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PERFECT AND PERFECTIVE STATE

As was noticed by many authors, Past Perfect Tense in English may have two different uses; see, e.g. Kamp 1991, Mittwoch 1993. In Mittwoch 1993 these two uses were illustrated by the following example

- (1) a. When I phoned Mary *had* (already) *left*;
b. (I phoned at seven.) Mary *had left* at six this morning.

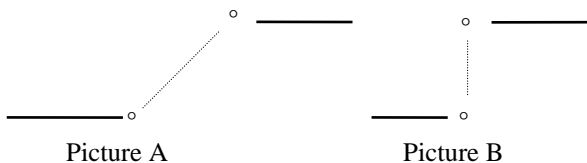
In this paper we propose an analysis of the semantic opposition in example (1) alternative to that suggested in Mittwoch 1993. We shall take into consideration co-occurrence restrictions between Tense-Aspect form and adverbial modifiers of time stated in Panevova, Sgall 1975; co-occurrence of the Past and the Present Perfect with adverbials is discussed at length in Leech 1971/1975. Reichenbach's distinction between time of event and time of reference will be of primary importance, and here we use some observations from Panevova, Sgall 1974.

Explications of several basic notions are at place.

1. Reichenbach 1947 is not very definite about Reichenbach's famous point of Reference - this term may be understood not only in the meaning of the vantage point from which the event is viewed (which is the most interesting of Reichenbach's innovations), but also as the time point that helps temporal localisation of the Event, see, e.g., Comrie 1981, Bertinetto 1986 on this double usage of the term "point of Reference". We shall use Reichenbach's term only in the first of the afore-mentioned meanings. Concerning the notion of referential time of an adverbial see Paducheva 1988, 1992; cf. also Leech 1971/1975.
2. Reichenbach's notion of point of Reference, though it produced a revolution in semantics of Tense and Aspect, lacks intuitive justification. Using the notion of the Observer introduced in Apresjan 1986, we shall interpret the point of Reference as the time of the Observer. The

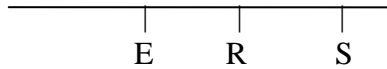
Observer is not needed for the interpretation of any linguistic entity. In fact, the Observer may coincide with the Speaker (i.e. the Speaker may be the only conscientious subject involved in the semantic interpretation of the form). The Observer comes into play, for example, when in traditional descriptions it is said that the Speaker places himself into a moment of time not coinciding with the moment of Speech, i.e. with the present moment of the Speaker. Leech uses the term ‘point of orientation’, which means "either the present moment - the moment 'now' when the speaker is actually speaking, or (sometimes) the moment at which he imagines himself to be speaking.", see Leech 1971/1975, p.39. In this latter case the Speaker and the Observer diverge. Deixis in the narrative text (secondary, or narrative deixis) is oriented towards the Observer and not the Speaker, see Paducheva 1993a.

3. There is a class of verbs that can be categorized as denoting an event with a well defined resulting state (the event always is a transition into a new state). The change of state may concern some of the participants of the situation (e.g., *to warm X* = ‘to make X warm’) or the world, as in case of verbs of coming into existence or of causing existence, e.g., *to build a house*. The situation described by such a verb may be represented as having the structure A, for accomplishments, as *to build a house*, or B, for achievements, such as *to arrive*:



In both cases a new state arises as a result of the event described by the verb. Let us call it the Resulting State of the event; for example, 'a house exists' is the Resulting State of the event 'John has built a house'. The Resulting State is one of the stages of the event. The preceding stage can be called Transition. The Transition and the Resulting State are in relation of temporal (and also space) contiguity.

With these distinctions in mind we now return to example (1). Both sentences of example (1) by one and the same Reichenbach’s scheme (E, S, R stand here for time of Event, time of Speech and time of Reference correspondingly):



What is important for all Perfect tenses is that the point of Reference (the temporal position of the Observer) coincides with one definite stage of the event - namely, with its Resulting State. This fact can be explicitly expressed with the help of our pictures A and B, but cannot be represented by Reichenbach style schemes.

Now what differentiates sentences (1a) and (1b) from one another is that in (1a) the point of reference, i.e. the temporal position of the Observer (from which he/she contemplates the event) is specified by the adverbial modifier (*when...* ; this modifier thus specifying not the time of event but the time when the Resulting state of the event was still there); while in (1b) the vantage point is specified by the preceding context (the modifier *at six* specifying the time of event and thus having nothing to do with the choice of the Past Perfect. Indeed, in (1b) the Tense would be the same if the adverbial were absent - which is not the case with (1a). Leech labels sentences like (1a) as having the meaning 'then' while sentences like (1b) as 'before then'.

Note. In Paducheva 1986 a similar kind of split of the event was proposed in order to differentiate Past Perfective and Past Imperfective in Russian, cf., e.g., the difference between *prochital* (as in *Ja prochital etu knigu*) and *chital* (*Ja chital etu knigu*). In Mittwoch 1993 the split is proposed only for sentence (1a). We believe it to be relevant for (1b) as well.

