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Soroka L.

– Teacher, Foreign Languages Department, Lviv Polytechnic National University

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ASPECTUALITY FIELD IN MODERN ENGLISH: THE SEMELFACTIVE ASPECT

The paper is devoted to the study of the aspect as a semantic property of verbs expressing how a certain event is viewed. It also explores two independent aspectual components: Grammatical aspect and Lexical aspect. Attention is paid to semelfactives, as a separate aspectual class of predicates. The observations and conclusions made in the course of the survey are illustrated by the examples from the British National Corpus.

Key words: aspectuality, telicity, semelfactive, predicate, aspectual class.

Сорока Л.

– викладач кафедри іноземних мов Національного університету «Львівська політехніка»

СФЕРА АСПЕКТУАЛЬНОСТІ В СУЧАСНІЙ АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ МОВІ: СЕМЕЛЬФАКТИВНИЙ АСПЕКТ

Стаття присвячена дослідженню аспекту як семантичної властивості дієслів, які виражають те, як розглядається певна подія. Також проаналізовано дві незалежні аспектні складові: граматичний аспект і лексичний аспект. Приділяється увага семельфактивам, як окремому аспектному класу предикатів. Спостереження та висновки, зроблені в ході дослідження, обгрунтовані прикладами з Британського Національного Корпусу.

Ключові слова: аспектність, граничність, семельфактив, предикат, аспектуальний клас.

Сорока Л.

– преподаватель кафедры иностранных языков Национального университета «Львовская политехника»

ОБЛАСТЬ АСПЕКТУАЛЬНОСТИ В СОВРЕМЕННОМ АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКЕ: СЕМЕЛЬФАКТИВНЫЙ АСПЕКТ

Статья посвящена исследованию аспекта как семантического свойства глаголов, выражающих то, как рассматривается определенное событие. Также проанализированы два независимых аспектуальных компонента: грамматический аспект и лексический аспект. Внимание уделяется семельфактивам, как отдельному аспектуальному классу предикатов. Наблюдения и выводы, сделанные в ходе исследования, обоснованы примерами из Британского Национального Корпуса.

Ключевые слова: *аспектуальность, предельность, семельфактив, предикат, аспектуальный класс.*

Formulation of the scientific problem. Our experience of events is deeply rooted in the perception of time, and these events can take on many, complex, temporal configurations. For instance, we can listen to the radio right now, tomorrow, yesterday, every afternoon, while taking a job, before having dinner, for several hours, etc. Likewise, this temporal structure is coded in every human language, such that any situation description, no matter how simple, provides temporal information.

In narratives, as in experience, events have varying duration, do not always occur in continuous sequence, and do not always wait for the previous event to finish before beginning. Complex system of language cues are employed to capture this rich temporal structure, and these cues arise from multiple sources, such as grammatical markers, lexical categories, and inherent semantics of events.

Analysis of the latest investigations of the question. In linguistics, aspect has received considerable attention over the past 40 years and, most especially, in recent years (C. Smith 1991, B. Comrie 1976, A. Timberlake and K. Chung 1985, M. Krifka 1992, H. Verkyul 1993, C. Tenny 1994). The modern aspectual classification opened new perspectives for the investigation of categorical semantics of the verb, involving into the analysis not only the lexical semantics, but also its combinatorial analysis, which is an argument structure on the deep level of syntax.

Semelfactive verbs represent perhaps the least studied event types class in English. D. Dowty (1979), similar to Z. Vendler (1967), does not distinguish semelfactive verbs as a class different from Activities and, in many cases, from that of Achievements. Although C. Smith (1991) recognizes the separate class of semelfactive verbs, her classification of these verbs is not totally correct. Thus, it seems plausible to examine if the semelfactive class of verbs can be treated as the class distinct from the above-mentioned classes and, then, on the basis of their features, to establish the exact semantic (sub)classes of the class of semelfactive verbs [8; 12; 14].

The **aim** of the investigation consists in an attempt to view the concept

of aspect, its types and structures. It also illustrates the semelfactive verbs as the separate class of predicates.

