



PHRASALEX II

Phraseological Approaches to Learner's Lexicography

July 22-23, 2021

Institute for Information Science and Natural Language Processing

Analysing and describing the influence of verbal aspect on verb patterns: How much co-text do we need?

Sarah Piepkorn, University of Hildesheim
piepkorns@uni-hildesheim.de



1) Outline



1) Overview



2) Dictionary entry



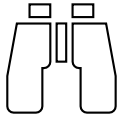
3) Theoretical background



4) Aspect in the dictionary



5) Conclusion



6) Future prospects



2) Dictionary Entry

Switch to interface



Important

- entries are not complete, contain only information to show the basic structure
- entries are preliminary, i.e. can change in the following editing process



3) Theoretical Background - 1

Basic assumption:

as tense locates situations to the time of other situations, aspect concerns the „internal temporal constituency of a situation“ (Comrie 1976: 2f)

Languages differ as to **how** and **where** they express aspect; Coseriu (1976: 13):

1. Aspect is tied to the verbs (Slavic languages)
2. Aspect is, with temporal location, the first specification to be made (e.g. ancient Greek)
3. Temporal location is specified first, aspect is added as a second perspective (often as periphrases) (e.g. English)
4. Aspect is added even later, as a further perspective (Romance languages)



3) Theoretical Background - 2

Many approaches distinguish two components

(ex. grammatical aspect vs. lexical aspect (ex. Filip 2012: 721) – aspect vs. Aktionsart/aspectual class (ex. De Swart 1998) – viewpoint vs. situation type (Smith 1997: xiv))

Desclés and Guentchéva (2012: 126-131) distinguish **Aspect₁** and **Aspect₂**:

- Aspect₁ is composed of aspectual classes
- Aspect₂ is concerned with grammar
- (a category Aspect₃ is added, which contains items that describe the phase of the situation)
- only combination of both Aspect₁ and Aspect₂ determines the sentence's aspect (Aspect₂ operates on Aspect₁, insertion of boundaries)



3) Theoretical Background - 3

Aspect₁: “time schemata” by Vendler (1957: 143-148):

1) *activities*:

“successive phases following one another in time” (ibid.: 144), “any part of the process is the same nature as the whole.” → “running”, “pushing a cart” (ibid.: 146)

2) *accomplishments*:

“proceed toward a terminus which is logically necessary to their being what they are.” → “running a mile”, “writing a letter” (ibid.: 146)

3) *achievements*:

“occur at a single moment” → “reach the summit”, “spot the plane” (ibid.: 147)

4) *states*:

“last for a period of time” (ibid.: 147) → “know”, “believe”, “love” (ibid.: 148)

Aspect₂: Imperfectivity vs. perfectivity as in Comrie (1976: 4, 18f):

1) Imperfective as viewing a situation from the inside

2) Perfective as viewing the situation as “complete”, as a whole (not necessarily “completed”!)



3) Theoretical Background - 4

Which explicit factors play a role in determining a sentence's aspect (in ENG + IT)?

- type of **subject** (e.g. Bertinetto, 1986: 100; Wanner, 2017: 30)
- use of **reflexive pronouns** (e.g. Bertinetto, 1986: 101)
- use of **tenses** (e.g. Bertinetto, 1986: 85) or **verbal periphrases** (Coseriu, 1976)
- use of **particles** (e.g. Comrie, 1976: 45; Smith, 1997: 133)
- use or type of **object** (e.g. Bertinetto, 1986: 91; Tenny, 1994; Filip, 2012: 736)
+ combination with quantifiers and determiners (e.g. Desclés & Guentchéva, 2012)
- use of **prepositional phrases** (e.g. Gvozdanović, 2012: 782; Wanner, 2017: 25; Smith 1997: 177)
- use or type of **adverbials** (e.g. Bertinetto, 1986: 85; Smith, 1997)



4) Aspect in the dictionary - 1

What may have to be added?

ADVANCE

1) so./sth. advance (movement)/(change) + prepositional phrase/measurement

so./sth. advance (movement)/(change) = activity (i.e. no endpoint)

→ adding p-phrase (e.g. with 'to') = endpoint, i.e. accomplishment

- can be combined with a time span adverbial (e.g. 'in an hour')

- progressive can specify the time leading up to the endpoint or a repeated action

→ adding distance (e.g. 'five miles') = progressive mostly meaning repetition

Use of prepositional phrase: differences between lexical units?

(<http://www.sketchengine.eu>; Kilgarriff, Rychlý, Smrž & Tugwell (2004); Kilgarriff, Baisa, Bušta, Jakubíček, Kovář, Michelfeit, Rychlý & Suchomel (2014) – English Web 2018)

- soldiers advance [l. 1]: facultative, different prepositions ('across', 'into', 'on'...)

