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Variation in aspect choices in factual contexts in Polish, Czech, Russian (and other Slavic languages)

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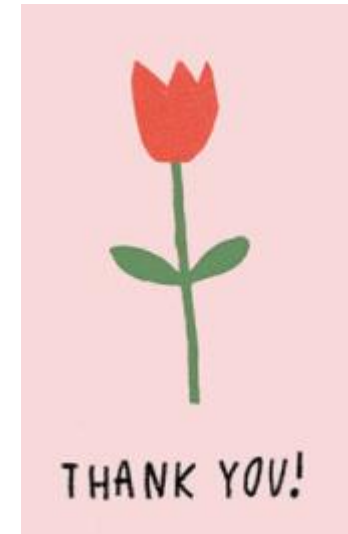
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Motivation

In spite of a rich tradition of studies on Slavic aspect, there have been relatively few works which take a comprehensive cross-Slavic perspective.

One of the most comprehensive approaches to aspect was undertaken by Dickey (2000, 2015, 2018, 2020). He offers a theory of the semantics of Slavic aspect based on the evaluation of the data from all the Slavic languages.

Relevant background

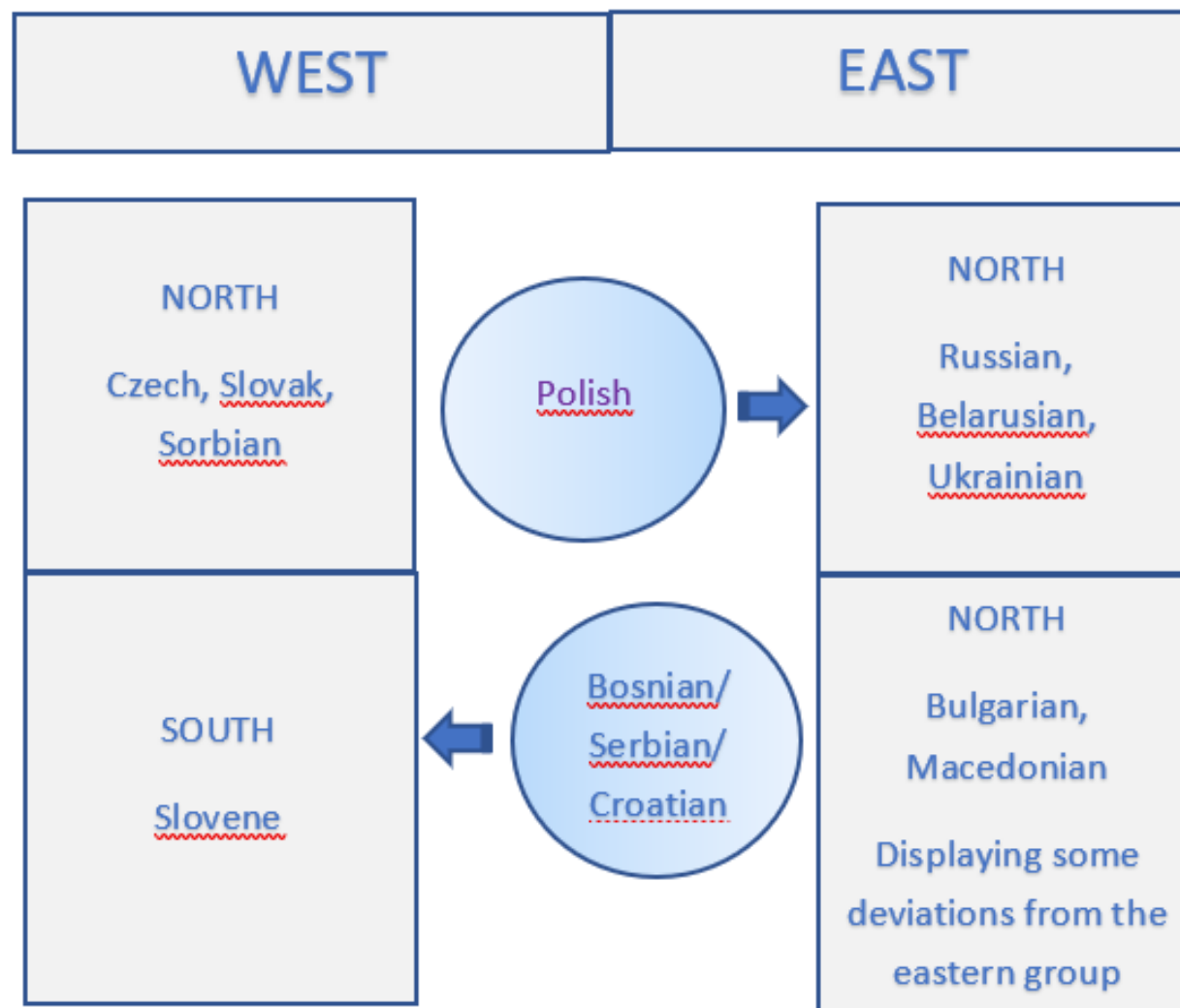
On the basis of the differences observed between the distribution of perfective and imperfective aspect in a range of contexts (habitual, factual, imperative, performative, deverbal nouns, running instructions) Dickey (2000) proposed **the 'East-West theory of Slavic aspect'**



A map showing the geographic distribution of Slavic languages (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slavic_languages) from Golubovic (2016)

Dickey (2000)

EAST-WEST ASPECT DIVISION (Dickey 2000)



Von Waldenfels (2012)

Von Waldenfels (2012) conducted corpus driven comparative analysis of aspect in imperative contexts.

He used very clear procedures of data collection making his results replicable.

His results support the basic division of Slavic languages into an Eastern and a Western group.

However, he states that there are so many intermediate positions and the general picture is more varied and needs more fine-grained exploration.

Dickey 2015: The East-West aspect theory revisited

The extremes of the east-west opposition are to be found in North Slavic:

- the western extreme includes primarily West Slavic languages (Czech, Slovak, Sorbian) and only one peripheral South Slavic language (Slovene)
- the eastern extreme consists of East Slavic (Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian).

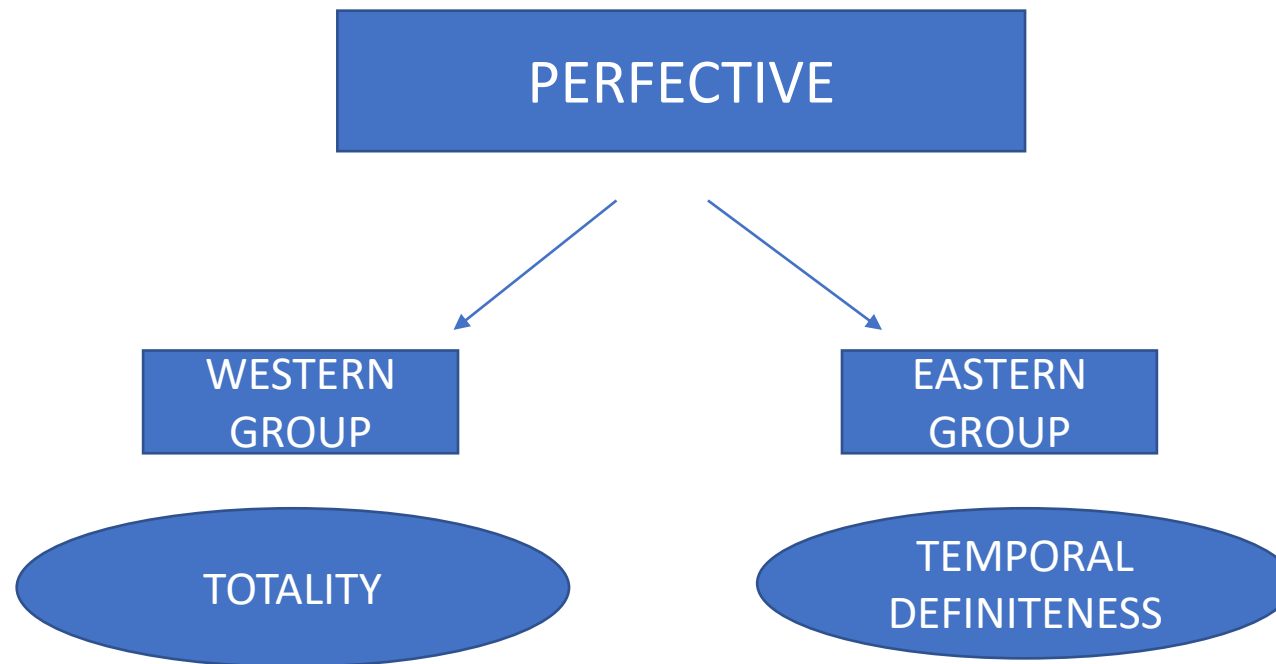
Polish, B/C/S occupy transitional positions between the eastern and western types (Polish and Serbian are closer to the eastern type, whereas Croatian is closer to the western type);

Macedonian is still closer to the eastern type than Serbian;

Bulgarian matches the eastern type for the basic parameters, but it differs from the eastern extreme in some important ways.

Parameters of Slavic aspect according to Dickey (2000, 2015)

Dickey (2015: 30) (following Leinonen 1982): The meaning of the **perfective aspect** in the **western group** is the familiar notion of **totality**, and the central for the characterization of the meaning of the **eastern** perfective as **temporal definiteness**.



Perfective: totality vs. temporal definiteness

WESTERN GROUP	EASTERN GROUP
Perfective aspect presents a situation in its totality (single indivisible whole). Totality is related to the temporal contour of an event. Totality/non-totality distinction is a parameter of inner aspect.	The meaning of perfective is that of temporal definiteness, which is a shared expectation of discourse participants that a situation occurred on a specific occasion. Perfective assigns a situation to a single, unique point in time. Definiteness is a parameter of outer aspect as it concerns the relationship of a situation with other situations in time.

Clarification

Puzzle: Isn't perfective used to express the totality of events in all the Slavic languages?