To achieve the aim of the diploma paper we have to fulfil the following **tasks**:

- To define the notion of aspect;
- To analyse its two major types;
- To consider aspectual markers and distinctions;
- To study the peculiarities of aspectual class of semelfactives;

Presentation of the basic material and interpretation of the results of the investigation. The term 'aspect' designates the perspective taken on the internal temporal organisation of the situation, and so 'aspects' distinguish different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of the same situation (B. Comrie 1976, after J. Holt 1943; J. Bybee 2003) [5; 6; 10]. The 'situation' is meant here as a general term covering events, processes, states, etc., as expressed by the verb phrase or the construction. Unlike tense, which is situation-external time, aspect is situation-internal and non-deictic, as it is not concerned with relating the time of the situation to any other time point.

Aspect refers to different ways of viewing the temporal characteristics of a situation (Comrie, 1976) [6]. There are two major types of aspect: lexical and grammatical aspect.

Grammatical aspect (or aspectual viewpoint) - this is the temporal perspective from which the situation is presented. An aspectual viewpoint can span an entire situation, as in the perfective, or it can span only part of it, as in the imperfective. The **perfective** indicates that the situation is to be viewed as a bounded whole, looks at the situation from outside, without necessarily distinguishing any of its internal structure. The **imperfective** looks at the situation from inside, or looks inside its temporal boundaries, and it is crucially concerned with its internal temporal structure. Perfectivity and imperfectivity are not objective properties of situations, and so the same situation can be presented from either viewpoint. In the English *John read that book yesterday; while he was reading it, the postman came*, the different forms of the verb 'read' refer to the same situation of reading (which in both cases is located in the past through the use of the appropriate tense), but the situation is presented in two different ways, with a difference in aspect [12].

Grammatical aspect is often confused with the closely related concept of tense, because they both convey information about time. While tense relates the time of referent to some other time, commonly the speech event, aspect conveys other temporal information, such as duration, completion, or frequency, as it relates to the time of action. Thus tense refers to *temporally when* while aspect refers to *temporally how*. Aspect can be said to describe the texture of the time in which a situation occurs, such as a single point of time, a continuous range of time, a sequence of discrete points in time, etc., whereas tense indicates its location in time.

For example, consider the following sentences: "*I eat*", "*I am eating*", "*I*

have eaten", and *"I have been eating"*. All are in the present tense, as they describe the present situation, yet each conveys different information or points of view as to how the action pertains to the present. As such, they differ in aspect.

Lexical Aspect (also known as situation aspect, inherent aspect, or Aktionsart) is compositionally determined by the lexical semantics of the main verb, its relation to the nominal argument that determines the telicity of a predicate and the quantizational status of this nominal argument [9, p. 81]. Quantized nominal arguments yield quantized (telic) verbal predicates (or sentences) and cumulative (mass. bare plural) ones cumulative (atelic) verbal predicates [9, p. 91].

Lexical aspect, specifically the potential of an event to be terminative or durative, is the basis for classification of verbs and verb phrases into aspectual classes. If an event is inherently limited, it is said to be telic; if an event does not have a natural boundary, it is referred to as atelic.

The most general approaches to the classification of lexical aspect as individual categories make a binary distinction (e.g., stative vs. dynamic, telic vs. atelic, durative vs. punctual). Z. Vendler's (1967) quadripartite classification of verb phrases into aspectual classes is currently the best-known and well-accepted classification. Taking telicity as the basis of the division, Z. Vendler (1967) categorized all English verbs into four classes with respect to the temporal properties that they encode: activities, accomplishments, achievements, and states.

So as we may observe, LA or telicity/atelicity is established by the inherent lexical semantics of the verb together with its environment.

Verbs tend to have inherent aspectual meaning because the situations described by them tend to have inherent temporal properties. Three types of **lexical** aspectual oppositions are frequently identified [6, p. 41-51]. For an example of a recent discussion of inherent aspect and temporal properties of situations, including an overview of formal approaches [1, p. 48]:

- Punctual and durative – these refer to situations which are not conceived of as lasting in time (punctual), versus situations which are conceived of as lasting for a certain period of time, however short it may be (durative). Inherently punctual situations can be further interpreted as semelfactive (taking place only once) or iterative (repeated). Many languages recognise a class of verbs that under normal circumstances can only refer to punctual situations (or iteration of punctual situations). However, semelfactive and iterative predicates are frequently derivational. In Slavonic linguistics, the term semelfactive is often used to refer to punctual situations irrespective of whether they are used iteratively or not.