- technology advances [l. 3,1]: not common, often as "to the point/stage where"

- students advance [l. 1/3,2]: facultative, correlated with change between lexeme 1/3

- winner(s) advance(s) [l. 1,b]: 'to' almost always present

→ add information about prepositional phrase / measurement?



4) Aspect in the dictionary - 2

What may have to be added?

PERDERE

2) qcn./qcs. perdere qcn./qcs. (possesso) – non avere più
as [1] concrete object or body part

perdere la chiave (= lose the key) = achievement

→ has to be a specific situation to be used in the Imperfetto (= imperfective):
expresses repeated events of losing the keys over a period of time

perdere i capelli (= lose one's hair) = activity

→ easily usable in the Imperfetto (= imperfective) as a process in which hair fell out

REASON for differences in use: with the object denoting a quantity of hair that usually falls out bit by bit, this is easily conceivable as an activity

→ add information about differences depending on properties of objects?



4) Aspect in the dictionary - 3

What may have to be added?

PERDERE

3) qcn./qcs. perdere qcn./qcs. (possesso) – non avere più
as [2] quality

(3) Una volta seguivo molto il calcio, ma negli anni **ho perso l'interesse.**
(= In the past, I followed football but over the years I lost interest.)

(4) Mi stavo frequentando con una ragazza ma quando ho scoperto che aveva abitudini strane, **ho perso (l')interesse.**
(= I was dating a girl but when I found out that she had some strange habits, I instantly lost interest.)

= accomplishment vs. achievement

→ add information about differences regarding specific objects?



4) Aspect in the dictionary - 4

What may have to be added?

PERDERE

4) qcn./qcs. perdere qcn./qcs. (possesso) – [2] as a quality + Imperfetto vs. Passato Remoto

perdere i sensi = achievement

→ with an achievement, the Imperfetto can focus the process leading up to the relevant moment.

(5) Cadde dal cavallo e perse i sensi. (= She fell from the horse and lost consciousness.)

(6) Mentre la soccorrevano perse i sensi. (= While they were helping her, she lost consciousness.)

→ at some point of the helping process, she lost consciousness

(7) Mentre la soccorrevano, perdeva i sensi. (= While they were helping her, she was losing consciousness.)

→ she was in the process of losing c. but hasn't lost it yet

(8) Mentre perdeva i sensi, si accorse che sua madre gli era accanto. (= While she was losing consciousness, she realised that her mother was at her side.) → same as (3)

→ different use of disambiguators

perse i sensi = punctual = immediatamente/subito/all'improvviso/all'istante (= instantly, suddenly)

perdeva i sensi = durative = progressivamente/man mano/lentamente (= slowly, gradually)

→ add information about differences with regard to Aspect₂/disambiguators?



4) Aspect in the dictionary - 5

What may have to be added?

PERDERE

5) qcn./qcs. perdere qcs. (possesso) – decrease
perdere olio = activity

(7) Il motore ha perso **olio.** (= The motor lost **some oil.**)
= a quantity that is not specified

(8) Il motore ha perso **l'olio.** (= The motor lost **all the oil.**)
= accomplishment, certain quantity (everything, due to definite article)

(9) Il motore ha perso **sei litri d'olio.** (= The motor lost **six litres of oil.**)
= accomplishment, certain quantity (due to measurement)
→ „measuring out“ (Tenny, 1994)

→ differences in meaning due to how the object is used

→ add information about restrictions of use with certain meanings?



4) Aspect in the dictionary - 6

Results so far:

Specifications may have to be added regarding...

- ... the use of different direct objects (singular vs. plural, concrete vs. abstract...)
- ... the presence of other elements in the sentence which may have an influence (prepositional phrases, adverbials)
- ... the combination with certain tenses
- ... the distribution of disambiguators



4) Aspect in the dictionary - 7

Problem: same structure of the lexeme, different time schemas, different meaning:

1) so. advances sth. (change) as help progress or develop

VS.

2) so. advances sth. (come to existence) as present or suggest

1) **Activity:** time span in which so. helps progress or develop sth. (Vendler, 1957: 148)

2) **Achievement:** „time instant“ in which the idea is presented (Vendler, 1957: 149)

→ somebody can contribute to the development of an idea **OR** present an idea
= potential ambiguity



4) Aspect in the dictionary - 8

Results from <http://www.sketchengine.eu>; Kilgarriff et al. (2004, 2014) – English Web 2018

→ Behaviour of 2) as analysed with „argument“:

- predominantly simple past
- approx. 10 % in simple present
- small percentage of progressives
- with progressive: some as plural, with „not (any)“ or in as non-actual

> when progressive: as advance an argument repeatedly/several arguments BUT also as an ongoing process

→ Behaviour of 1) as analysed with „technology“

- often used as infinitive
- high percentage of progressives

> when progressive: only meaning as ongoing process



4) Aspect in the dictionary - 9

How can we distinguish between repeated achievement, ongoing achievement (phase leading up to the completion) and ongoing activity?