I found this:

Dickey 2000: The totality/non-totality distinction is probably the universal characteristics of perfective aspect. However, temporal definiteness is in fact more important for aspect choice in Russian.

Relevant points from Dickey (2000)

- Perfective in the eastern group is selected to express both totality and temporal definiteness.
- Perfective in the western group is used to express only totality.
- Thus, the perfective in the west has a wider distribution because it is less restrictive.
- Perfective in the eastern group is more restrictive. It refuses to be used in contexts which are not temporally definite.
- Aspect in the east is less tied to the situation type of the verb, thus resulting in more widespread coding of telic predicates as imperfective.

Variation in aspect choices in general factual contexts

Among the contexts, which according to Dickey (2000 and subsequent works) are subject to cross-Slavic variation are the so called [general factual contexts](#).

What constitutes a puzzle is why in general factual contexts imperfective is used to report completed events, which are typically expressed by means of perfective aspect.

General factual contexts

Mary: What a beautiful colour of an ornament on your wall. I would love to have one just like that in my living room. Can you tell me with which paint **you painted.impf** it?

Polish

Marysia: Jaki piękny kolor ornamentu na ścianie. Chciałabym mieć taki sam w swoim salonie. Czy możesz mi powiedzieć, jaką farbą go **malowałaś.impf**?

Czech

Marie: To je ale krásná barva ornamentu na stěně. Chtěla bych mít stejnou ve svém obýváku. Můžeš mi říct, jakou barvou jsi ho **malovala.impf**?

Russian

Марыся: Какой красивый цвет орнамента на стене. Я бы хотела иметь такой же в моей гостиной. Подскажи, какой краской ты его **рисовала.impf**?

Characteristics of general factual imperfective contexts

Grønn (2004: 81):

General factual imperfective contexts:

- are marked with past tense and imperfective morphology,
- entail the existence of one past event,
- contain **telic** predicates.

Variation in aspect choices in general factual contexts

Dickey (2015: 182):

East Slavic has the maximum amount of imperfective general factual usage, and the western Slavic languages have the lowest amount of usage of imperfective general factual imperfectives;

Dickey (2000: 101): Regarding general factual contexts Polish follows the Czech pattern.

Goal of my study:

To verify Dickey's (2000, 2015) typological claims concerning the distributions of aspect in general factual contexts in Slavic languages using quantitative methods and replicable procedures.

The study

I conducted scenario-based online questionnaire studies.

I elicited native speaker responses in six types of general factual context in Russian, Belarussian, Ukrainian, Czech, Slovak, Polish, Slovene, Serbian, Macedonian, Bulgarian.

Example from Polish:

Jaki cudny portret kobiety. Ciekawe, jaką techniką Janek tak pięknie ten portret (paint-past).

Tekst krótkiej odpowiedzi

Wczoraj trzy godziny (correct-past) testy.

Tekst krótkiej odpowiedzi

English translation of my instruction used in my questionnaires

Dear participant, in the contexts below, please write the correct form of the verb (the first form that comes to mind after reading the whole context). The verbs should be written in Polish. The missing word in English is given in brackets as an indication of the word in question. Sometimes there is a note next to the English word (past), which means that the verb has to be used in the past tense. Thank you very much for your time. If you have any doubts, feel free to contact me. Here is my e-mail address: dorota.klimek-jankowska@uwr.edu.pl

The instruction was written in the native language of my participants in the tested languages.

Material

I tested six types of general factual contexts:

I used accomplishment verbs.

Existential factual contexts

- 1) neutral
- 2) resultative

Presuppositional factual contexts

- 3) strong resultative, focus on the initiator
- 4) strong resultative, focus on the result
- 5) weak resultative, focus on the initiator
- 6) weak resultative, focus on the result

Existential vs. presuppositional general factual contexts

Grønn (2004), in his discussion of factual imperfective contexts in Russian, distinguishes between two kinds of factual imperfective contexts: (i) existential and (ii) presuppositional.

Existential factual imperfectives

Has Peter ever eaten a pineapple?

Polish

Czy Piotrek kiedykolwiek **jadł.impf** ananasa?

Russian

Пётрек когда-нибудь **ел.impf** ананас?

Czech

Jedl.impf už Petr někdy ananas?

- The existence of the event denoted by the verbal predicate is asserted (focused).
- There is some (at least one) instantiation of the past event within some interval that extends from some point in the past till now.
- Use of vague adverbs such as *ever*, *earlier*, *once*, *already*, *never* which do not locate the event at a specific time.
- Focus on the temporal indefiniteness of the past event and target state validity of telic predicates is irrelevant.

Presuppositional factual imperfectives

You have such a nice outfit. Can you tell me which fabric you **sew.impf** it from?

Polish

Ale masz piękną bluzkę. Czy możesz mi powiedzieć, z jakiego materiału ją **szyłaś.impf**?

Czech

Máš pěknou halenku. Můžeš mi říct, z jakého materiálu jsi ji **šila.impf**?

Russian

Какая у тебя красивая кофточка! Можешь сказать, из какого материала ты её **шила.impf**?

Presuppositional general factual

In presuppositional factual contexts, the existence of the event denoted by a verb is presupposed (backgrounded).

The presuppositional IMPF involves an Elaboration discourse relation (see Borik and Gehrke 2019).

Elaboration (1,2): event 2 is part of event 1 (perhaps by being in the preparatory phase or consequent state of e1).

The council built the bridge (event 1). The architect drew up the plans (event 2).
(from Lascarides and Asher 1997)

Elaboration in presuppositional general factual contexts

Similarly in presuppositional factual contexts:

Ale masz piękną bluzkę (event 1). Czy możesz mi powiedzieć, z jakiego materiału ją szyłaś.impf (event 2)?

'You have such a nice outfit. Can you tell me which fabric you sew.impf it from?'

What is at issue in presuppositional factual contexts is the holder of the result state of the presupposed past event.

Event 1 (having a beautiful dress) is a result of the past event of sewing it (event 2) (event 1 it is placed in the consequent state of event 2).

QUESTION 1:

Will the distribution of perfective and imperfective aspect be the same in existential and presuppositional factual contexts in Polish, Czech and Russian (and other Slavic languages)?

Two types of existential contexts (neutral and resultative)

NEUTRAL EXISTENTIAL (focus on temporal indefiniteness)

RESULTATIVE EXISTENTIAL (focus on the RESULT discourse relations
(event 1 is a result of event 2))

Neutral existential factual imperfectives

It's no great feat to use a modern lawn mower. I wonder if John has ever **mowed.impf** a lawn with a real scythe?

Polish

To nie jest wielki wyczyn użyć nowoczesnej kosiarki do trawnika. Ciekawe, czy Jan kiedyś **kosił.impf** trawnik prawdziwą kosą?

Czech

Použít moderní sekačku na trávu není žádný velký výkon. Zajímalo by mě, zda někdy Jan **sekal.impf** trávu opravdovou kosou?

Russian

Использование современной газонокосилки – это не подвиг. Интересно, **косил.impf** ли Ян когда-нибудь траву настоящей косой?

Resultative existential factual imperfectives

I can see that the flowers on the windowsill have wilted. Are you sure you **watered.impf** them today?

Polish

Widzę, że zwiędły kwiatki na parapecie. Czy ty na pewno je dzisiaj **podlewałeś.impf**?

Russian

Я вижу, что цветы на подоконнике засохли. Ты уверен, что **поливал.impf** их сегодня?

Czech

Vidím, že kytka na římse zvadla. Určitě jsi je dnes **zalívala.impf**?

Result/target state validity

Swan (1977: 518): general factual utterances are characterized by a "shift of emphasis away from the result". (see also Gronn 2004 and Reichau-Muller 2018).

Both types of existential contexts feature temporal indefiniteness, but:

In resultative existential contexts → the result state of the past event is more relevant than in neutral existential contexts.

In neutral existential contexts → the temporal indefiniteness is more relevant than the result state.

QUESTION 2: Will the distribution of perfective and imperfective aspect differ in these two types of existential factual contexts in Russian, Czech and Polish (and other Slavic languages)?

Four types of presuppositional factual contexts

Strong resultative presuppositional

- 1) Focus on the initiator
- 2) Focus on the result

Weak resultative presuppositional

- 3) Focus on the initiator
- 4) Focus on the result

I manipulated whether what was AT ISSUE at the evaluation time was the holder or the RESULT STATE or the INITIATOR of the event. When the information focus is on the initiator of the event, the result state is less relevant and hence we may expect more choices of imperfective.

Strong resultative presuppositional factual context, focus on the result

In strong resultative presuppositional contexts I used creation verbs (sew, build, paint, draw, cook, bake, sculpt).

The reaching of the result state in the past event of *building*, *painting*, *baking* is a necessary epistemic precondition for the existence of the holder of the result state which is at issue at the moment of evaluation. The resultative character of these contexts is not defeasable.

What a delicious pie Mary. What ingredients did you **bake.impf** it from?

Polish

Jaki pyszny placek Marysiu. Z jakich składników go **piekłaś.impf**?

Czech

Ta placka je skvělá, Maryšo. Z jakých ingrediencí jsi ji **pekla.impf**?

Russian

Какой вкусный пирог, Марыся! Из чего ты его **пекла.impf**?

DISCOURSE FOCUS ON THE RESULT

Strong resultative presuppositional factual context, focus on the initiator

I am looking for a construction team. I can see that your house is perfect. Can you give me the contact details of the team that **built.impf** it?

Polish

Poszukuję ekipy budowlanej. Widzę, że twój dom jest idealny.

Czy podasz mi namiary na ekipę, która go **budowała.impf**?

Russian

У тебя отличный дом! Я как раз ищу строительную фирму.

Ты можешь дать мне подробную информацию о бригаде, которая его **строила.impf**?

Czech

Hledám partu zedníků. Vidím, že tvůj dům je moc povedený.

Dáš mi prosím kontakt na partu, která ho **stavěla.impf**?