- Telic and atelic - these refer to situations which have an internal structure consisting of a process leading up to the terminal point and the terminal point (telic), versus situations which do not have an inherent endpoint (atelic). In this semantic distinction, it is particularly clear that situations are not described by verbs alone, but rather by the verb with its arguments (subject and objects), and it is in fact difficult to find sentences

that are unambiguously telic or atelic. The telic nature of a situation can often be tested as follows [6, p. 44–45]: "if a sentence referring to this situation in a form with imperfective meaning (such as the English Progressive) implies the sentence referring to the same situation in a form with perfective meaning (such as the English Perfect), then the situation is atelic; otherwise it is telic. Thus from *John is singing* one can deduce *John has sung*, but from *John is making a chair* one cannot deduce *John has made a chair*. Thus a telic situation is one that involves a process that leads up to a well-defined terminal point, beyond which the process cannot continue." The term 'telic situation' corresponds most closely to Z. Vendler's [12, p. 102] 'accomplishment'.

- Stative and dynamic - roughly, these refer to situations which continue and do not change over time (stative), versus situations which involve necessarily change (dynamic). More precisely, with a state, unless something happens to change that state, the state will continue (e.g. standing, or knowing). With a dynamic situation, the situation will only continue if it is continually subject to a new input of energy, whether from inside or from outside (e.g. running, or emitting light) [6, p. 49]. Since punctual situations inherently involve a change of state, they are always dynamic. Sometimes the distinction between states and non-states is referred to as 'states' and 'actions'. However, the term 'action' is also used in a more restricted sense, for a dynamic situation that requires the involvement of an agent. Similarly, the term 'event' is used to refer to a dynamic situation viewed perfectly, and the term 'process' - to a dynamic situation viewed imperfectly.

The Semelfactive Aspect. Dynamic verbs across languages can be classified into a number of types based on the semantic distinctions durative/punctual and telic/atelic [11, p. 232]. These different verb types correlate to different dynamic event types. The first distinction is between durative and punctual events: durative, applying to verbs which describe a situation or process which lasts for a period of time, and punctual, which describes an event that seems so instantaneous that it involves virtually no time. Thus, punctual events do not have any duration, not even duration of a very short period and they do not have internal structure either. A typical example of punctual events in English is the verb *cough*. In Slavic linguistics, the equivalent of verbs like *cough* are called "semelfactive verbs", after the Latin word *semel*, 'once'. This term is adopted for general use by C. Smith [11] and H. Verkuyl [13], among other writers.

In linguistics, semelfactive refers to a class of lexical aspect or aktionsart (verb aspects that reflect the temporal flow of the denoted event, lexically included into the verb's root itself rather than grammatically expressed by inflections or auxiliary verbs).

For the first time this idea has been put by B. Comrie [6] in addition to other more commonly known categories such as verbs of Activity, Accomplishment, Achievement, and State. The event represented by a semelfactive verb is punctual (instantaneous, taking just a moment),

perfective (treated as a complete action with no explicit internal temporal structure), and atelic (not having an end). Semelfactive verbs include "to jump", "to cough", and "to glimpse".

Semelfactives are single-stage events that occur very quickly with no result or outcome [11, p. 27]. C. Smith's semelfactive punctual events imply neither preceding nor subsequent state. 1 They have the features [+ dynamic], [+ atelic], [+ instantaneous]. The sentence *Jane knocked at the door* is a typical example of a semelfactive event. Semelfactives are the simplest type of event, consisting only in the occurrence. Since they are single-stage events, semelfactives are intrinsically bounded. C. Smith (1997) uses this term for atelic instantaneous events. The Semelfactive event may involve a discernible period of time. When a person coughs, or a bird flaps a wing, the events take some fraction of a second to occur. The semelfactive event indicates that there is only one 'stroke' of a normally iterative event, e.g. a single knock at the door. It indicates that a normally durative or multi-stage event occurs "all at once".

