point of view, is tendentially terminative in Italian and Spanish, although not to the utmost degree. This is true even more in English, perhaps because of the ambiguous aspectual nature of the Simple Past (see Section 3.2 for further comments on this point). Unsurprisingly, Spanish admits, as in the previous case, the Simple Past in the progressive periphrasis.

2.1.3. *Since t_x*

Let us now consider the adverbial type "*since t_x*" (It. "*da t_x*" Sp. "*desde t_x*"). In the Romance languages, this adverbial combines with both telic and atelic verbs, provided they are used nonterminatively, as we gather from:

- (7) a. /= atelic, terminative/
*Maria ballò da mezzogiorno.
Mary dance:SP since noon
b. /= atelic, nonterminative/
Maria ballava da mezzogiorno (quando ...)
Mary dance:IMPF since noon (when)
'Mary was *dancing* since noon (when ...)'

- c. /= telic, terminative/
*Maria dipinse la parete da mezzogiorno.
Mary paint:SP the wall since noon
d. /= detelicized, nonterminative/
Maria dipingeva la parete da mezzogiorno (quando ...)
Mary paint:IMPF the wall since noon (when)
'Mary was *painting* the wall since noon (when ...)'

English is slightly different because in (b) and (d) one prefers the Past Perfect Progressive (cf. *Mary had been dancing/painting the wall since noon*). However, doing so amounts to using an essentially nonterminative device, for the conclusion of the event is not necessarily envisaged. Thus, the ultimate result does not change. Spanish behaves exactly like Italian (cf. *María bailaba/*bailó/pintaba la pared/*pintó la pared desde el mediodía*). However, it must be remarked that in this language the progressive periphrasis with the Simple Past may be allowed here, as in the preceding cases (cf. *María estuvo bailando desde el mediodía*), provided there is a contextual presupposition which fixes a temporal limit, such as *hasta las ocho* "until 8 o'clock". But in the latter case we would in practice obtain the adverbial type "from *t_x* to *t_y*" which we examined in Section 2.1.2. This shows that "*desde t_x*" has indeed a strong nonterminative value.

2.2. Type II adverbials

2.2.1. *In X Time*

The second series of temporal adverbials that we will examine is characterized by the presence of quantified (conventional) units of time. Let us begin with "*in X Time*"; e.g., *in one hour*, *in two weeks*, *in six months*. This demands telic verbs, and is associated with the terminative aspect only, as can be seen in:

- (8) a. /= atelic, terminative/
*Mary *danced* in two hours.
b. /= atelic, nonterminative/
*Mary was *dancing* in two hours.
c. /= telic, terminative/
Mary *Painted the wall* in two hours.
d. /= telic, nonterminative/
*Mary was *painting* the wall in two hours.

2.2.2. *For X Time*

Next, consider the adverbial type “*for X Time*” (It. “*per X Tempo*”, Sp. “*durante X Tiempo*”):

- (9) a. /= atelic, terminative/
Mary *danced* for two hours.
b. /= atelic, nonterminative/
% Mary was dancing for two hours.
c. /= detelicized, terminative/
Mary *painted the wall* for two hours.
d. /= detelicized, nonterminative/
% Mary was *painting the wall* for two hours.

From the actional point of view, this is clearly a detelicizing adverbial. Indeed, (9c) does not mean that the event is carried through to the end. However, the situation regarding aspectual values is slightly complicated in English (as to Romance languages, see below). Although this adverbial type clearly prefers terminative contexts, sentences (9b) and (9d) receive contrasting judgements by the speakers, as shown by the diacritic used.¹¹ They appear rather clumsy, at least in isolation, to some scholars (e.g., Mittwoch 1988, Hatav 1989), but acceptable to others (e.g., Vlach 1981). It is useful to compare these sentences with a truly nonterminative situation, such as:

- (10) When I came in, Mary *was dancing/painting the wall*.

The difference in this sentence compared to (9a) and (9c) is as follows. Sentence (10), where the temporal clause provides the evaluation time, suggests an indeterminate situation, as far as the continuation of the event beyond the relevant moment is concerned. Indeed, for all we know, the event may have gone on beyond that moment, or it may have stopped right then. Sentences (9a) and (9c), on the other hand, suggest that the (relevant portion of the) event is entirely confined within the interval considered; it may of course be resumed later on, but that should explicitly be stated in a further sentence. Thus, sentences (9a) and (9c) combine an atelic and (respectively) detelicized situation with a terminative view.

As already noted with (5–6), added temporal specifications seem to improve the situation when the nonterminative aspect is employed (cf. 11–12), although this is not always the case (cf. 13):

- (11) %While I was sleeping, John *was running* for an hour.
(12) %Yesterday I was told that, while we were in class, John *was running* for an hour.
(13) *During the class, Mary *was playing cards* with John for 10 minutes.

Sentence (13) is ungrammatical, due to the fact that the “*for X Time*” adverbial indicates a short interval included into another relatively short one, so that we are inescapably bound to view the situation terminatively (i.e., by considering the terminal point of the event), and this is clearly incompatible with the Past Progressive. Sentences (11–12), acceptable for some speakers, might be taken as counterexamples to this claim. Note however that when we add a punctual temporal clause, as in (14b), the incompatibility with the adverbial becomes quite clear, although the same sentence without this adverbial sounds perfectly natural (cf. 14a). Clearly, in these cases the punctual temporal clause helps us to focus on a particular moment of the event, which is thus viewed nonterminatively. Note further that the ungrammaticality of (14b) is not simply due to a possible conflict between the duration indicated by the “*for X Time*” expression and the punctual temporal clause, since (14c) sounds natural. However, and not surprisingly, due to the preceding punctual temporal clause, the Simple Past of the last sentence takes an ingressive meaning (a subspecies of the terminative aspect), which is alien to the Past Progressive:

- (14) a. When I came in, John *was running*.
b. *When I came in, John *was running* for an hour.
c. When I came in, John *ran* for an hour.

Thus, (14c) enhances the conclusion formulated above, according to which “*for X Time*” adverbials refer to a basically terminative situation. The acceptability, at least for some speakers, of (9b) and (9d), as well as (11–12), is probably due to the ambiguous aspectual nature of the English Simple Past (cf. Section 3.2 for further comments). Indeed, when the context forces a nonterminative interpretation, as in (14a–b), the presence of this adverbial is unanimously rejected.

Now consider Romance languages. In Italian the Imperfect of the progressive periphrasis is quite inappropriate with the adverbial “*per X Tempo*”. The same applies to the bare Imperfect, unless it is understood in the habitual meaning. Spanish behaves like Italian as far as the Imperfect is concerned, but unlike Italian it may exploit the Simple Past in the progressive periphrasis, which sounds perfectly appropriate, due to its terminative character; cf. *María estuvo bailando durante dos horas* ‘Mary was dancing for two hours’ (lit.: ‘Mary was:SP dancing.’). This is the same sort of situation we noted above for “*until t_x*” and “*from t_x to t_y*”; and indeed this does not come as a surprise, because the aspectual and actional properties of all these types of adverbial are exactly the same.

To sum up, the actional and aspectual inclinations of “*for X Time*” adverbials are as follows: atelic, terminative.

2.2.3. It. “*da X Tempo*”, Sp. “*desde X Tiempo*”, Fr. “*depuis X temps*”

Let us now analyse the adverbial It. “*da X Tempo*” (Sp. “*desde X Tiempo*”, Fr. “*depuis X Temps*”). This type is quite common in Romance languages, much less so in English. The only possible equivalent is “*for X Time*” apparently identical to the adverbial examined in Section 2.2.2. But, as we shall see, there are differences.

