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EXPLORING LINGUISTIC TESTS FOR DISTINGUISHING EVENTUALITY TYPES (WITH A FOCUS ON TWO SLAVIC LANGUAGES)

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Numerous researchers have proposed linguistic tests to identify aspectual classes (also referred to as eventuality types), building on the work of Zeno Vendler. While such tests have been extensively discussed and enriched for English, as well as for Russian and other Slavic languages, recent attention has turned towards Bulgarian, particularly focusing on stative predicates.

Bulgarian, like other Slavic languages, is distinguished by the category of verb aspect. In English, the meaning of a verb aspect is conveyed through various means, either lexical or grammatical. Consequently, tests developed for English may not be unequivocally applicable to Bulgarian (and Russian) due to the inherent differences in expressing the Slavic verb aspect. We will underscore this well-known fact by demonstrating the application of certain tests proposed by D. Dowty and E. Paducheva, which aim to differentiate between stative and active verb predicates. Examples featuring verbs such as *лежа*, *лягам*, *легна*, *полягам*, and *легна*, each with selected meanings, are presented in Table 1. Notably, the table exclusively contains Bulgarian examples. In Russian, there is a closely knit system of the semantic and word-forming characteristics of the given verbs, although with a certain type of deficiency.

Table 1. Selected verbs (and their meanings)

Bulgarian verbs	Definition
1. <i>лежа</i> (imperf.)	For a person or an animal, I am in a horizontal position with the entire body on a bed, ground, or floor.
2. <i>лежи</i> (imperf.)	For artefacts, something is in a horizontal position on a surface.
3. <i>лежи</i> (imperf.)	For a geographic object, something is located somewhere.
4. <i>лягам</i> (imperf.), <i>легна</i> (perf.)	I am intentionally placing my body in a horizontal position on a surface.
5. <i>ляга</i> (imperf.), <i>легне</i> (perf.)	As for smoke, fog, etc., something is spread over a surface, covering something with oneself.
6.a. <i>полягам</i> (imperf.), 6.b. <i>полегна</i> (perf.)	I lie down for a brief duration, or from time to time.
7. <i>поляга</i> (imperf.), <i>полегне</i> (perf.)	For grass, crops, etc., something is curling up or reclining on the ground.

The selected tests of D. Dowty [Dowty 1979: 60], also proposed by other authors, are as follows:

State predicates do not combine with adverbs such as *deliverably*, *studiously*, and *carefully* (verbs in lines 2, 3, 5, and 7), but activities and accomplishments do (verbs in lines 1, 4, and 6).

State predicates cannot be complements of *force* and *persuade*. (verbs in lines 2, 3, 5, 6.a, and 7), but activities and accomplishments do (verbs in lines 1, 4, and 6.b).

State predicates do not occur in imperatives (verbs in lines 2, 3, 5, and 7), but activities and accomplishments do (verbs in lines 1, 4, and 6).

The listed tests do not specifically consider the feature of “conscious participation” of the subject in the semantic structure of verbs. Consequently, they do not aim to differentiate between the ontologically distinct states: denoting a temporary property (Davidsonian states, also called stage-level predicates), characterized by a hidden event argument, and/or a more or less permanent property (Kimian states, also called individual-level predicates), which cannot be interpreted with a hidden event argument. Additionally, it is observed that within the same test, verbs belonging to the same aspect pair may exhibit different behaviours and, therefore, characteristics.

It has been asserted that the semantic type of a predicate for many verbs is a dynamic or “moving category” [Paducheva 2004: 33]. It is suggested that this should not be viewed as an inherent property of the word itself but rather as a parameter that assumes various meanings in different contexts, forming what could be termed a “categorical paradigm of the word”. This perspective aligns with the semantic typology of verbs, as indicated by the distinction between primary (non-derivative) types (those with primary meanings and unmarked modes of action, etc.) and derivative types [Paducheva 1996: 125–126]. This distinction holds particular significance in languages that employ the category of verb aspect.

Among the various tests employed by E. Paducheva to differentiate between states and activities, particularly those related to combinability with specific temporal modifiers, there are also tests oriented towards the word-forming potential of the source predicate. The capability to form a delimitative, indicating a portion of a process, stands out as the most indicative test for distinguishing active homogeneous processes from states and properties. This test gives reason to consider position/location verbs such as *лежа/лежать, сидя/сидеть, стоя/стоять* with an animate subject as activities (Davidsonian states in the other terminology). In contrast, such derivations are impossible or challenging for temporary and permanent states (e.g., **повиждам, *помразя, (?)поболедувам*).

The brief analysis put forward validates that in Bulgarian and Russian, source and derivative verbs of different aspects may exhibit distinct behaviours when subjected to tests determining their eventuality type membership. Word-formatively related verbs can belong to different eventuality types. This suggests that the significance of grammatical markers, along with the meaning conveyed by formative prefixes, can play a dominant role in determining their classification into eventuality types.

References

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