In English we can set up the following semantic (sub)classes of the class of semelfactive verbs based on their features:

1. Bodily events: *blink, cough, burp, sneeze, wink, glimpse, jump, skip, spring, jerk, fart*.
2. Punctual actions involving movement: *tap, peck, scratch, kick, hammer a nail (once), pound on the table (once), pop (the gun), hit, slap, thump, thwack, smack, clap, shake, knock*.
3. Internal events: *flicker, flash (lights), gleam, ring, spurt, squirt, spew*.
4. Punctual verbs implying a subsequent state: *explode, find, break, break in, cave in, crack, split, smash, close*.
5. Punctual verbs of perception: *cry out (in pain), call out, shout out* [11, p.123].

Many of the verbs in the above subclasses often occur in repetitive sequences which take the form of progressive, e.g. *She is sneezing* refers to a series of sneezes (not a single sneeze in the process of unfolding). Let us see some more examples how a typical point-like semelfactive event can receive a derived activity reading through repetitions.

- (1) *John winked at Mary only once* [BNC AN7 3345].
- (2) *John is openly winking at Mary for a while because he fancies her* [BNC ACV 677].
- (3) *John skipped down the stairs so suddenly that his mother almost choked on her coffee* [BNC K95 3466].
- (4) *John was skipping down the steps instead of walking* [BNC FXT 1218].
- (5) *He was just lowering his glasses when the bell rang twice again* [BNC CKC 142].
- (6) *The church steeple bell was ringing for five minutes* [BNC KD8 244].
- (7) *He crossed to the guard and tapped him on the arm* [BNC ECK 1462].

(8) *He was tapping on the bathroom door again* [BNC GW0 1102].

(9) *The little vole scratched his ear three times very quickly* [BNC CFJ 85].

(10) *John was scratching his head until he drew blood* [BNC FAT 258].

The sentences (1), (3), (5), (7), (9) contain semelfactive events of the subclasses mentioned above. It can be observed that in some cases the occurrence of a semelfactive event can be identified by adverbials like *once*, *twice*, *suddenly*, and not infrequently the usage of the semelfactive verbs becomes apparent from the context. The sentences denote single (countable) punctual events. While sentences (2), (4), (6), (8), (10) express a series of punctual events. The iterative reading of these events is imposed by temporal adverbials like *for five minutes*, *for a while*, *until X time*, and, of course, by the context. In these latter cases we have multiple-event activities or activities derived from punctual semelfactive verbs. They are known as multiplicatives [2; 3].

The basic means of expressing the category of frequency rate are multiplicative and semelfactive verbs which represent the least studied aspectual class. Multiplicative verbs indicate an action in which a normally time-consuming or multi-stage situation is compressed and which occurs 'all at once' or 'in one fell swoop'. Actions of single occurrence in English are usually expressed by semelfactive verbs (semelfactive – from neoLatin *semelfactivus*, a compound of *semel* (once, a single time) and *factum* (event, occurrence). Semelfactive verbs express an action where there is only one 'stroke' of a normally multiplicative situation.

Multiplicative and semelfactive verbs can be intensified by some modifiers, such as *suddenly*, *abruptly*, *instantly*, *once*, *quickly*, for-adverbials – for an instant, for a split second, for a fraction of a second, for a second, for a moment, in-phrases – in the blink of an eye, in an instant, in a fraction of a second or by the context.

In most languages multiplicative verbs belong to the sphere of accomplice semantics, i.e. differentiated semantically, but not morphologically, thus there are verb tokens that describe a single situation, a verbal lexemes denoting the multiplicative situations.

In English such verbs as *to kick*, *to strike*, *to hit* depending on the context can mean semelfactive and multiplicative actions. Semelfactive value is expressed using the ideal forms and expressive intensifiers *suddenly*, *quickly*, *instantly*, *once*, etc.

(11) *Suddenly I sneezed and then everything went still again* [BNC AK9 1009].

(12) *Maggie suddenly shuddered and twisted away, her happy expression replaced by one of painful memories* [BNC C8D 2709].