The adverbial “*da X Tempo*” is compatible with both telic and atelic verbs, and with both terminative and nonterminative tenses, although with different meanings, and (saliently) with the exclusion of one combination of these features, namely *[-telic, +terminative]. It should be noted that this adverbial is not found in Romance with the Simple Past, whereas it may easily be with the Compound Past (morphologically equivalent to the English Present Perfect, but not strictly identical from the semantic point of view). Indeed, Bertinetto (1986) regards this adverbial as a powerful diagnostic tool for discriminating, within the terminative aspect, between perfectal tenses and purely aoristic ones. Consider the following Italian examples, keeping in mind that in these contexts the Compound Past takes a strictly perfectal value:

- (15) Italian
- a. /= atelic, terminative/
 *Maria *ha ballato* da due ore.
 Mary has:PRS danced since two hours
 - b. /= atelic, nonterminative/
 Maria *ballava* *stava ballando* da due ore.
 Mary dance:IMPF was:IMPF dancing since two hours
 ‘M. had been dancing for two hours.’
 - c. /= telic, terminative/
 Maria *ha dipinto* la parete da due ore.
 Mary has:PRS painted the wall since two hours
 ‘M. finished painting the wall two hours ago.’
 - d. /= detelicized, nonterminative/
 Maria *dipingeva* *stava dipingendo* la parete da due ore.
 Mary paint:IMPF/ was:IMPF painting the wall since two hours
 ‘Mary had been painting the wall for two hours.’

The actional value in (15d) may properly be defined as “aspectually detelicized”, because the adverbial is in itself compatible with telic verbs, as shown by (15c). Indeed, the detelicization is entirely due here to the nonterminative aspect (remember the so-called ‘imperfective paradox’), rather than to the adverbial. Compare, on the

other hand, (1c), where the verb is detelicized independently of the aspectual value (cf. also the comment in fn. 9).

The different meaning of the adverbial, depending on the aspectual value, is quite apparent. With terminative tenses, it indicates the interval elapsed between the end of the event and the evaluation time. With nonterminative tenses (specifically, with the progressive aspect), it measures the time elapsed between the beginning of the event and the evaluation time (nothing is implied, of course, as to the conclusion of the event). This explains the exclusion of (15a). This sentence looks weak because atelic predicates are not suitable for indicating that the event referred to is directed towards a specific goal; thus, it is not easy to determine from where one should start measuring the elapsed time (unless the final moment, which obviously exists, is explicitly given, as with the periphrasis *ha finito di ballare* ‘s/he has finished dancing’, which is based on a telic verb). Sentence (15b), on the other hand, is perfectly natural, because durative events obviously have an initial, psychologically salient, moment.

As noted above, English makes much more limited use of this type of adverbial in contexts corresponding to those exemplified in (15). It is only allowed with stative verbs and Perfect tenses. However, if these appear in the progressive form, then the actional restriction is relaxed, i.e., non-stative verbs may appear:

- (16) a. /= +stative/
 Mary *has/had known* John for two months.
- b. /= +stative/
 (*)Mary *knew* John for two months.
- c. /= –stative; detelicized/
 ??Mary *has/had painted* the wall for two hours.
- d. /= –stative; detelicized/
 Mary *has/had been painting* the wall for two hours.

2.3. Type III adverbials

2.3.1. *Already*

A similar case is offered by the adverb *already* (It. *già*, Sp. *ya*), which belongs to the next type of temporal adverbials. This combines with all possible actional and aspectual types, but again with different meanings:¹²

- (17) a. /= atelic, terminative/
 Mary *already danced* the polka.
 [i.e., some other time in the past]
- b. /= atelic, nonterminative/
 Mary *was already dancing* the polka, when I came.

- c. /= telic, terminative/
Mary already *painted this wall*.
[i.e., some other time in the past]
- d. /= detelicized, nonterminative/
Mary was already *painting this wall*, when I came.

As noted regarding (15d), the detelicization of the predicate occurring in (17d) does not depend on the direct contribution of the adverb, but is a mere product of the progressive aspect (remember again the ‘imperfective paradox’), because the adverb is not in itself incompatible with telic verbs, witness (17c). Note, furthermore, that although *already* may be used in conjunction with both aspectual values, the meaning it acquires in terminative sentences (as indicated in the comments attached to (17a) and (17c)) must be regarded as a derived one, available only in particular contexts. This is shown by sentences like the following, where the terminative tense sounds inappropriate:

- (18) ??During the maths class, Mary already *played cards* with John.

2.3.2. *Still*

The use of the adverb *still* (It. *ancora*, Sp. *todavía*) is more limited. It does not combine with terminative tenses, although it is indifferent to the actional value considered here.¹³

- (19) a. /= atelic, terminative/
*Mary still *danced* the polka, before leaving.
[i.e. again]
- b. /= atelic, nonterminative/
Mary was still *dancing* the polka, when I came.
- c. /= telic, terminative/
*Mary still *painted this wall*, before leaving.
[i.e. again]
- d. /= detelicized, nonterminative/
Mary was still *painting this wall* when I came.

Actually, Italian and Spanish are more liberal in this respect, because they allow for a resemanticization of the adverbs *ancora* and *todavía*, which in conjunction with terminative tenses mean ‘again, another time’, as shown by the following examples (to be compared with 19a):

- (20) a. Italian
Maria balló ancora la polka, prima di andarsene.
Mary dance:SP still the polka before of go:INF

- b. Spanish
María bailó todavía la polka, antes de irse.
Mary dance:SP still the polka before of go:INF
‘Mary danced the polka again, before leaving.’

2.4. Type IV adverbials

The next type of adverbials, which may be called adverbials of ‘graduality’ (*gradually*, *little by little* and the like), is also relevant, as these treat actional and aspectual properties as two independent parameters. Namely, they admit both major aspectual values, but are restricted to telic predicates.¹⁴ Thus, they are unaffected by aspectual values, just as *still* and *already* are unaffected by the feature [\pm telic]. Consider:

- (21) a. /= atelic, terminative/
*Mary *danced* gradually.
- b. /= atelic, nonterminative/
*Mary was *dancing* gradually.
- c. /= telic, terminative/
Mary *painted* the wall gradually.
- d. /= telic, nonterminative/
Mary was *painting* the wall gradually.

Besides presenting adverbials of graduality corresponding to the English ones (*gradualmente*, *a poco a poco*), Italian exhibits a peculiar adverbial (*man mano*) with more constrained properties. This is found only with a combination of telic verbs and non-terminative (specifically, progressive) aspect:

- (22) a. /= telic, terminative/
??Maria *dipinse* man mano la parete.
Mary paint:SP little by little the wall
‘Mary painted the wall little by little.’
- b. /= telic, nonterminative/
Mentre Ugo puliva il giardino, Maria *dipingeva*
while Ugo clean:IMPF the garden Mary paint:IMPF
man mano la parete.
little by little the wall
‘While Ugo was cleaning the garden, Mary was little by little painting the wall.’