DISCOURSE FOCUS ON THE
INITIATOR

Weak resultative presuppositional factual context, focus on the result

My shirt smells lovely after washing.

Can you tell me what powder you **washed.impf** it with.

Polish

Moja koszulka pięknie pachnie po praniu.

Czy możesz mi powiedzieć, jakim proszkiem ją **prałaś.impf**.

Czech

Moje tričko voní pěkně po svěže vypraném prádle.

Můžeš mi říct, v jakém prášku jsi ho **prala.impf**.

Russian

Моя футболка прекрасно пахнет после стирки.

Подскажи, каким порошком ты его **стирала.impf**.

DISCOURSE FOCUS ON THE RESULT

Weak resultative presuppositional factual context, focus on the result

The existence of the shirt is not conditioned by the past event of washing but rather its property of having a nice smell is a result of the past event of washing.

The past event of washing is a very strong epistemic precondition for the shirt's nice smell but it is not a necessary precondition. It can be defeated.

Polish

Moja koszulka pięknie pachnie. Czy możesz mi powiedzieć, jakim proszkiem ją **prałaś.impf**?

Nie prałam jej tylko użyłam nowych perfum.

'My shirt smells lovely. Can you tell me what powder you washed.impf it with?

I didn't wash it just used my new perfume.'

Weak resultative presuppositional factual context, focus on the initiator

Oh, you finally have a working bike. I am also looking for professionals.

Can you tell me who **repaired.impf** it for you.

Polish

Widzę, że masz w końcu sprawny rower. Ja też właśnie szukam fachowców.

Czy możesz mi powiedzieć, kto ci go **naprawiał.impf**.

Czech

Vidím, že tvé kolo je nakonec funkční. Právě také hledám odborníky.

Můžeš mi říct, kdo ti ho **opravoval.impf**.

Russian

Я вижу, что тебе наконец-то починили велосипед.

Я тоже ищу мастера. Подскажи, кто тебе его **чинил.impf**?

DISCOURSE FOCUS ON THE
INITIATOR

Material

For each of the six types of contexts, I constructed five scenarios.

Altogether I had 30 experimental contexts and 22 filler contexts.

I constructed my contexts in Polish, then I had them translated to nine Slavic languages.

The translations were corrected by native speakers of these languages.

So I had parallel translations of the tested contexts (semantic chains in Slavic, mini parallel-corpus)

Number of responses

I obtained 125 responses in my Polish questionnaire, 135 in my Czech questionnaire, 86 in my Russian questionnaire

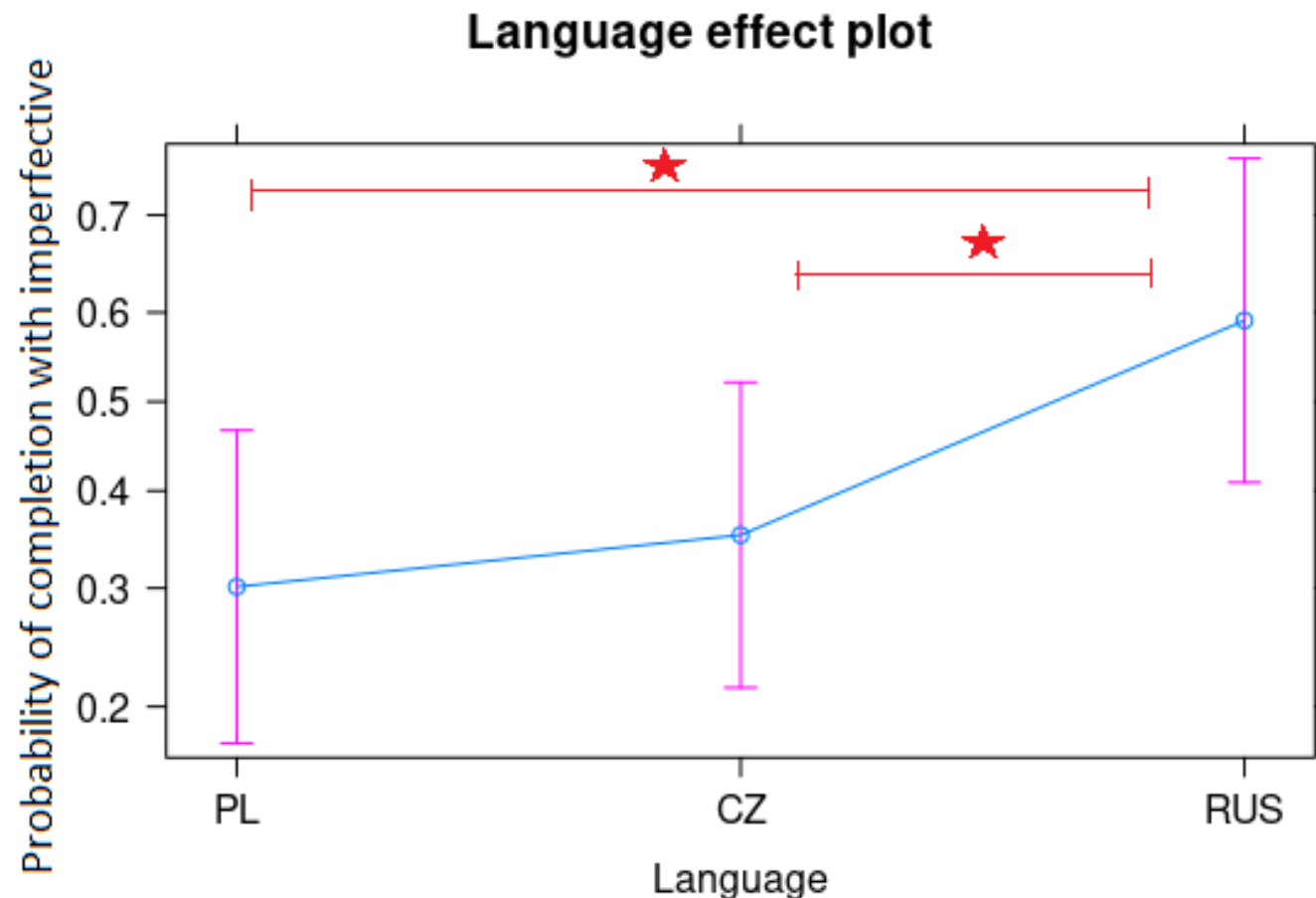
Macedonian 267, Czech 135, Polish 125, Bulgarian 121, Serbian 110, Russian 86, Slovene 59, Belarusian 45

Ukrainian 36, Slovak 30

Results

Statistical analysis of aspect choices revealed a significant main effect for CONDITION ($\chi^2(5) = 41.6897$; $p < 0.0001$) and LANGUAGE ($\chi^2(2) = 6.6467$; $p = 0.03603$).

Pairwise comparisons with respect to the main effect of LANGUAGE revealed marginally significant differences between Polish and Russian and Czech and Russian.



Linear Hypotheses:

	Estimate	Std. Error	z value	Pr(> z)
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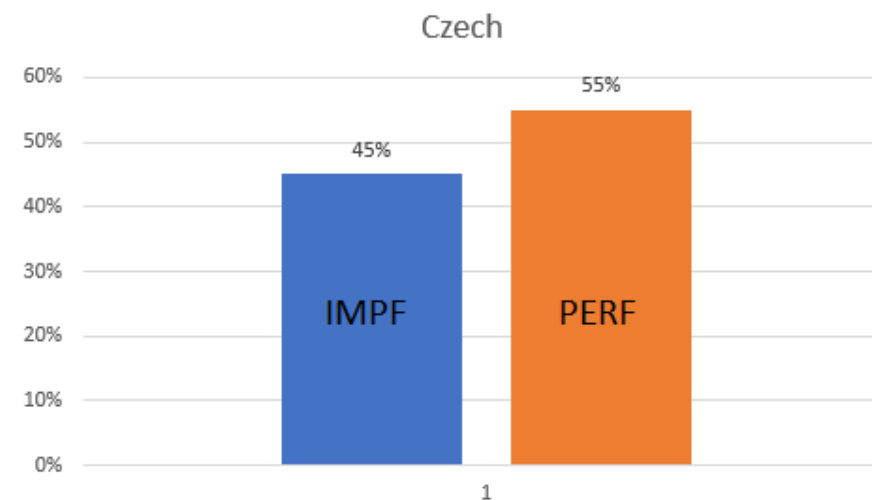
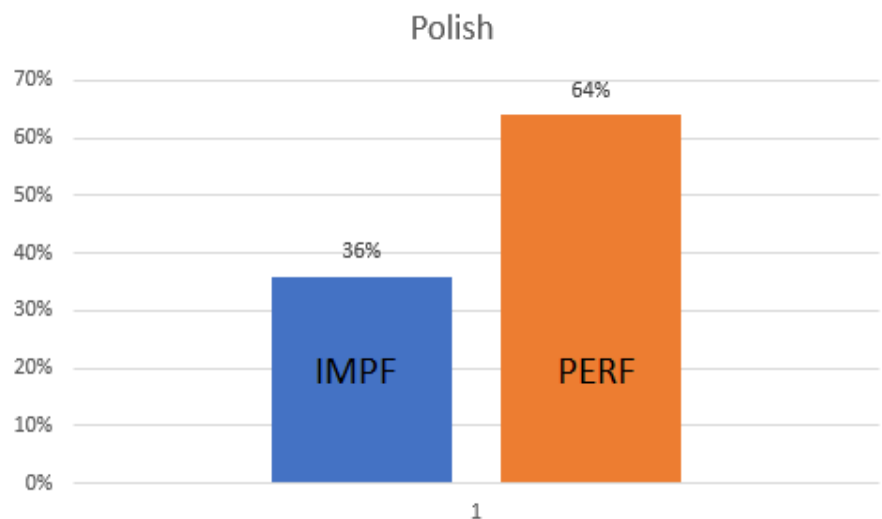
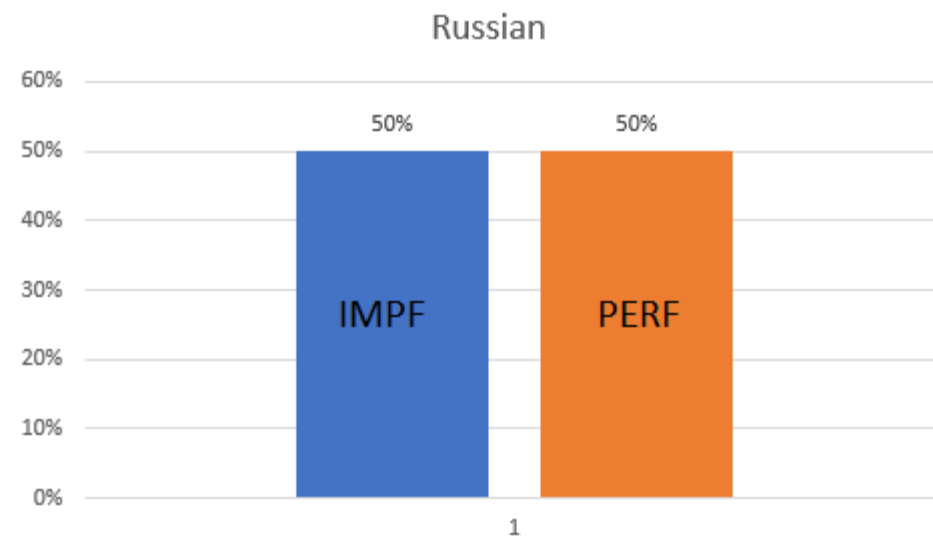
PL - CZ == 0	-0.2348	0.4883	-0.481	0.6307
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PL - RUS == 0	-1.2099	0.5166	-2.342	0.0575
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CZ - RUS == 0	-0.9751	0.4615	-2.113	0.0692
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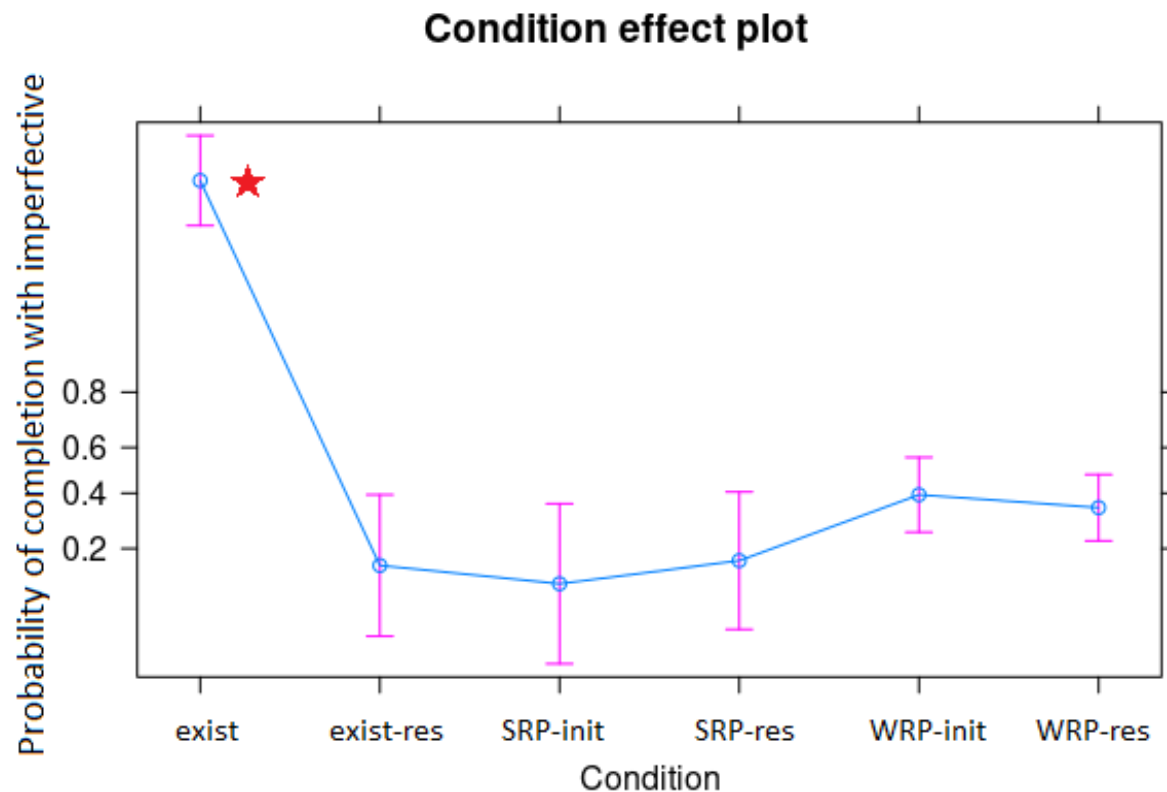
Results

Czech and Polish do not differ significantly but interestingly it is not Polish which is in the intermediate position but Czech.



Results

Pairwise comparisons with respect to the main effect of CONDITION revealed significant differences between EXIST (neutral) and other experimental conditions only. EXIST (neutral) stimuli show significantly greater probability of being completed with an imperfective form of the verb (rather than the perfective one) than stimuli other experimental conditions.



Exist - neutral existential

exist-res - resultative existential

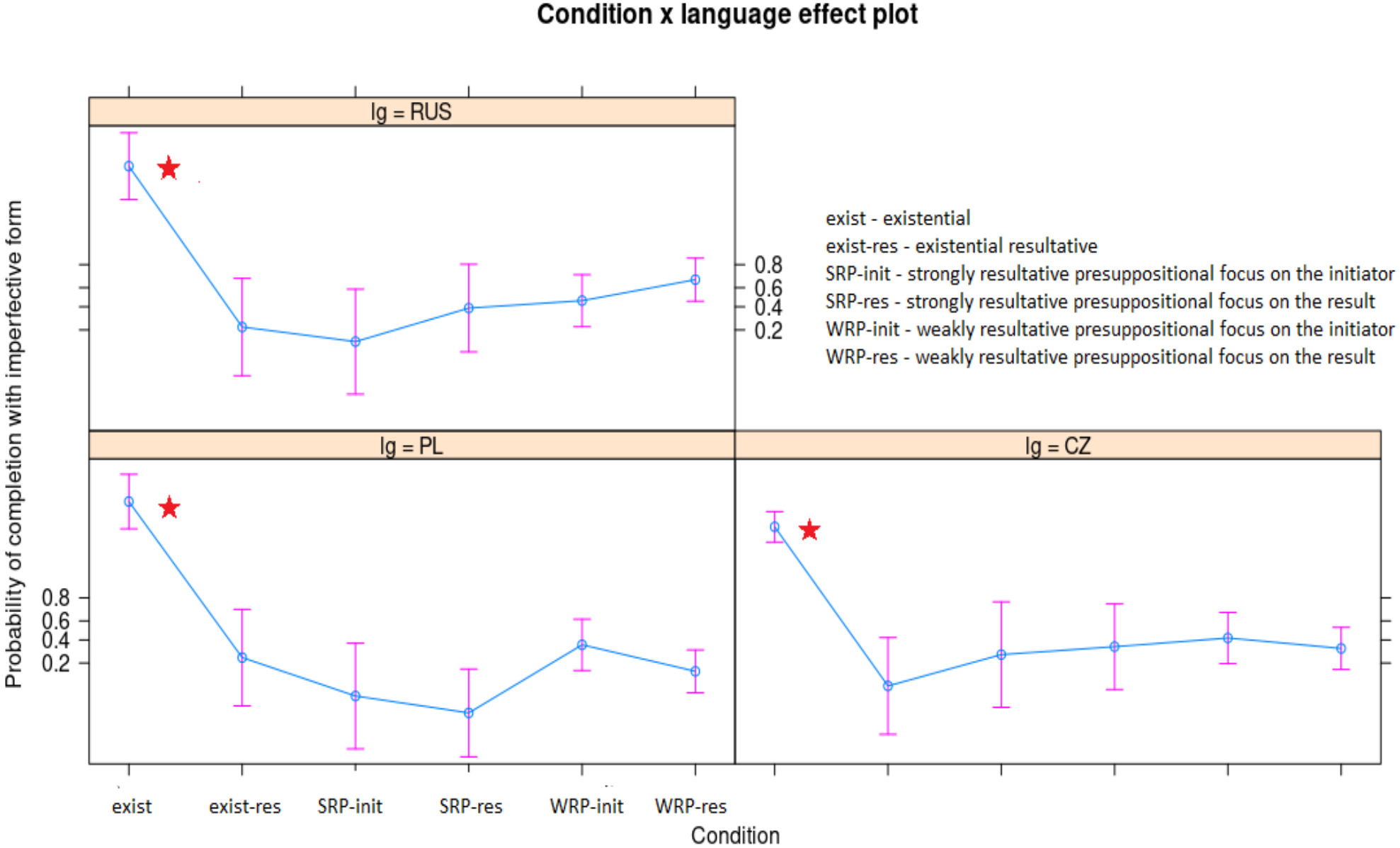
SRP-init - strongly resultative presuppositional focus on the initiator