In addition, in English there is a special style design *to give a kick*, *to take a deep breath*, *to give a cough*, which indicate only semelfactive value.

(13) *I was thinking to myself that my friend was more cheerful than he had been since his illness, when he gave a sudden, sharp cry* [BNC HOD

1923].

Conclusion. Aspect is traditionally concerned with what B. Comrie calls “different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation” [6]. The intuition behind this definition is that while tense relates the temporal location of a situation or “eventuality” to some other temporal reference point such as the time of utterance, aspect is concerned with the structural properties of the event itself. Within the study of aspect, linguists make a distinction between grammatical and lexical aspect. Grammatical aspect shows the difference between perfective and imperfective events which is morphologically marked and syntactically realized through the use of tenses. Lexical aspect, also called “Aktionsart” covers distinctions between properties of event-types denoted by verbal expressions, which linguists have tried to capture by classifying verbs and verbal phrases into aspectual classes. The term 'semelfactive verb' is used to refer to a verb which describes a single occurrence of the event. In English, the term 'semelfactive' was introduced for the general use by C. Smith (1991).

Perspectives for further investigations. The paper illustrates that semantically oriented typological research on tense and aspect goes far beyond a mere inventory of forms and global classification of meanings. Many more issues could have been – and maybe should have been – analysed more deeply in the future, such as discourse analysis, computational modeling, and implications of linguistic diversity for theories of human cognition. Analysis presented here may provide a starting point for anyone interested in broadening the study of tense and aspect.

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Дуброва О.

– кандидат педагогічних наук, доцент, докторант Національного педагогічного університету ім. М. П. Драгоманова

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ВІДОКРЕМЛЕНІ ОЗНАЧЕННЯ В СУЧАСНІЙ УКРАЇНСЬКІЙ ТА АНГЛІЙСЬКІЙ МОВАХ: СТРУКТУРА, СЕМАНТИКА

У роботі проаналізовано статус простого ускладненого речення в загальній системі синтаксичних одиниць англійської мови порівняно із українською мовою. Відсутність загальноприйнятої дефініції поняття "ускладнене речення" пояснюємо різноспрямованістю тих синтаксичних явищ, які практично підведені під термін «ускладнення». Щоб послуговуватися цим поняттям, необхідно знайти й теоретично визначити ті підстави, спираючись на які можна протиставити будь-яке ускладнене речення неускладненому.

У сучасній українській та англійській мовах активно вживаними є речення, ускладнені відокремленими означеннями. Залежно від позиції означення щодо антецедента їх поділено на два різновиди: препозитивні й постпозитивні означення. У кожній із цих груп проаналізовано специфіку функціонування в сучасних художніх текстах англійської та української мов.

Ключові слова: *просте речення, ускладнене речення, напівпредикативність, додаткова предикативність, відокремлений член речення, відокремлене означення.*

Дуброва О.

– кандидат педагогических наук, доцент, докторант Национального педагогического университета им. М. П. Драгоманова

ОБОСОБЛЕННЫЕ ОПРЕДЕЛЕНИЯ В СОВРЕМЕННОМ УКРАИНСКОМ И АНГЛИЙСКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ: СТРУКТУРА, СЕМАНТИКА

В работе проанализирован статус простого осложненного предложения в общей системе синтаксических единиц английского языка по сравнению с украинским языком. Отсутствие общепринятой дефиниции понятия "осложненное предложение" объясняется разнонаправленностью тех синтаксических явлений, которые практически подведены под термин «осложнение». Чтобы пользоваться этим понятием, необходимо найти и теоретически определить те основания, опираясь на которые можно противопоставить любое усложненное предложения неосложненному.

В современном украинском и английском языках активно применяемыми являются предложения, осложненные обособленными определениями. В зависимости от позиции по отношению к антецеденту их разделяем на два типа: препозитивные и постпозитивные определения. В каждой из этих групп проанализирована специфика их функционирования в современных художественных текстах английского и украинского языков.

Ключевые слова: *простое предложение, осложненное предложение, полупредикативность, дополнительная предикативность, обособленный член предложения, обособленное определения.*