3. Aspectual and actional properties as independent entities

3.1. Synopsis

It may be useful, at this point, to recapitulate what we have observed in Section 2. For simplicity's sake, we shall tabulate only data referring to English, with the single exception of the adverbial type It. "*da X Tempo*" (which also stands for similar constructions in other languages, such as Sp. "*desde X Tiempo*" or Fr. "*depuis X Temps*"). Note that the diacritic '±' has two different meanings: either that the given adverbial type is truly indifferent to the specific value of the diacritic, or that the adverbial is compatible with both values, but with separate readings. In the latter case, we insert the diacritic within parentheses for clarity. Furthermore, we make use of the exclamation mark to suggest that the given adverbial type shows the tendency indicated to a high degree:

Table 1. Actional and aspectual properties of selected English (and Romance) temporal adverbials.

	Actionality	Aspect
Type I		
" <i>until t_x</i> "	– telic!	+ terminative!
" <i>from t_x to t_y</i> "	– telic!	+ terminative
" <i>since t_x</i> "	– telic!	– terminative!
Type II		
" <i>in X Time</i> "	+ telic!	+ terminative!
" <i>for X Time</i> "	– telic!	+ terminative
It. " <i>da X Tempo</i> "	± telic	(±) terminative
Type III		
<i>already</i>	± telic	(±) terminative
<i>still</i>	± telic	– terminative
Type IV		
adverbials of graduality	+ telic!	± terminative

It should be noted that with It. "*da X Tempo*", the combination *[–telic, +terminative] is excluded.¹⁵ As to the detailed differences between English on the one side, and Italian and Spanish on the other, the reader is directed to the preceding discussion. To sum up briefly: in Italian and Spanish the adverbs corresponding to *still* are [(±)terminative]; in addition, all adverbials demanding the features configuration [–telic, +terminative] accept in both languages the Imperfect with habitual meaning, while in Spanish they also tolerate the progressive periphrasis with the Simple Past.

Table 1 clearly shows that aspectual and actional values are independent entities, as claimed at the outset, and contra the opinion defended in for instance Sasse (1991). Indeed, the various adverbials behave quite differently with respect to these two semantic categories. Consider for instance *still*. This is neutral to the [±telic] distinction, but is clearly selective with regard to aspectual values. Conversely, adverbials of graduality are very tolerant with aspectual values, but quite selective with actional ones. These are of course the most relevant cases, because they diverge in the sharpest way; but the varying behaviour of the remaining adverbials is quite revealing. Thus, "*until t_x*", "*from t_x to t_y*" and "*for X Time*", which are [–telic!, +terminative(!)], contrast neatly with "*in X Time*", which is [+telic!, +terminative!], and so forth. We shall return to this in Section 4.2.

3.2. Progressive periphrasis and terminative aspect

One topic needing clarification is a peculiarity of Spanish alluded to above. Like English, this language has preserved the possibility (once also exhibited by Italian) of combining the progressive periphrasis with both terminative and nonterminative tenses (see Section 3.3). Unlike English, however (but like any Romance language), Spanish is morphologically endowed with a typically nonterminative tense, called "Imperfect". This provides the Spanish progressive periphrasis with additional expressive power, in contradistinction to both Italian (which accepts only nonterminative tenses with this periphrasis) and English (which lacks a markedly nonterminative tense, like the Romance Imperfect).

As observed above, this has specific consequences for all adverbials of the type [–telic, +terminative], such as "*until t_x*", "*from t_x to t_y*" and "*for X Time*":

- (23) a. English %*Mary was dancing* for two hours.
 b. Italian /= Imperfect/ **Maria stava ballando* per due ore.
 c. Italian /= Simple Past/ **Maria stette ballando* per due ore.
 d. Spanish /= Imperfect/ **María estaba bailando* durante dos horas.
 e. Spanish /= Simple Past/ *María estuvo bailando* durante dos horas.

Here, Italian yields ungrammatical sentences (cf. 23b–c), while English behaves rather ambiguously (cf. the discussion relating to examples 9–14 above). As shown by the diacritic in (23a), the progressive does not sound entirely appropriate to a number of speakers, owing to the purely terminative character of the adverbial. Spanish, on the other hand, makes a very neat distinction in these contexts (cf. 23d–e). The progressive periphrasis with the Imperfect is unacceptable (just as in Italian), whereas with the Simple Past it sounds absolutely appropriate.¹⁶ Clearly, Spanish is able to counteract the nonterminative orientation of the progressive periphrasis by means of an explicit morphological tool. This effect, on the other hand, does not

extend to the adverbial type “in X Time” (**María estuvo pintando la pared en dos horas*; cf. 8d for translation). However, as we saw above, the latter adverbial demands a strictly telic situation; and this is not ensured by the progressive periphrasis, which inevitably determines a detelicization of the predicate.

The reason why English encounters some difficulties in (23a) is presumably a direct consequence of the ambiguous aspectual characterization of the Simple Past. It should indeed be noted that this tense is regularly used in contexts where Romance languages would normally employ the Imperfect:

- (24) Italian
 a. /= Imperfect/
Maria era bruna e aveva gli occhi azzurri.
 b. /= Simple Past/
Mary was dark-haired and had blue eyes.
- (25) Italian
 /= Imperfect/
Il cervo corse, corse, raggiunse la tribù dei cervi che vedendolo con un uomo sulle corna un po' lo sfuggivano, un po' gli s'avvicinavano curiosi.
 (I. Calvino) ‘The deer ran, ran, reached the deer troupe which, seeing it with a man on its antlers, *escaped* (*were escaping) or *approached* (*were approaching) it in turn with eagerness.’

Obviously, in (24) the progressive could not be employed because of the stative character of the verb; however, it is worth noting that it is precisely in contexts such as those that Romance languages tend to make almost exclusively use of the Imperfect, reserving the Simple Past for highly marked stylistic registers.¹⁷ As to (25), the English progressive would sound inappropriate even though the verb is not stative. Thus, the English Simple Past turns out to be appropriate both for truly terminative contexts, where Romance languages would also normally employ the Simple Past,¹⁸ and for truly nonterminative contexts, where Romance languages employ the Imperfect (as in 24–25). This suggests an explanation for the divergent reactions of English speakers, some of whom tend to reject sentences such as (23a), presumably because they regard the periphrastic construction “*was* + VERB-*ing*” as genuinely nonterminative. Those who accept such sentences, on the other hand, seem to consider this construction as a sort of syncretic tool, combining the meanings of both Sp. “*estaba* + Gerund” and “*estuvo* + Gerund”. We believe that this phenomenon has still further consequences: indeed, attempts to provide a semantic treatment for the progressive have so far seriously underestimated this fact (Bertinetto and Delfitto, 1996).

One point on which Spanish and English converge is the possibility of combining the progressive periphrasis with Perfect morphology (in our view, a subspecification

of terminative aspect). This possibility is again denied to Contemporary Italian, as shown by (26), since the restriction against terminative tenses with the progressive periphrasis has become very tight and general. By contrast, compare (27):

- (26) **Maria è stata ballando per due ore.*
- (27) a. Mary has been dancing for two hours.
 b. *María ha estado bailando durante dos horas.*

Actually, the sentences in (27a–b) are ambiguous. The most frequent interpretation is the ‘inclusive’ one, which fully exploits the aspectually ambivalent nature of the construction. On this interpretation, the terminativity of the tense employed matches the terminative nature of the adverbial, while the basically nonterminative character of the progressive form suggests that the event is not necessarily over at the relevant reference time (coinciding here with the speech time). However, another interpretation is also available, where the intended meaning is that the event has been going on for some time in the past (not necessarily a distant past, but one with no overlapping with the speech time). When the latter interpretation is chosen, (27b) may have the same reading as (23e), suggesting a substantially terminative view of the event, which is then regarded as concluded at the end of the given interval confined in the past (for further comments on this matter, cf. example (19) in section 3.2 of Bertinetto, this volume). Indeed, in such a case, the difference between (23e) and (27b) appears not to be aspectual, but rather temporal, since the latter sentence tends to point (albeit not necessarily) to a near past, while the former is more appropriate for distant events.¹⁹

4. The intertwining of aspectual and actional values in the Slavic languages

4.1. The structure of Slavic languages

As observed in the introduction, Slavic languages constitute a decisive test for any aspectological theory. In the rest of this paper we shall address this topic, trying to show that the particular structure exhibited by the verbal lexicon of the Slavic languages has mostly to do with the category of actionality, although it is also connected, in a highly intricate way, with the category of aspect.