SRP-res - strongly resultative presuppositional focus on the result

WRP-init - weakly resultative presuppositional focus on the initiator

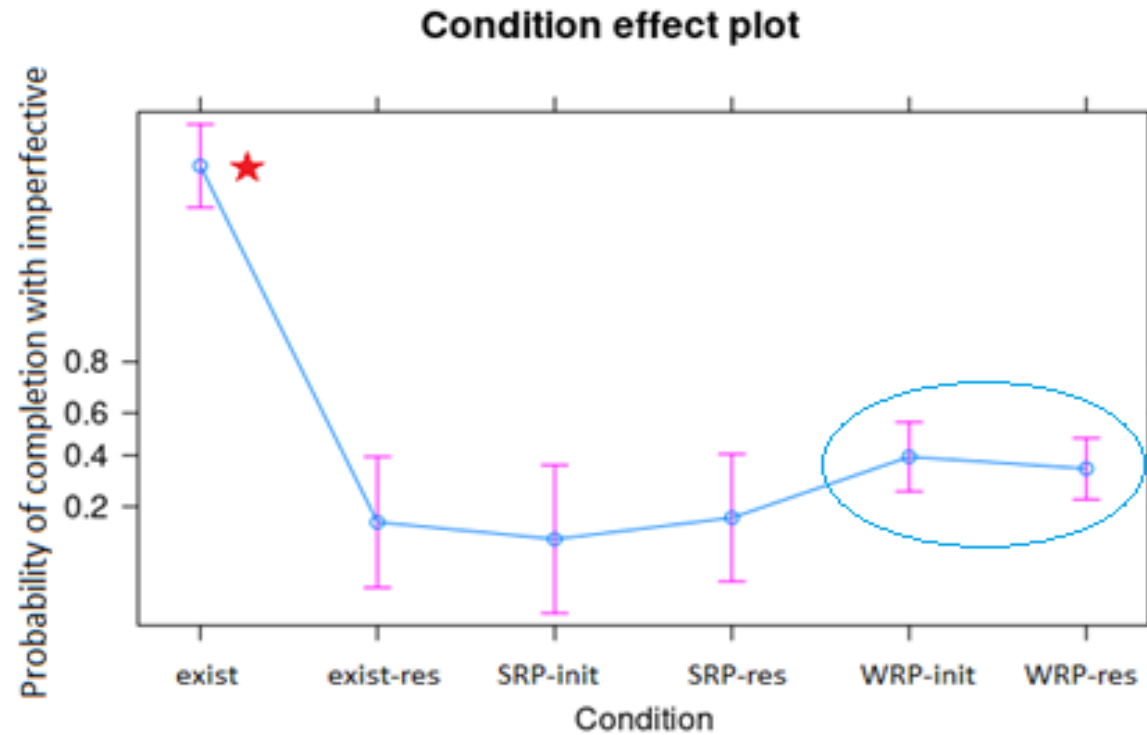
WRP-res - weakly resultative presuppositional focus on the result

However, no significant interaction effect between CONDITION and LANGUAGE was found ($\chi^2(10) = 14.8559$; $p = 0.13740$).



Results

Plots show a trend towards higher usage of imperfective in weakly resultative presuppositional contexts but it did not reach significance.



Russian	100	100	100	100	98	93	88	87	81	80	79	59	54	52	47	45	41	36	32	24	23	23	16	9	7	7	3	2	1
Czech	100	100	100	99	98	83	80	78	76	72	66	63	59	51	47	43	41	27	26	22	22	22	20	18	16	16	9	7	3
Polish	100	100	100	100	97	77	70	56	49	49	47	42	40	29	29	27	24	24	17	16	14	13	13	10	9	3	3	2	0

EXISTENTIAL



In most scenarios Russian featured a higher percentage of uses of imperfective. This contributed to its being significantly different from Czech and Polish.

RUSSIAN (percentage of uses of imperfective in tested contexts)

100	exist
100	exist
100	exist
100	exist
98	exist
93	exist-result
88	exist-result
87	WRP-init
81	WRP-result
80	WRP-result
79	WRP-result
59	SRP-init
54	WRP-result
47	WRP-init
45	SRP-init
41	WRP-init
36	SRP-init
32	WRP-init
24	WRP-result
23	WRP-init
22	exist-result
16	SRP-result
9	SRP-result
7	exist-result
7	SRP-result
3	exist-result
2	SRP-init
1	exist-result

Notice, that in most factual imperfective (except for the neutral existential contexts), both imperfective and perfective aspect can be used.

Sometimes one form is more preferred than the other.

All of these contexts are temporally indefinite (even the presuppositional ones) but they differ in the strenght of their resultativity.

TEMPORAL INDEFINITENESS AND RESULTATIVITY may coexist.

Sometimes a given context makes temporal indefiniteness more relevant, sometimes its resultative character is contextually more relevant.

The more resultative a given context was the more choices of perfective.

It seems that in these contexts imperfective is used to express temporal indefiniteness and perfective the resultative nature of the event in general factual contexts.

QUESTION: How to explain the tense-like behavior of imperfective aspect?

Perfect-like factual imperfectives

Łaziński (2020:118)

General factual context connect the opposition of tense and resultativity and are therefore closer to the category of PERFECT.

Relevant facts from Bulgarian and Macedonian

In Bulgarian and Macedonian most respondents opted for PERFECTUM in the tested contexts. In Bulgarian and Macedonian PERFECTUM may come with both perfective and imperfective *I*-participle. In existential contexts, Bulgarian and Macedonian speakers used mainly PERFECTUM with an imperfective participle.

I wonder if John has ever **mowed** the lawn with a real scythe?

Bulgarian

Интересно, дали Жоро някога **е косил** тревата с истинска коса?

Macedonian

Интересно, дали Јан некогаш **косел** трева со вистинска коса?

IMPERFECTIVE BE-PERFECT

In third person singular, Macedonian respondents used a bare imperfective participle without a BE-auxiliary. What looks like an imperfective verb in Macedonian is an **UNDERCOVER BE-PERFECT**

NOTE: In more resultative contexts in my study my Bulgarian and Macedonian respondents used many perfective PERFECTS (with a be-auxiliary and a perfective *I*-participle).

Some relevant facts about imperfective PERFECTUM in Bulgarian

- Alexander and Zhobov (2009): where other Slavic languages eliminated the aorist and imperfect in favor of a single past tense form based on the old perfect, Bulgarian has retained all of these tenses in active use.
- This perfect-like form with an imperfective participle is also called conclusive mood (indicating that one's source of information is based on one's powers of deduction: one arrives at a conclusion about the information in question from evidence). However, Alexander and Zhobov (2009) provided evidence that younger speakers use the imperfect participle not in the meaning "conclusive", but in this broader meaning—of a generalized past tense with imperfective aspectual connotation. (Acknowledgement to Vesela Simeanova for suggesting this source to me).

Some relevant facts about imperfective PERFECTUM in Bulgarian

- Additionally, my Bulgarian and Macedonian respondents did not use IMPERFECT in my tested contexts.
- This suggests, that imperfective in the remaining Slavic languages has a much broader distribution than IMPERFECT in Bulgarian and Macedonian. In my opinion it is because some of “our” uses of imperfective are the remnants of imperfective PERFECT.
- PERFECTS in Bulgarian are called indefinite past tenses.
- Conclusion: In some of its uses (for example in many factual imperfective contexts) imperfective in Polish, Czech and Russian acts as an UNDERCOVER IMPERFECTIVE PERFECTUM and it expresses temporal indefiniteness of the past event.
- This explains its temporal function of locating an event at an indefinite point in time.

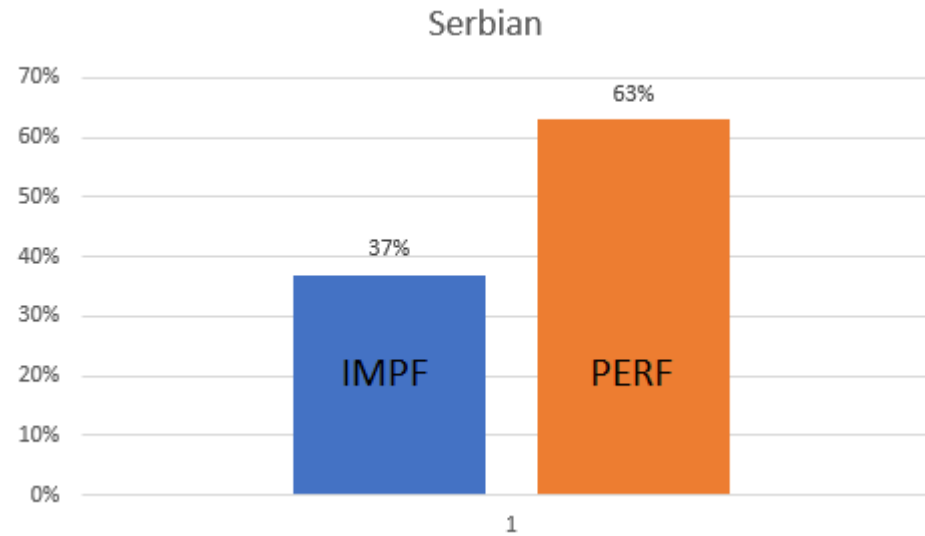
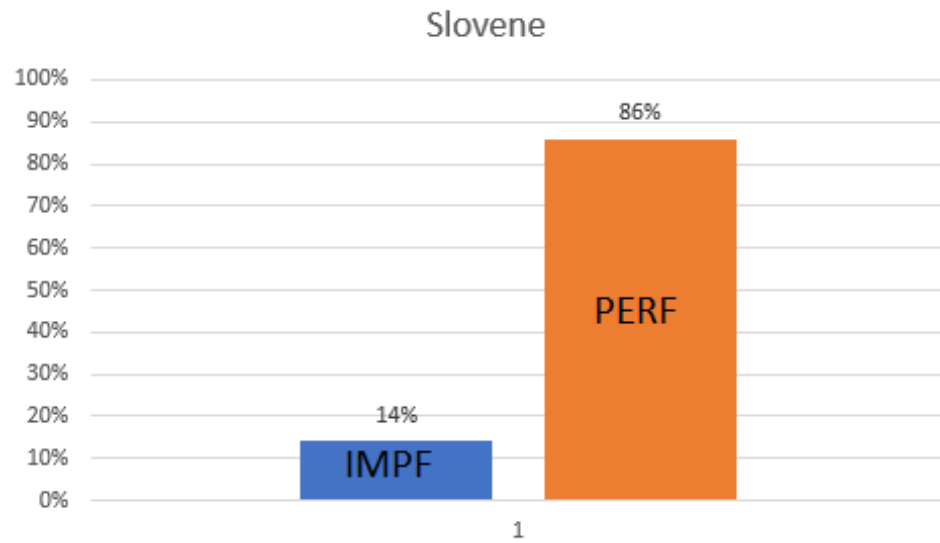
Imperfective as an undercover imperfective PERFECTUM

- But, why is imperfective more often used in Russian in factual contexts as compared to Polish and Czech?
- According to Dickey (2015) after the collapse of the old tense system, the temporal distinctions coded originally by aorist, imperfect and perfect tenses were taken over by perfective and imperfective aspect forms.
- It is likely that the use of imperfective in general factual contexts was a way of compensating for the loss of the PERFECT: PRETERIT opposition in Late Church Slavonic.