- Through indicators specific for lexical units
'advance the idea that' = more 2)
'advance the same idea' = more 2)

If not:

- Only through co-text:

(10) “First, self-identified political conservatives throughout the nation, for as long as I have been politically conscious, have been advancing the argument that many Americans are afraid of freedom (...).“
(<http://www.sketchengine.eu>; Kilgarriff et al. (2004, 2014) – English Web 2018)

> No explicit indicator, we have to base our judgement on the situation!



4) Aspect in the dictionary - 10

Similar problem:

(11) “[4] Giovanni *passeggiava* avanti e indietro.” (Bertinetto, 1986: 354)
(= Giovanni strode/was striding up and down.)

→ Is this a continuing or a habitual activity?
- with „ininterrottamente“ (continuously) = a continuing activity
- with „ogni volta che doveva concentrarsi“ (every time he had to concentrate) =
habitual activity
(Bertinetto, 1986: 354)

→ and if there is no overt sign?

Cf. a context like: Giovanni is nervous because he is waiting for an important telephone call, which is late.

> No explicit indicator, we have to base our judgement on the situation !



5) Conclusion

What do we want to do with aspect?

- Add information about the variation of meaning
 - when adding or changing certain elements
 - when using one element or the other or in a certain form of it
 - when using certain tenses due to the aspectual information they express
 - and the use of disambiguators
 - ...

What do we mean by co-text when we want to add aspectual information?

- explicit information near the verb(s)
- explicit information in a wider co-text
- implicit information in the surrounding text
(no insights yet as to the distance that is relevant)



6) Future Prospects

We need to...

...determine where additional information concerning aspect can be found
(ex. variation of complements, different behaviour regarding perfective/imperfective, disambiguators...)

...find out if this information can be generalised for classes of verbs

...encounter a way to collect this kind of information quickly and reliably

...work out how to deal with implicit information

...define how to present this information in the learner's dictionary

→ difficult because no linguistic knowledge can be assumed, not much space in a dictionary entry

References

- Bertinetto, P. M. (1986). *Tempo, aspetto e azione nel verbo italiano: il sistema dell'indicativo*. (= Studi di grammatica italiana). Firenze: Pr. l'Accademia della Crusca.
- Binnick, R. I. (2012). *The Oxford handbook of tense and aspect*. Oxford [i.e.]: Oxford University Press.
- Comrie, B. (1976). *Aspect: an introduction to the study of verbal aspect and related problems*. (= Cambridge textbooks in linguistics, 2). Cambridge [i.e.]: Cambridge Univ. Press.
- Coseriu, E. (1976). *Das romanische Verbalsystem*. (= Tübinger Beiträge zur Linguistik, 66). (ed. H. Bertsch). Tübingen: TBL-Verl. Narr.
- Desclés, J.-P. & Guentchéva, Z. (2012). Universals and Typology. In Binnick, R. I. (Ed.). *The Oxford handbook of tense and aspect*, (pp. 123-154). Oxford [i.e.]: Oxford University Press.
- De Swart, H. (1998). Aspect Shift and Coercion. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 16 (2). 347-385.
- Filip, H. (2012). Lexical Aspect. In Binnick, R. I. (Ed.). *The Oxford handbook of tense and aspect* (pp. 721-751). Oxford [i.e.]: Oxford University Press.

References

- Gvozdanović, J. (2012). Perfective and Imperfective Aspect. In Binnick, R. I. (Ed.). *The Oxford handbook of tense and aspect* (pp. 781-802). Oxford [i.e.]: Oxford University Press.
- Kilgarriff, A., Rychlý, P., Smrž, P. & Tugwell, D. (2004). Itri-04-08 the sketch engine. *Information Technology*. n.p.
- Kilgarriff, A., Baisa, V., Bušta, J., Jakubíček, M., Kovář, V., Michelfeit, J., Rychlý, P. & Suchomel, V. (2014). The Sketch Engine: ten years on. *Lexicography* 1. 7-36.
- Smith, C. S. (1997). *The parameter of aspect* (2nd ed.). (= Studies in linguistics and philosophy, 43). Dordrecht [i.e.]: Kluwer.
- Tenny, C. L. (1994). *Aspectual roles and the syntax-semantics interface*. (= Studies in linguistics and philosophy, 52). Dordrecht [i.e.]: Kluwer.
- Vendler, Z. (1957). „Verbs and Times“. *The Philosophical Review* 66 (2). 143-160.
- Wanner, A. (2017). *Verbklassifizierung und aspektuelle Alternationen im Englischen*. (= Linguistische Arbeiten, 398). Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.