As noted in the introduction, we may view any given tense-aspect system as the result of a peculiar mixture of three fundamental components: temporal reference, aspect and actionality. Let us now compare the structure of Romance languages and the structure of a typical Slavic language (such as Russian). As is well known, Romance

languages present explicit morphological marking of temporal and aspectual values (although not in all tenses).²⁰ Slavic languages, for the most part, instead present explicit morphological marking of temporal values, and in addition mark overt oppositions between different but (usually) derivatively connected lexical entries. These tend to create bipolar contrasts, although some pairs lack one of the two poles, and in quite a few cases one (or both) of the two poles comprises more than a single member. These opposing poles are traditionally referred to as "Perfective/Imperfective"; but (as discussed in Section 1.1) in order to avoid confusion with the non-Slavicist aspectological tradition, we shall speak here of "bounded/unbounded", as is sometimes done in the literature. Now, given the general structure of the two language families considered, it is quite clear that Romance languages tend to relegate actional values to the background, giving prominence to temporal reference and aspect, while Slavic languages privilege temporal reference and actionality over aspectual values, for the opposition [\pm bounded] is very much reminiscent of the distinction [\pm telic]. (For a similar approach to this matter, cf. Johanson, this volume.)

This is a fundamental point, and it is very important to understand it clearly. By saying (as we did in Section 1.1) that actionality essentially belongs to the lexical domain, we are not claiming that the opposition [\pm bounded] observed in Slavic languages does not belong to the realm of grammar. On the contrary, the specific character of the Slavic verbal system lies in the fact that these languages have found a way to overtly mark, in a fairly regular way, one of the most salient distinctions belonging to the actional domain. To the extent that this opposition is systematic and pervasive, we are obviously entitled to consider it part of the grammar of Slavic languages, just like the process which yields causative cognates from non-causative verbs is grammaticalized in quite a few languages. There is no principled reason why a word-formation process should not be considered part of the grammar of a given language, especially if it is systematically employed. To repeat Dahl's (1985: 89) formulation, the so-called Slavic aspectual pairs may be regarded as "grammaticalized lexical categories".²¹

Despite these dramatic differences, the expressive power of the two language families (Romance and Slavic) is not significantly different. They can express quite similar meanings, though with different morphological tools. As a matter of fact, the category relegated to the background can produce its effects in the appropriate contexts. This can be seen through selective reactivity to temporal adverbials. Thus, as shown in Section 2 above, English, Italian and Spanish behave in a clearly identifiable way in conjunction with specific actional values, although these do not usually receive overt marking. As we shall now show, Slavic languages do the same with respect to aspect proper (as defined in Section 1.1), which is not overtly marked, or (more precisely) is not normally marked; note, in fact, that the situation described above for Russian does not refer to all Slavic languages. As is well known, Bulgarian and Macedonian (and to a lesser extent other languages in the Slavic domain) differ

Table 2. English and Romance selected temporal adverbials, grouped according to their actional and aspectual properties.

Telic	Terminative		
+	+	(i)	"in X Time", It. "da X Time" (tm)
-	+	(ii)	"until t _x ", "for X Time"
-	-	(iii)	"since t _x ", It. "da X Tempo" (ntm), <i>already</i> (ntm), <i>still</i>
+	-	Ø	

considerably from the Russian pattern, insofar as they delicately combine the characteristics of both the Romance and the Slavic types. Leaving further details aside, Bulgarian and Macedonian present:

- (i) A rich system of temporal reference distinctions (consider for example a tense such as the Pluperfect, which has disappeared in Russian);
- (ii) Explicit aspectual oppositions implementing the distinction terminative/non-terminative (cf. the contrast between the Imperfect on the one hand, and the Aorist and Perfect on the other);
- (iii) A highly developed system of lexical oppositions, contrasting bounded and unbounded verbs as is typical of Slavic languages in general.

This gives Bulgarian an exceptionally high degree of expressive power; so high, in fact, that its possibilities are often exploited to obtain subtle modal meanings, rather than strictly temporal or aspectual ones (Lindstedt 1985, Guentcheva 1991).²²

In the following section, we will compare the behaviour of Russian and Bulgarian with the behaviour of English and Romance, trying to argue that the analogies observed appear to support the principled distinction between aspect and actionality defended in the preceding sections.

4.2. Linguistic evidence

Let us take another look at Table 1 in Section 3.1 above, which sums up the actional and aspectual values compatible with the adverbials analysed in Section 2. We can present the data in a slightly modified form, by grouping the adverbials compatible with a given combination of actional and aspectual values. This is done in Table 2, where three classes of adverbials are listed. For simplicity, not all adverbials are repeated here. Note further that, for some adverbials having a different meaning depending on the particular aspectual value exhibited by the verb, we split the adverbial in two different entries: one compatible with the terminative value (tm), the other compatible with the nonterminative value (ntm).²³

The first observation to be made is that there is apparently no adverbial which selects the [+telic, -terminative] combination. This might be due to our particular selection of adverbials, but we believe that there is some deeper semantic reason lying behind this. If an adverbial has a strong telic inclination, it also necessarily has a terminative one.²⁴ This is consistent with what we said in Section 1.1: although aspect and actionality are independent categories, they are not altogether orthogonal to one another. The sorts of semantic primes on which they are based are, ultimately, of a very similar nature. If this were not so, it would be difficult to understand why Romance languages (and English) have developed a morphological structure so dramatically different from that exhibited by Slavic languages.

Bearing Table 2 in mind, let us now consider the behaviour of Russian and Bulgarian. We might expect Bulgarian to adhere to the actional and aspectual choices exhibited (with only minor differences) by English and Romance, making use of course of its rich morphological structure to explicitly mark the relevant actional meanings. As to Russian, we might reasonably expect this language to select 'bounded' lexemes with class (i) adverbials, those requiring a [+telic, +terminative] configuration, and 'unbounded' lexemes with class (iii) adverbials, those requiring a [-telic, -terminative] configuration. The ultimate challenge lies in the treatment of the remaining configuration: [-telic, +terminative], exhibited by class (ii) adverbials.

Let us see what the actual linguistic data tell us. The data reported below were elicited by one of the authors from linguists who are native speakers of Russian and Bulgarian.²⁵ Basically, the examples used were a subset of those illustrated in Section 2 above; the only major change was that instead of the verb corresponding to *dance* (Rus. *tancevat'*), we used the verb corresponding to 'write a letter' (*pisat'/napisat' pis'mo*).²⁶ This was due to the restricted choice available with the first verb. It should also be remarked that whenever we use, in what follows, the label 'nonterminative', this must be taken once more in the progressive sense, rather than in the habitual one. As we saw in Section 2, the latter meaning is often available, with the Romance Imperfect, in contexts where the progressive periphrasis (or the progressive reading of nonterminative tenses) is not acceptable. Indeed, this is true also for Bulgarian.