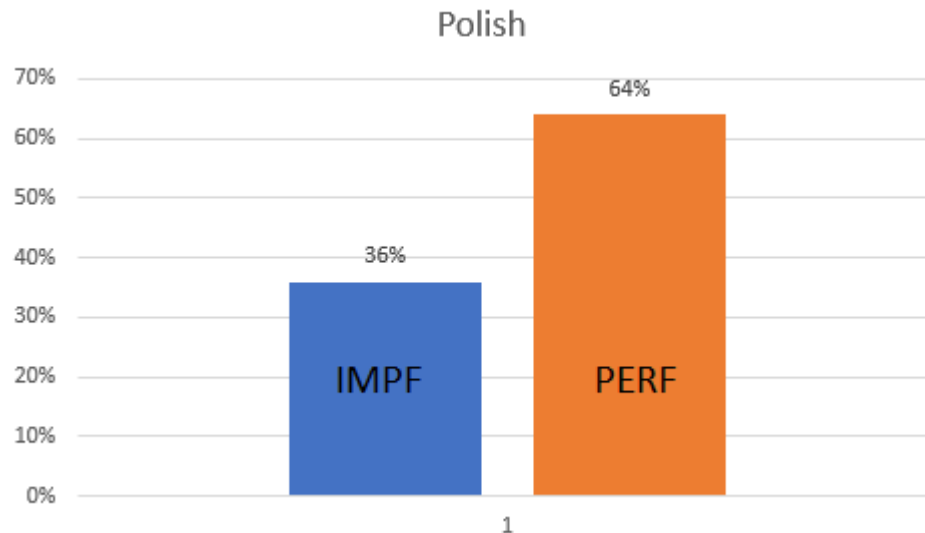
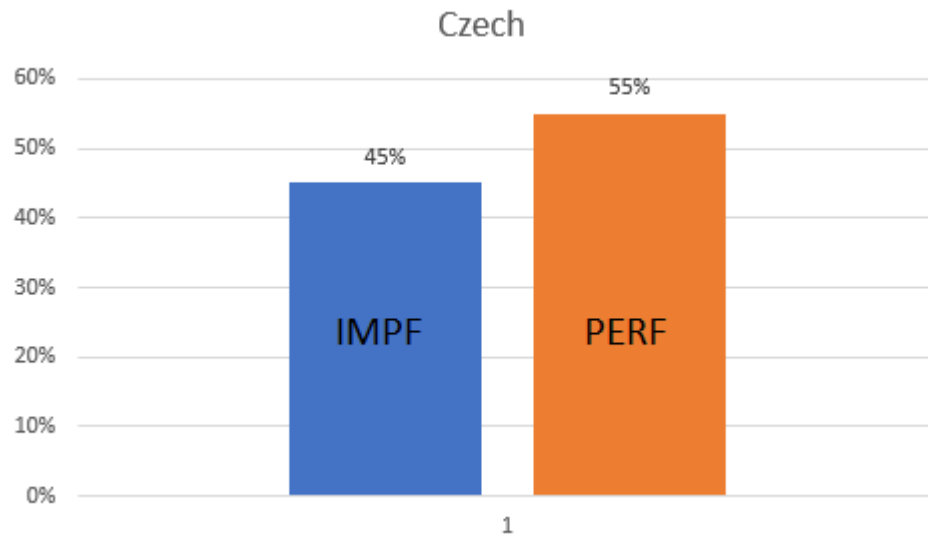
Diachronic facts

- According to Dickey (2015): It is also likely that there is a correlation between the time when a given Slavic language lost the PERFECT: PRETERIT opposition and the amount of usage of imperfective in general factual contexts.
- In Russian the loss of the PERFECT:PRETERIT opposition took place earlier (12th century). Czech retained this distinction in the third-person compound preterit until the end of the sixteenth century.
- So there is a correlation between the early or late loss of the PERFECT: PRETERIT distinction and a shift of functions of the older temporal system to the new two-way perfective-imperfective aspectual opposition.
- In East Slavic the early loss of the PERFECT:PRETERIT distinction led to a broader usage of imperfective in general factual contexts.

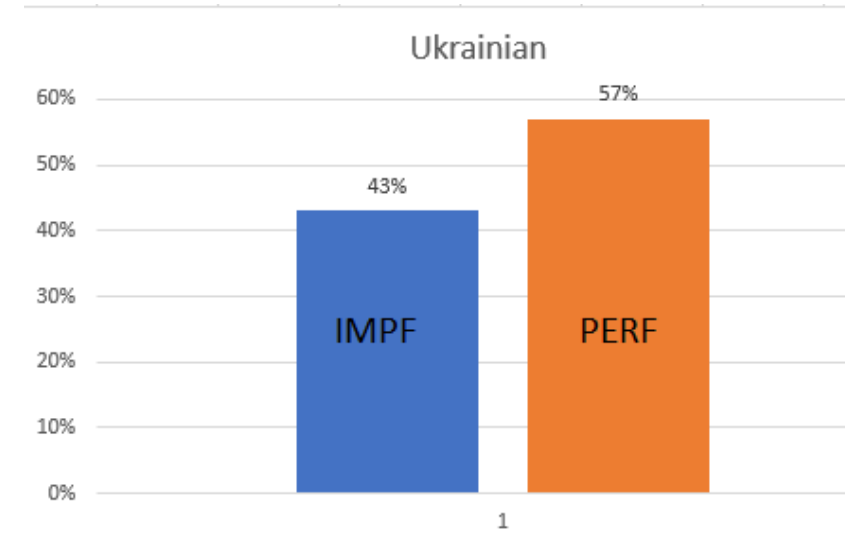
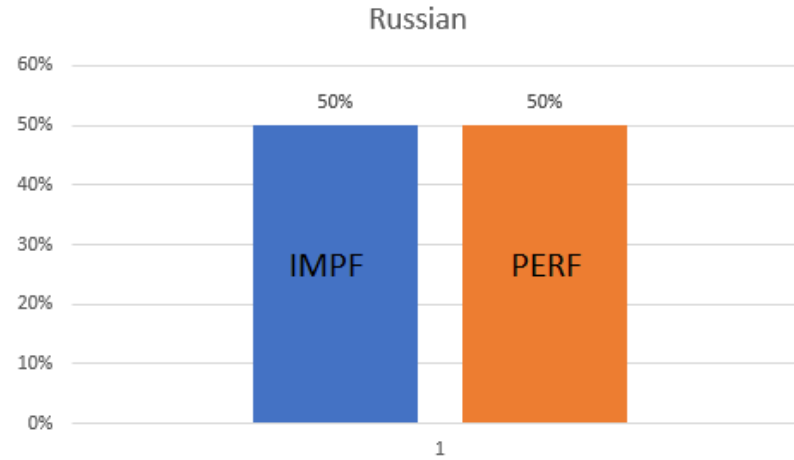
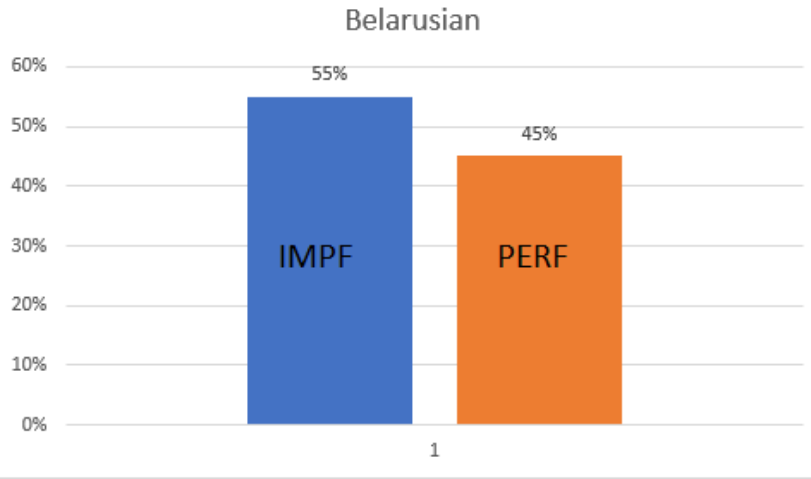
Other Slavic languages (preliminary results)