The above expectations are confirmed (the reader is invited to verify this in Table 3 in Section 4.3 below). Both Russian and Bulgarian select bounded lexemes with class (i) adverbials ("za X Vremja", "X Vremja *nazad*", where "X Vremja" stands for 'X Time').²⁷ Moreover, in Bulgarian the morphological choice that is consistently selected here is the one corresponding to the configuration [+bound, +terminative] (e.g., the Aorist of bounded verbs), while the choice corresponding to the configuration [-bound, +terminative] (e.g., the Aorist of unbounded verbs) is systematically avoided, in a way that is reminiscent of English and Romance (cf. 8a and 15a).²⁸ The only difference regarding the latter languages is that Bulgarian, besides presenting overt aspectual marking (Aorist and Perfect against Imperfect),

also presents, like the remaining Slavic languages, overt morphological marking for the category of actionality.

Equally, with class (iii) adverbials ("s t_x", "uže X Vremja", *uže* (ntm) and *eščē*) only unbounded lexemes are allowed in both Russian and Bulgarian. Moreover, with the second of these adverbials ("uže X Vremja") the feature configuration [-bound, +terminative] is not allowed, just as the configuration [-telic, +terminative] is avoided in Romance languages (cf. the comment on Table 1, concerning the behaviour of It. "*da X Tempo*"). This of course depends on the deep semantics of these constructions.

Let us now consider class (ii) adverbials, those requiring the configuration [-telic, +terminative] which, according to Table 2, is the only permitted configuration among the two conceivable mixed cases (i.e., those where actional and aspectual categories differ in the distribution of plus and minus signs). As it happens, in Bulgarian the adverbials "*do t_x*"²⁹ and "*X Vremja*" require by and large the feature configuration [-bound, +terminative], which closely corresponds to the [-telic, +terminative] configuration that we find in Romance (English, as we saw above, presents a slightly more complicated picture; cf. 9). Russian, on the other hand, allows both bounded and unbounded predicates. This is in keeping with the lack of overt morphological marking of the aspectual values to be observed in this language.³⁰

4.3. Discussion

It is useful, at this point, to tabulate the data concerning Russian and Bulgarian. The main conclusions are presented in Table 3 (where the Russian adverbials also stand for their Bulgarian cognates):

It should be clear that the neat correspondence to be observed between Romance (plus English) and Bulgarian, regarding the respective values of the categories telic/atelic and bounded/unbounded, cannot merely be due to chance. Thus, we believe that there are strong reasons to affirm that these two sets of terms essentially name one and the same category, whose manifestations are by and large similar, although we do not claim strict coincidence (see below for further comments). Russian, however, shows a partly independent behaviour, but this is easy to explain if one considers that this language has no overt marking of the category of aspect proper, as defined at the outset. Thus, while in Bulgarian the dichotomy bounded/unbounded works in essentially the same way as the dichotomy telic/atelic in Romance and English, in Russian the dichotomy bounded/unbounded partly subsumes the role played in Romance and Bulgarian by the aspectual opposition terminative/nonterminative (cf. the behaviour of class (ii) adverbials).

The obvious conclusion to be drawn from the discussion above is indeed (as we have already suggested) that the boundedness category essentially belongs to the

Table 3. Actional and aspectual properties of selected Russian and Bulgarian temporal adverbials.

		Russian bounded	Bulgarian bounded	Bulgarian terminative
(i)				
"za X Vremja"	("in X Time")	+	+	+
"X Vremja nazad"	(lt. "da X Tempo" tm)	+	+	+
(ii)				
"do t _x "	("until t _x ")	±	—	+
"X Vremja"	("for X Time")	±	—	+
(iii)				
"s t _x "	("since t _x ")	—	—	—
"uže X Vremja"	(lt. "da X Tempo" ntm)	—	—	—
uže (ntm)	(already ntm)	—	—	—
ešče	(still)	—	—	—

domain of actionality, especially in the case of Bulgarian, where the marking of [\pm telic] values has retained the opportunity to exist independent of aspect. This is hardly a matter of surprise, considering that the formal expression of boundedness is basically a matter of derivational morphology, notoriously connected with lexical meaning, rather than of inflectional morphology, as is the case with aspect proper. Indeed, although in languages such as Romance and English (and indeed in the vast majority of languages) actionality is usually not overtly marked by derivational processes, it clearly deals with lexical meaning. Thus, it is no wonder that [\pm telic] and [\pm bounded] behave very similarly.

However, it is important to understand that we are not suggesting total identity. It would simply be false to claim that the boundedness category, as implemented in languages such as Russian, coincides tout court with telicity, as implemented in English or Romance. In fact, these two categories are embodied in distinct linguistic structures, and this has obvious consequences for the overall functioning of the relevant tense-aspect systems. If this were not the case, there would be no reason to introduce the pair bounded/unbounded instead of simply telic/atelic. The reason for maintaining this difference is twofold (cf. also fn. 21).

First, in the non-Slavic type, telicity tends as a rule (but cf. fn. 20) not to be overtly marked in the lexicon. Consequently, the detelicization of the predicate that is obtained in conjunction with nonterminative tenses is inferred by the language user, rather than directly exhibited by the language. In the Slavic type, by contrast, detelicization simply cannot occur. Consider a language like Russian. Whenever a bounded verb is inserted in a nonterminative context, it necessarily preserves its telic character. Alternatively, an unbounded predicate may be selected in the relevant contexts, but then the [$-$ telic] value is explicitly exhibited.³¹ The situation is

obviously more complicated in Bulgarian, which also presents overt aspectual oppositions, manifesting the terminative/nonterminative dichotomy. In this language, the speaker does have the possibility of combining bounded verbs with nonterminative tenses, but, interestingly, this does not bring about the detelicization of the predicate; rather it suggests (in most cases) a habitual reading, as observed in fn. 24. Note that this is among the logically conceivable possibilities. Indeed, the habitual aspect implies a series of terminative microevents composing a nonterminative macroevent. By consequence, any individual microevent of a habitual situation is such that it may preserve the inherent properties of telic predicates. It is no wonder, then, that we can find examples such as the following (note that 'bd/ubd' stand for 'bound/unbound'):

- (28) Bulgarian
 Štom napišeše pismo, toj ti
 as_soon_as write:BD:IMPF:2SG letter, he you:DAT
 otgovarjaše.
 answer:UBD:IMPF
 'As soon as you wrote a letter, he would answer you'.

Second, and most important, the actual telic value of the situation described is not always mirrored in the selection of a bounded predicate. All aspectological descriptions of Russian (and related languages) highlight this fact regarding some typical instances, such as habitual and experiential contexts. This has recently also been emphasized by Lindstedt (1995) in a contribution that was written as a reaction to a previous version of the present paper. This author had previously proposed (cf. Lindstedt 1985) for Bulgarian a model in which the features here called "bounded" and "terminative" (named "material bound" and "temporal bound" in Lindstedt 1995)³² interact in an intricate way, so that the peculiar meaning of specific verbal constructions may be interpreted in terms of the scope of one feature over the other. Even if the details of the interpretation do not correspond to the view presented here, there is reason to believe that Lindstedt's approach is basically compatible with our own.

To give an example, consider the following Russian sentences, which respectively instantiate a habitual and an experiential context:

- (29) Russian
 a. Vypit' ne xotite li? Net, spasibo, ja uže
 drink:BD:INF not want:PRS:2PL Q no, thank_you, I already
 pil.
 drink:UBD:PST
 'Don't you want to drink? No, thanks, I have already drunk.'

- b. Ty možeš' ob"jasnit' mne etu zadaču?
 you can:PRS:2SG explain:BD:INF me:DAT this problem
 Poprobuju. Kogda-to davno ja rešal ee.
 try:BD:PRS:1SG sometime long_ago I solve:UBD:PST it:FEM
 'Can you explain this problem to me? I'll try. A long time ago I solved it.'

In both cases, an unbounded predicate is used instead of a bounded one, although there is no doubt as to the telic character of these two events. Yet, (29a) is perfectly acceptable if the speaker refers to a habitual event, which occurs more or less regularly. Although that given event of drinking may be regarded as completed, the whole series of drinking episodes is not yet over at the time of speaking. Equally, (29b), which is suggested by Lindstedt (1995), is grammatical, and indeed the only possible choice in the given context. Although the speaker did solve the same problem a long time before, he is not certain that he will now reproduce the solution. Lindstedt (1995) suggests that this happens only in dialogues, rather than in narratives, and proposes the following explanation. In a narrative, a telic event provides a prominent temporal reference for the ensuing development of the textual plot. In dialogues such as (29b), on the contrary, the past occurrence of the event can only be viewed as relevant to the present moment; for that matter, the event could have occurred at an unspecified time, with no immediate bearing on anything that immediately ensued from it. Thus, an unbounded verb is selected in both sentences in (29).

We do not intend to discuss here the merits of Lindstedt's proposal.³³ Suffice it to say that, whatever the ultimate explanation of the facts presented here is, these are uncontroversial linguistic data that any aspectological model should take into account. What these examples ultimately tell us is that there is not a strict correspondence between the terms "unbounded" and "atelic". Unbounded verbs may be used, in particular cases, as a sort of neuter or unmarked form, referring (so to say) to a potentially telic event taken in a generic sense, rather than as denoting a truly atelic event. In fact, these are instances of what has sometimes been called "general-factive meaning" or "simple denotation function". Even the Bulgarian translations of the Russian examples in (29) present this feature:

(30) Bulgarian

- a. Ne, blagodarja. Veče pix / sām pil
 no thanks already drink:UBD:AOR:1SG / am drink:PP
 'No, thanks. I already drank.' (iterative situation)
- b. Šte opitam. Predi vreme sām ja rešaval /
 FUT try:BD:PRS:1SG previous time am I solve:UBD:PP /
 rešavax
 solve:AOR
 'I shall try. Time ago I solved it.'

lit:FEM

The only difference is that here the terminative tenses make explicit what the Russian sentences leave only implicit: namely, the terminative character of the situation. And note that the Aorist of the unbounded predicate in (30b) (which in this particular case differs from the Imperfect only in stress placement) suggests a quasi-iterative reading ('I solved it at least once').³⁴

Nevertheless, we would like to insist that the view defended here has some advantage over the opposing interpretation. Namely, we maintain that the boundedness parameter to be found in the Slavic languages essentially belongs to the domain of actionality rather than aspect proper, despite the existence of cases like those discussed above. We believe that this view permits a better understanding of the observable data at the typological level. Note, in fact, that if boundedness were a purely aspectual phenomenon, it would be hard to understand how this category could ever develop in such a systematic way in Bulgarian without endangering the grammatical status of the independent (and abundant) aspectual devices that this language has at its disposal.³⁵ The alternative view defended here yields a straightforward explanation. The rise of the boundedness parameter provided the Slavic languages with a convenient tool for expressing the telic/atelic opposition that in most other languages is only sporadically captured at the morphological level. Once this system became fully exploited, the natural and inevitable interaction between boundedness and terminativity made it possible, for most Slavic languages, to dispense entirely with the overt manifestation of aspect, concomitantly enlarging the coverage of the boundedness category. This has to some extent also happened in Bulgarian; witness the examples in (30). However, the evidence gathered in Table 3 suggests that the difference between the purely aspectual values incorporated in the tense oppositions and the basically actional values expressed by the boundedness category (specifically implementing the telic/atelic distinction) is still strongly preserved in this language.³⁶

Notes

1. We wish to thank our colleagues of EUROTYP Group 6 (in particular Jouko Lindstedt) for useful comments. We also want to thank Walter Breu for his detailed counterarguments, as well as Georgi Jetchev for his help with the Bulgarian data (cf. also fn. 25). The paper was jointly developed by the two authors. For academic purposes, however, PMB bears responsibility for Sections 1, 3 and 4, while DD bears responsibility for Section 2.
2. Other terms that have been used are 'character' and 'intrinsic meaning' of the verb.
3. Note that the terms "Perfective/Imperfective" appear here (as in (iii) below) with capitalized initials, to suggest that they represent traditional grammatical labels in the Slavic languages. By contrast, in (ii) below no capital is used, for the same terms represent purely theoretical terms. The clarification of the difference between the truly aspectual and the actional meaning of these terms is one of the fundamental aims of this paper. However, to avoid misunderstandings, let us say at the outset that we do not intend to