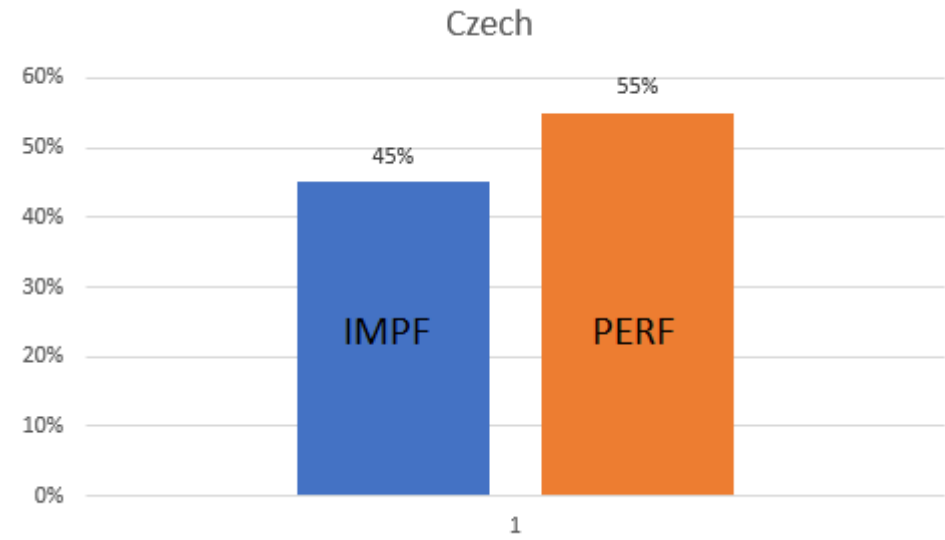
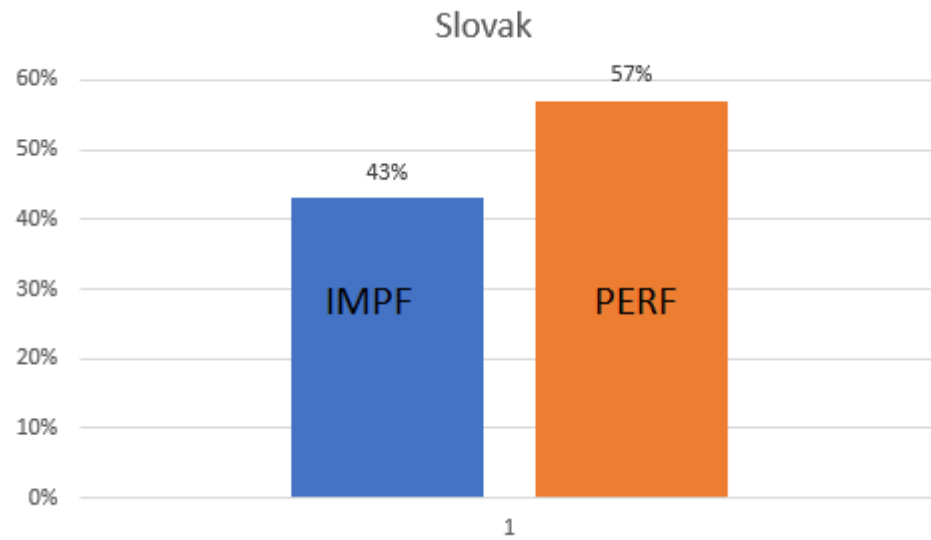
Slovene is the new extreme. How to explain it?



Other Slavic languages (preliminary results)



Other Slavic languages (preliminary results)



Preliminary account

Belarusian and Slovene are new extremes in this micro-typology.

Dickey (2015) points to intensive periods of language contact with German in Slovenia.

Maybe, under this influence, after the collapse of the PERFECT:PRETERIT distinction, Slovene compensated for the underpsecification of the temporal indefiniteness (earlier expressed by means of PERFECT) with the use of undercover perfective PERFECTUM.

Formal account based on Ramchand (2008)

Why Ramchand (2008)? Because she also makes use of the notion of temporal in/definiteness in her theory of tense and aspect.

The event building phase contains three subevental components. Each of these subevents is represented as its own projection, ordered hierarchically and each of them has an event participant projected in the specifier position.

a causing (initiation) subevent



The 'subject' of cause → INITIATOR

a process subevent



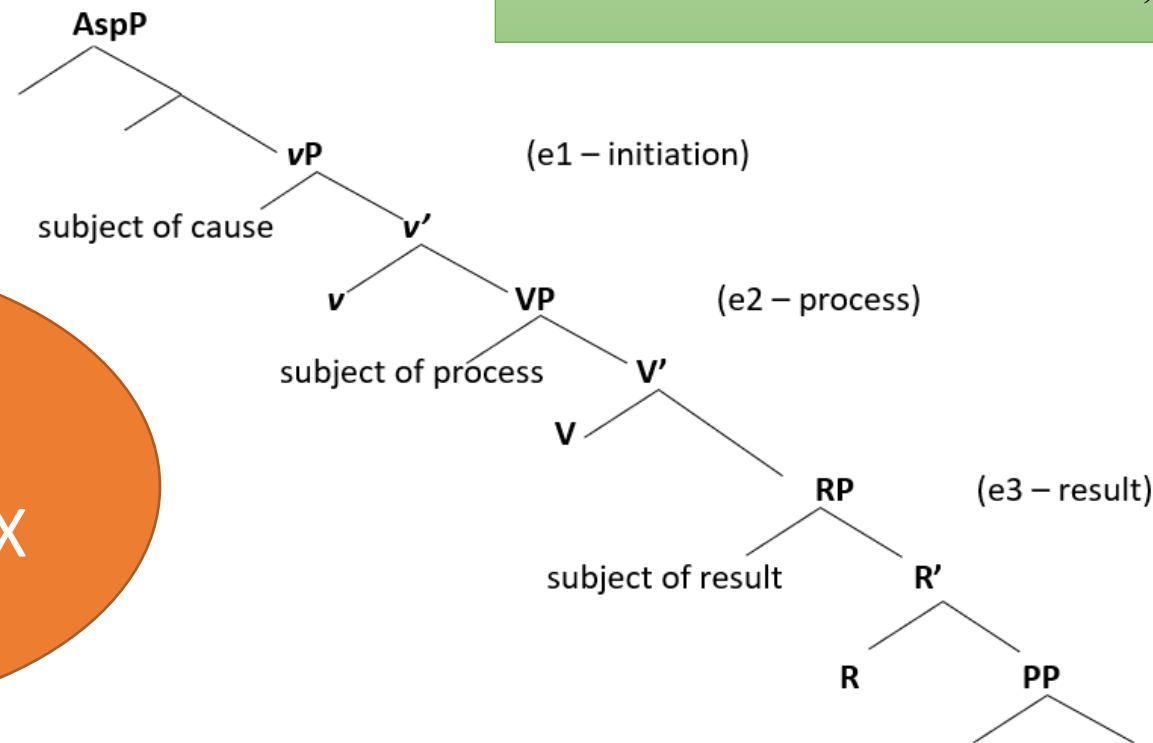
The subject of process → UNDERGOER

a subevent corresponding to a result state



The subject of result → RESULTEE (the holder of a 'result')

THE FIRST
PHASE SYNTAX



The second phase syntax → time variable

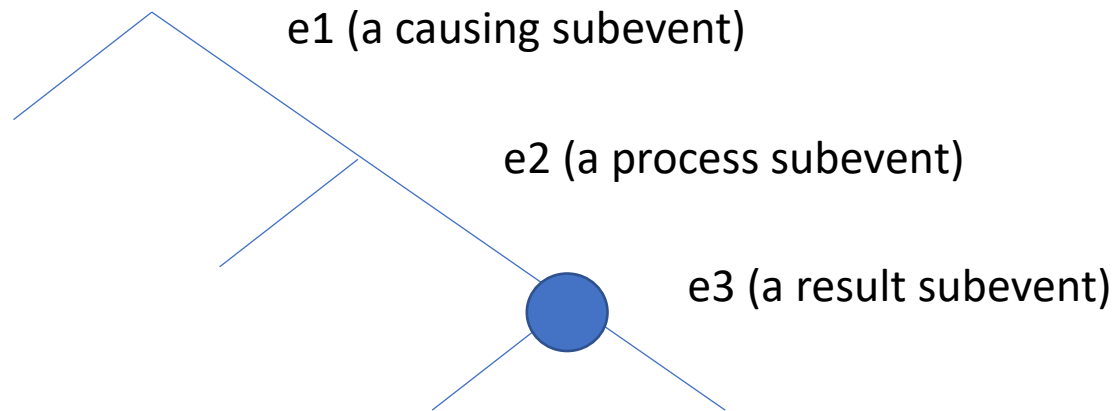
The second phase introduces **a time variable** at the level of **AspP**.

An innovation in Ramchand's (2008 a) proposal is that the time variable introduced in AspP is **a time instant (not an interval)**.

The time variable is located with respect to a temporal trace of an event $\tau(e)$ and with respect to the moment of speech (at TP)

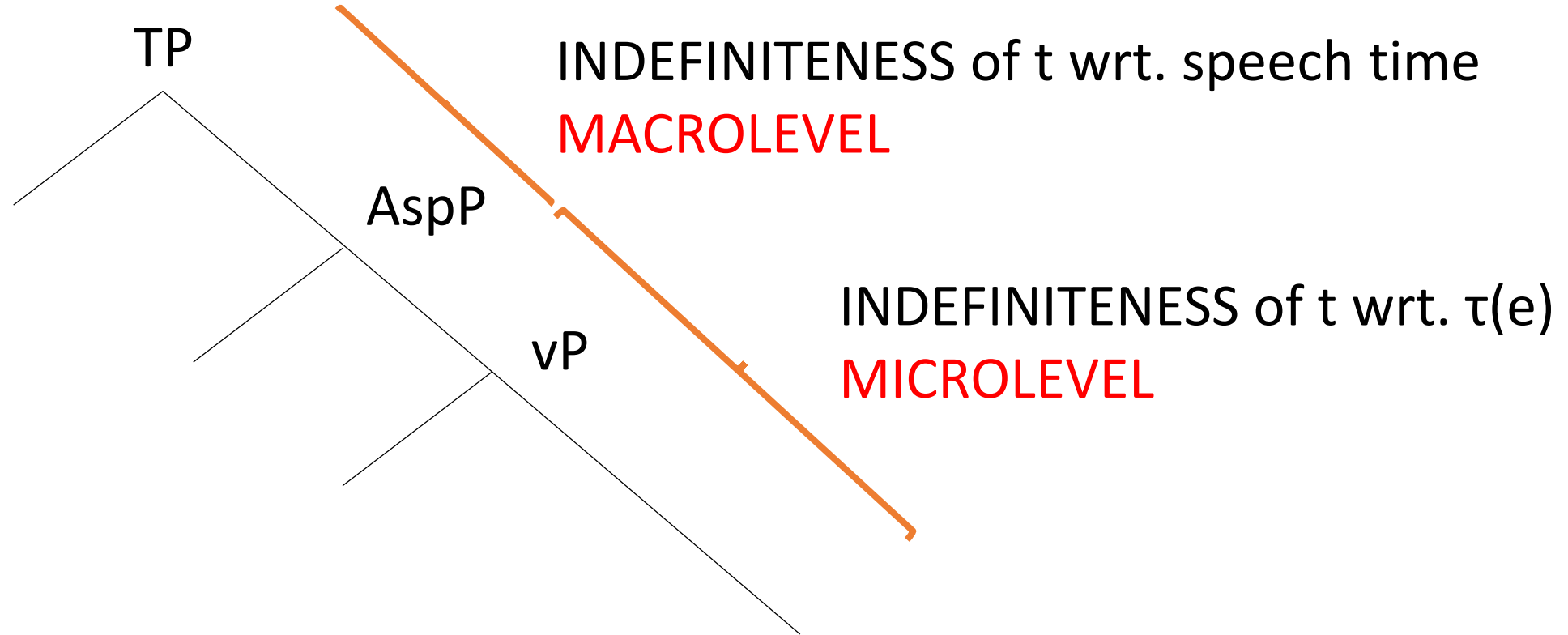
- **PERFECTIVE ASPECT** introduces a **definite reference time (a specific moment within the temporal trace of the event)**
- **IMPERFECTIVE ASPECT** introduces an **indefinite reference time (an arbitrary moment within the temporal trace of the event).**