- claim that the opposition to be observed in the Slavic languages is exclusively actional, rather than aspectual. We would like to ask the reader to wait until Section 4 before jumping to any conclusion. For a different view on the topic addressed here, cf. Klein (1995).
4. For a full-fledged actional classification, cf. for instance Bertinetto (1986). Note that telic and perfective (or "terminative", as we shall propose to designate this notion) should not be confused. The first term belongs to the actional subdomain, i.e., ultimately to the lexical one, whereas the latter belongs to the aspectual subdomain. Except for the partial convergence to be observed in some languages (such as Russian, which lacks separate expressions for the categories of aspect and actionality), the notions of telic and perfective (or atelic and imperfective) are normally conveyed by distinct devices. Cf. below, this section, for further comments on this point.
 5. This entails that even the notion 'tense-aspect system' is not very felicitous: 'tense system' would be a more appropriate denomination. However, since this term has now become standard, we shall use it in this paper. Note further that, in addition to temporal and aspectual values, tenses may also express modal meanings; but this is not the default case.
 6. In some sense, one could say that "tense" is a formal notion, inasmuch as it consists in a concrete, morphological expression, while "aspect" and "temporal reference" are semantic notions, which need a particular tense to manifest themselves. Note, however, that the correspondence is not one-to-one: each tense has both an aspectual and a temporal meaning, and very often it has in fact a range of aspectual and temporal meanings, which differ according to the context in which the given tense is embedded.
 7. Lazzeroni (1990) has suggested a similar view with respect to the notion "middle" in ancient languages, which he regards as historically connected with the idea of stativity. The class of verbs incorporating this notion is considered to have undergone progressive transformations, retraceable on the morphological level, through the intermediation of a number of parameters (non-eventivity, non-agentivity, subject-orientation), which ultimately also interact with the notion of Perfect. Thus, we have a constellation of meanings, producing a certain amount of vagueness, which is responsible for the cross-linguistic variation to be observed in Classical languages, and their historical development.
 8. See however, at least, Platzack (1979).
 9. Note that in (c–d) the event is qualified as "detelicized", rather than "atelic", because the predicate is telic in its basic meaning, but turns out to be detelicized in the given context. As to the reason for this, it is obviously different in the two cases: in (c) the detelicization is induced by the adverbial, while in (d) it is yielded by both the adverbial and the nonterminative aspect.
 10. This is not a unique case, even among European languages. Other European languages whose progressives may have a future-time reading interpretation are: Icelandic, Maltese, and to some extent Finnish.
 11. As noted already regarding example (1), it is also possible for these sentences to receive a prospective (here, future-in-the past) reading. This would not modify our conclusions, though, for this would clearly be a terminative reading.
 12. Apparently, the meaning associated with (17a) and (17c) is more common with speakers of American than British English. With (17a), the latter speakers are likely to prefer a reading of the following sort: "at that time, Mary was already able to dance the polka".
 13. With (19a), if we ignore the temporal clause, it is marginally possible to have the following readings: "At the given time Mary was still able to dance the polka", or "Mary still used to dance the polka". Here we disregard these readings. Besides, *still* may also be used as a contrastive adverb, in which case it is obviously compatible with terminative tenses (*Still* [i.e. notwithstanding this] *Mary danced the polka*).
 14. More properly, they are restricted to accomplishment verbs, for achievements are incompatible with them, due to their non-durative character.
 15. It should be added that Fr. "*depuis* X Temps" does not easily combine with accomplishment verbs, but rather with achievements. In fact, even It. "*da* X Tempo" undergoes pragmatic restrictions when used with accomplishments. We shall not go into these details here.
 16. For a thorough analysis of this construction, cf. Squartini (1998).
 17. Dausen (1981) has baptized this particular use of the Romance Imperfect 'absolute Imperfect'.
 18. Or the Compound Past, in as much as it subsumes, in the appropriate contexts and in the relevant languages, the specific functions of the Simple Past.
 19. Cf. Bertinetto and Squartini, this volume.
 20. Note that the view presented here is not restricted to the description of Romance languages. Indeed, these are singled out only as an example, but any language exhibiting a terminative/nonterminative opposition would behave in the same way. Similarly, the type of lexical oppositions exhibited by the Slavic languages is also to be observed, to some extent at least, in some non-Slavic languages, such as Lithuanian, Hungarian and Georgian. Actually, these lexical oppositions are occasionally manifested in many more languages. Although they are very marginal in, say, Romance, they are relatively well attested in Germanic: e.g., Eng. *eat* vs. *eat up*, Germ. *jagen* 'hunt' vs. *erjagen* 'catch (in hunting)'. However, even in the latter case they are not nearly as systematic as they are in the Slavic languages. Interestingly, Hentschel (1991) has pointed out that the German particle *mal* may receive an aspectual (specifically, terminative) interpretation in certain contexts. However, this is far from being a systematic behaviour. And, in any case, it should not be confused with the problem discussed here. While the lexical pairs reported above exhibit actional oppositions, the particle *mal* is used by German speakers (at least in part) to overcome the poverty of aspectual devices offered by the language.
 21. For a different approach to the verbal system of Slavic languages, cf. Breu (1984a; 1984b; 1992). The view of this author is in a way diametrically opposed to ours, inasmuch as he claims that the so-called aspectual pairs constitute in fact one and the same lexical entry. So, for instance, according to Breu, in Russian there is one verb consisting of the joint paradigms of *čitat'*/*ipročitat'*, and another verb corresponding to *čitat'*/*pročitat'*. Accordingly, there are two homonyms *čitat'*, one with activity reading, the other with accomplishment reading. For us, on the contrary, *čitat'* may only have an activity reading, while its bounded cognates may supplement their actional value with different semantic specifications, according to the peculiarities of their meaning. In fact, besides the bounded/unbounded opposition which constitutes the basis of the Slavic verbal lexicon,

there are many additional semantic nuances, and often quite a lot of sheer idiosyncrasy, particularly with bounded predicates.

- Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the class of *po*-prefixed verbs, referred to by Breu, is quite peculiar, inasmuch as it expresses the idea of temporal limitation without implying telicity. Indeed, *počitat'* takes "for X Time" adverbials and rejects "in X Time" adverbials, thus behaving like *čitat'* in sharp contrast to *pročitat'* (which shows the opposite distribution of adverbials), although on the other hand *počitat'* is similar to *pročitat'* in substantially rejecting the adverb *dolgo* 'for a long time' (perfectly compatible with *čitat'*). We would then like to say that *po*-prefixed verbs are rather exceptional in being bounded but not telic; something that should be borne in mind, to smooth our general position concerning the fundamental convergence of the features "telic" and "bounded".
22. Indeed, Bulgarian also presents explicit oppositions in the modal domain of evidentiality with respect to the so-called "testimonial/non-testimonial" tenses. On the topic of evidentiality, see Guentchéva (1996).
 23. In practice, this treatment applies to the adverb types exhibiting a '(±)' mark in the aspect column in Table 1.
 24. This does not mean, however, that one cannot find verbal forms exhibiting this particular combination of features (i.e. [+tel, –terminative]), although the latter is excluded for temporal adverbials. This does indeed occur in Bulgarian in the translation of sentences such as: *Whenever he copied the article ...* (in the sense of: "... he copied entirely"), where a bounded verb would be used. Actually, this combination of features should be expected on the basis of what we observed in Section 2.1.1, where we claimed that habitual contexts (such as the one discussed here) consist of a nonterminative macroevent composed of a series of terminative microevents.
 25. We wish to thank Mrs. Kumuš Imanaleva, Mrs. Olga Obuchova and Prof. Neli Radanova Kuševa for their patient help.
 26. For simplicity, Russian words will also stand for their Bulgarian cognates.
 27. Cf. Table 3 for the translation of these adverb types. Note that "X Vremja nazad" corresponds more properly, in some of its uses, to "X Time ago", whose semantic and syntactic properties are closer to It. "X Tempo fa" than to It. "da X Tempo". It should obviously be noted, in this context, that temporal adverbs generally differ in very subtle ways from language to language. The correspondences are almost never perfect.
 28. Recall that we are assuming here progressive, rather than habitual, interpretation.
 29. Here again we have more proof of what we said in fn. 27. The adverb type "*do t_x*" has both the meaning of "*until t_x*" and the meaning of It. "*entro t_x*" (roughly corresponding to "*within t_x*"). Needless to say, this has relevant consequences for our purposes, because the latter adverb type takes only telic predicates. Cf.:

- (i) *Gianni dormì entro le 5.
Gianni sleep:SP:3SG within the 5
[If this had a meaning, it would be: 'Gianni finished sleeping before 5'.]
- (ii) Gianni consumò il pranzo entro l' una.
Gianni consume:SP:3SG the lunch within the one
'Gianni ate up his lunch before 1 o' clock.'

The data reported in the text refer only to the meaning corresponding to "*until t_x*".

30. A notable exception to this generalization is represented, in both Bulgarian and Russian, by bounded verbs inherently expressing the notion of temporal limitation, such as Russian *pospat'* 'sleep for a while', *postajat'* 'stand for a while'. However, this is not surprising, given the strict correspondence of the notion of temporal limitation, included in the meaning of these predicates, with the semantics of class (ii) adverbials (see fn. 21).
31. Note that this may bring about possibilities that are not within the reach of non-Slavic languages. For instance, the Italian verb *esaurirsi* 'exhaust' has a non-deletable telic character, to the extent that the Imperfect used in the following sentence does not detelicize the predicate, contrary to what normally happens in such cases:

- (i) ??Le scorte si esaurivano, ma non si sono poi
the supplies RFL exhaust:IMPF but not RFL be:PRS:3PL then
esaurite.
exhausted
'The supplies were on the verge of finishing, but ultimately did not finish.'

By contrast, the translation of this sentence into a Slavic language would involve, in sequence, first an unbounded and then a bounded lexeme, as in the following Bulgarian rendering (and note that Russian would behave essentially in the same way, as far as the category "boundedness" is concerned):

- (ii) Zapasāt se izčerpvaše, no v krajna smetka
supply:DEF RFL exhaust:UBD:IMPF:3PL but in extreme count
ne se izčerpaxa.
not RFL exhaust:BD:AOR:3PL
'The supplies were on the verge of finishing, but ultimately did not finish.'

Thus, in Slavic languages the verb corresponding to 'exhaust' may be conceived of as atelic in the relevant contexts.

32. Cf. also Bondarko (1987), quoted by Lindstedt (1995), who suggests "internal bound" and "external bound".
33. We do sympathize with Lindstedt's proposal, which captures also some significant analogies among Russian and Finnish (in the latter case regarding the choice of accusative vs. partitive). However, it seems to us that this proposal is designed to capture cases such as (29b), rather than (29a). It should therefore be complemented by an appropriate formulation concerning habitual contexts. In this respect, we would like to advance the following hypothesis. Recall what we said in Section 2.1.1: a habitual situation is characterized as a nonterminative macroevent comprising an undeterminate number of microevents, each of which may be viewed terminatively. Obviously, whenever the relevant type of predicate is involved, any terminative microevent may also by definition be telic. However, no matter what kind of predicate is employed, the general situation corresponding to the macroevent does not imply telicity, for the designated habit may not be yet terminated at the end of the reference interval. Consider now that unbounded verbs, which essentially suggest atelicity, are the only device available to suggest interminativity in languages like

- Russian. If this is so, it is not surprising that, in order to insist on the interminativity of the macroevent (the real distinctive feature of habitual aspect), these languages make use, in contexts such as (29a), of a tool which, although not directly expressing interminativity, nevertheless hints at it by proximity of meaning.
34. Needless to say, it would also be possible in (30b) to stress the telicity of the event, by using a terminative tense like the Aorist with a bounded predicate (*rešix*). But the really interesting cases are those presenting apparently contrasting features.
 35. It has been pointed out to us that this is not a valid argument, given the frequent cases of "layering" discussed in the grammaticalization literature. Indeed, it is not the case that new categories arise only to fill empty slots; otherwise, French would never have developed a new Future to replace the old one. We agree with this, but we would like to remark that, in the long run, when this happens, there is always a redistribution of the functional charge of the competing elements. These do not remain forever perfectly interchangeable. Now, since the tense system of Common Slavic was imported from Indo-European, and since it has retained its functions on the temporal and aspectual level in Modern Bulgarian, there is reason enough to argue that the innovation represented by the boundedness category was introduced to fulfill some other purpose, rather than simply express aspectual values. The latter is an evolution that took place to some extent in languages such as Russian, due to the loss of the previous aspectual distinctions. Obviously, something similar might happen in the future development of Bulgarian: but this is another story, yet to be told.
 36. Jouko Lindstedt (p.c.) pointed out to us that the situation appears to be slightly different in Macedonian, a closely related language, which is in the process of losing the Aorist of unbounded verbs. Modern Croatian is a similar case: the Imperfect is apparently used only for unbounded verbs, while the Aorist is mostly employed with bounded verbs (Morabito 1992). The next step is represented by the two Sorbian languages, where the Imperfect of bounded verbs has been lost (cf. also Löttsch 1995). Thus, although Sorbian still preserves the aspectual opposition Imperfect/Aorist, in practice this tends to come out in fixed combinations with respect to the boundedness parameter: bounded verbs are normally associated with terminative tenses, unbounded verbs with nonterminative ones. This is presumably the path along which Russian and languages of the same sort reached their present state, in which the aspectual oppositions have been lost entirely. Indeed, the research carried out by Petruxin (1996) on the chronicle *Piskarevskij letopisec* (written over a long period, extending from the XI to the XVII cent.), provides a striking confirmation of this. Especially in the first part of the text (XI–XIII cent.), where the so-called *I*-forms of the Past are still rarely used to the advantage of the Aorist and the Imperfect, one observes with prefixed verbs a very strong correlation between boundedness and the Aorist. More precisely, the Imperfect is rarely attested in general, and is virtually absent with bounded predicates. By contrast, with non-prefixed verbs both bounded and unbounded predicates appear in a more or less balanced proportion; however, the Imperfect is used only with unbounded predicates.
- These remarks demonstrate that each language in the Slavic family may show a different stage of development regarding the fusion of actional and aspectual values. A hint of this is also offered by the responses to our Progressive Questionnaire (= PROGQ; cf.

Appendix 3), in which we collected data for Serbo-Croatian (four speakers) and Rusyn (one speaker). Obviously, there is no specialized progressive device in Slavic languages. In those languages that lack specifically nonterminative tenses (like Russian, or the two mentioned here), the unbounded verbs may express any nonterminative value (specifically, progressive and habitual). Among the two languages examined, Rusyn seems to make much wider usage of unbounded predicates. Although some caution should be taken, given the fact that we collected the responses of only one informant, the contrast with Serbo-Croatian is apparent. Rusyn uses a bounded predicate alone in only one case (PROGQ:5), while it presents it as an alternative to the unbounded predicate in one more case (PQ:74). All other examples elicited an unbounded verb from our informant. With our Serbo-Croatian informants, the situation is more varied. Here again, there is just one instance in which the bounded predicate is the only type of response provided by the speakers (PQ:5). However, in quite a number of cases we observe some vacillation in the behaviour of our informants. Interestingly, this seems to correlate to some extent with the degree of telicity. The more prominent the telic value of the sentence is, the more frequent are the bounded verbs provided by the informants. In what follows, a formula such as "x + y" indicates first the number of bounded verbs, then the number of unbounded ones (note that, although there were four informants, the total number of responses may be greater than four, because a single informant has sometimes provided a double answer). The most relevant cases are the following: PROGQ:14 (3 Kg of potatoes) = 2 + 3; PROGQ:15 (all the potatoes) = 2 + 2; PROGQ:17 (two chickens) = 2 + 2. Other examples of the same sort are: PROGQ:21 (leave the house) = 2 + 3; PROGQ:23 (begin to peal) = 3 + 1; PROGQ:30 (throw the stone) = 2 + 3; PROGQ:32 (give the sign) = 2 + 2; PROGQ:37 (the water boil) = 2 + 4; PROGQ:52 (forget the names) = 2 + 4; PROGQ:53 ((the level) increase) = 2 + 3; PROGQ:55 ((snow) cover the land) = 4 + 1. We must of course allow for a certain degree of variation, possibly also due to mere misunderstanding of the intended meaning of the sentence. However, the contrast between Rusyn and Serbo-Croatian is striking, and leads us to believe that the grammatical contrast bounded/unbounded works slightly differently in the two languages. Namely, in Serbo-Croatian this contrast seems to be used with more an actional than aspectual intention, while in Rusyn the aspectual value predominates. The figures for Serbo-Croatian show that when emphasis is put on the telicity of the event, the bounded predicate tends to be preferred over its competitor. This is obviously in accordance with the interpretation suggested in this paper: although the opposition bounded/unbounded may express in the relevant contexts a purely aspectual meaning, its original value is actional, and basically addresses the opposition telic/atelic. Now, since progressivity implies the detelicization of the predicate, there is an obvious interaction between the aspectual and the actional meaning, and it is thus no wonder that unbounded predicates are preferably chosen to convey a sense of progressivity. However, the comparison between Rusyn and Serbo-Croatian shows that these two languages occupy different stages in terms of the transformation of the original actional meaning into a purely aspectual one.

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