- According to Ramchand (2008): when the Result subevent is present in the first phase syntax, the time variable t must be part of the process subevent and part of the result subevent → the single unique transition point between the two subevents → DEFINITE TIME POINT



In Ramchand's (2008 a) system, there are two kinds of (in)definiteness of the temporal variable:

- (i) (in)definiteness with respect to the temporal trace of an event
- (ii) (in)definiteness of t with respect to the Speech Time (see Ramchand 2008 a: 1701).



How to explain optionality and variation in the choice of perfective and imperfective aspect factual imperfective contexts?

- In Ramchand's (2008 a) (an extension of the Distributed Morphology view), the spell-out domain is either vP or CP (see Chomsky 2004, 2005a,b).
- Since both types of (in)definiteness of t are established before CP, perfective and imperfective Vocabulary Items compete for insertion at the level of CP. The choice of the aspectual form may depend on very subtle nuances of context and on what kind of (in)definiteness is more relevant in a given scenario.
- This competition between in/definiteness at the micro and macrolevel may be solved differently in different Slavic languages.

How to link Ramchand's (2008) temporal in/definiteness with the facts of variation in Slavic?

After the loss of the PERFECT:PRETERIT distinction in most Slavic languages, the temporal indefiniteness at the macrolevel was left underspecified.

Different Slavic languages solved this underspecification differently.

Some of the uses of perfective are the remnants of perfective PERFECTUM and some of the uses of imperfective are the remnants of imperfective PERFECTUM.

Russian, Czech, Polish, (Slovak, Slovene, Serbian, Ukrainian, Belarusian)

MACROLEVEL

IMPERFECTIVE

INDEFINITETENESS of t wrt. Speech Time



UNDERCOVER IMPERFECTIVE PERFECTUM

PERFECTIVE

INDEFINITETENESS of t wrt. Speech Time



UNDERCOVER PERFECTIVE PERFECTUM

MICROLEVEL

IMPERFECTIVE

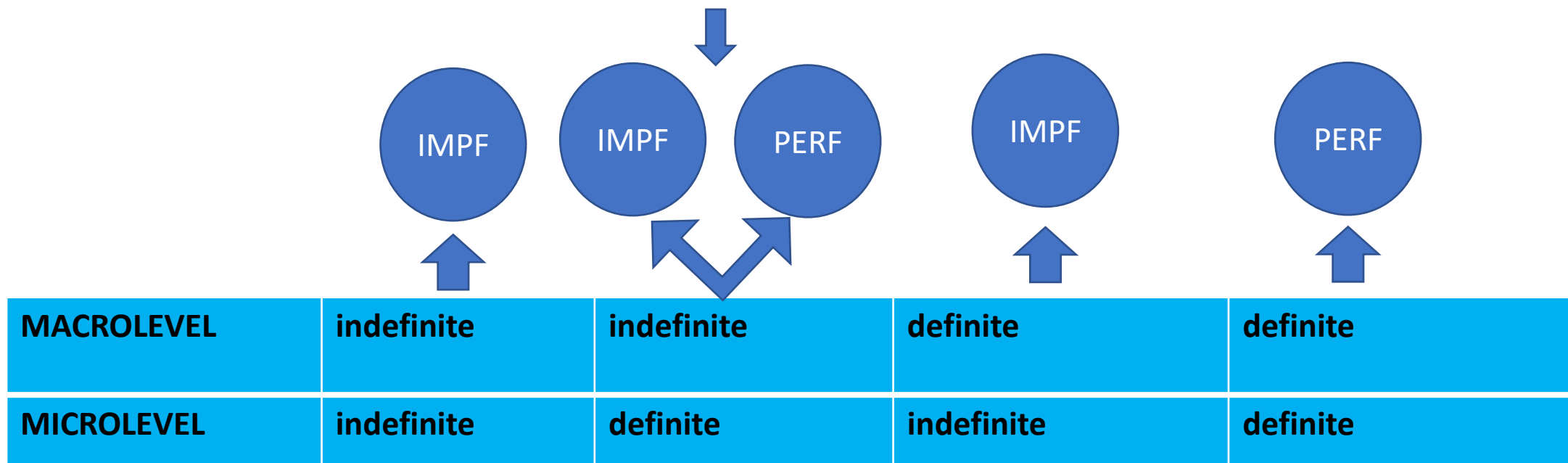
INDEFINITETENESS of t wrt. $\tau(e)$

PERFECTIVE

DEFINITETENESS of t wrt. $\tau(e)$

Russian, Czech, Polish

INTERFACE CONDITIONS (CONTEXT, WORLD KNOWLEDGE) AFFECT ASPECT CHOICES IN THIS MISMATCHING SCENARIO. THEY MAY DO IT DIFFERENTLY IN DIFFERENT LANGUAGES → CROSS-LINGUISTIC VARIATION

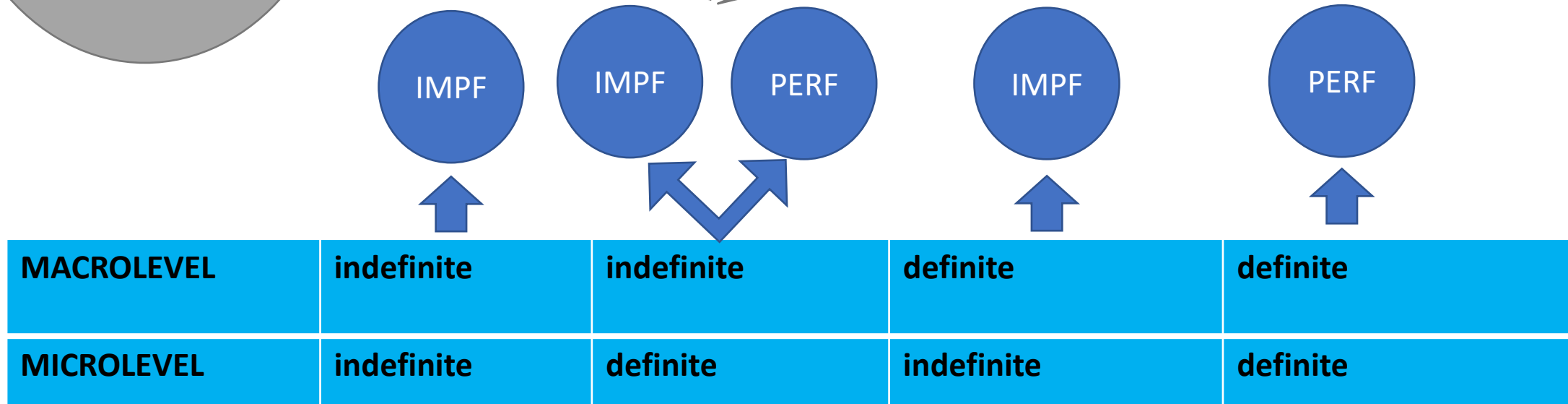


Russian, Czech, Polish

In this scenario, Slovene opts mainly for perfective. This use of perfective is the remnant of perfective PERFECTUM.

In this scenario, Russian is more likely to opt for imperfective than Polish and Czech. This use of imperfective is the remnant of imperfective PERFECTUM.

In this scenario, Bulgarian opts for perfective PERFECTUM or imperfective PERFECTUM depending on what is more contextually relevant (temporal indefiniteness or resultativity).



Conclusions

In the tested contexts, Russian showed a significantly higher proportion of imperfective uses in general factual contexts than Polish and Czech (which is compatible with Dickey 2000, 2015). Czech is closer to Russian than Polish. Belarussian and Slovene are likely candidates to become our new extremes in the east-west aspect division.

In Russian, Czech and Polish neutral existential contexts elicited significantly more imperfective choices than all the remaining tested conditions but Russian generally used more imperfectives in most of the tested contexts. It is due to their unambiguous temporal indefiniteness and lack of focus on the result.

Conclusions

- Proposal: There are two main driving factors determining aspect choices in general factual contexts in Slavic: temporal indefiniteness and resultativity.
- After the loss of PERFECT-PRETERIT the temporal indefiniteness (earlier expressed by PERFECT) was left underspecified.
- Different Slavic languages compensated for this loss of PERFECT with imperfective or perfective aspect.
- Russian solved the underspecification in temporal indefiniteness with imperfective to a greater extent than west Slavic languages (in Russian the loss of the PERFECT-PRETERIT opposition took place very early).
- Some of the uses of imperfective in Russian, Czech and Polish (especially the ones in general factual contexts) are undercover imperfective PERFECTS and some of the uses of perfective in these languages are undercover perfective PERFECTS.

THANK YOU

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