Now let me demonstrate what useful consequences (both for English and for other languages) can be drawn from the analysis we propose, namely, from the split of the event into the Transition stage (the event proper) and the Resulting state.

1) The co-occurrence restriction discussed in Mittwoch 1993, as in

(2) *When I phoned Mary *had left* an hour ago,

is easily explained by the following Rule of single localisation that sounds quite natural by itself:

Rule of single localisation. An event described by a sentence of a natural language may have only one type of time localisation (expressed by an adverb or by a Tense-Aspect form) - either this is the localisation of the time of Transition (i.e. of the event itself) or of the Resulting State, but not both. Now in (2) the event of Mary's leaving is already localised by means of localisation of its Resulting state; and this localisation is

reflected in that the form of the Perfect Aspect is selected for the verb. This is why the localisation of the event itself (namely, of the Transition point) is out of place in the context of sentence (2).

2) The same Rule of single localisation explains why the Present Perfect form of a verb does not co-occur with past-time adverbials (a well known restriction that must be learned by all those who study English as a foreign language). Cf. example from Mittwoch 1993:

(3) *Mary *has left* an hour ago.

Indeed, Present Perfect localises the Resulting State of the event (being the Perfect Aspect form) as coinciding with the moment of speech (being the Present Tense form). This is why time localisation of the event itself is impossible according to the Rule of single localisation. Thus, the time adverbial is out of place in this context. The Observer in this case coincides with the Speaker. With Simple Past the localisation of the Observer is not specified, cf.

(4) A year ago Mary *left* this country.

3) The Rule of single localisation also gives an explanation of why Present Perfect co-occurs with adverbials referring to the present time: they all localise the Resulting State (as is required by the form of Perfect), and not the Transition, so our of Single Localisation Rule is not violated:

(5) Mary *has left* for the US to-day.

It is obvious that an adverbial co-occurring with the Present Perfect must be deictical - namely, its referential interval must include the moment of Speech, see Paducheva 1992.

It is noteworthy that in Russian time adverbials referring to the Present moment may co-occur with verbs in the Past Tense of the Perfective Aspect but do not co-occur with verbs in the Imperfective Aspect:

(6) a. My *sejchas izmenili* [Past Pfv] porjadok oformlenija dokumentov

'We have now changed the order of processing the documents' ;

b. *My *sejchas menjali* [Past Ipfv] porjadok oformlenija dokumentov

'We were now changing the order of processing the documents' .

In fact, a Perfective verb in Russian denotes a situation one stage of which - namely, its Resulting State - is unfolding at the present moment. Note that a verb in the Imperfective may co-occur with *sejchas*, but then it must be a word with a different meaning - either not deictical (*On ponimal, chto sejchas ot nego trebovalos'*) or not referring to the present time (*Ja sejchas razgovarival s direktorom = 'just now'*), see Mel'chuk

1985, Paducheva 1996: 271.

4) Reichenbach gives illuminating examples of how the notion of point of Reference may be used in order to explain co-occurrence restrictions of verbal forms and adverbial time modifiers. For example,

(7) *He *had* already *mailed* the letter when I have come

is impossible because of the following contradiction: the Present Perfect *have come* places the Observer at the Moment of Speech, while the Past Perfect *had* <*already*> *mailed* requires that the Observer be in the past.

Reichenbach was, perhaps, mistaken in assuming that the point of Reference takes part in characterisation of all tenses. For example, it is evidently a mistake to postulate a synchronous Observer for the Simple Past Tense. When trying to express the difference between the Present Perfect and the Simple Past Reichenbach is right in asserting that the Present Perfect form presents the Past as looked upon from the Present. But we must bear in mind that with the Simple Past the Observer is also in the Present. Thus, Reichenbach's opposition

(I) Simple Past: E,R - S; **(II) Present Perfect:** E - S,R

(where “-” denotes precedence and “,” denotes simultaneity) does not hold: while scheme (II) is good for the Present Perfect, scheme (I) is not good for the Simple Past. In fact, scheme (I), with its Observer synchronous to the Event, must be reserved for the Past Progressive.

What really differentiates the Present Perfect from the Simple Past is the fact that with the Present Perfect the situation denoted by the verb form is splitted into the Transition stage and the Resulting state, while with the Simple Past the Resulting state is either irrelevant or does not last any more at the moment of Speech. In any case, the persistence of the Resulting state at the moment of Speech is not marked grammatically.

In Russian the corresponding meaning difference can be expressed by the opposition of the Imperfective resultative (the so called “obshchefacticheskoe”), as in (8a), and the Perfective, as in (8b):

8) a. Ja *chital* [Ipfv] etu povest' [lit. "I was reading this novel"]

(the fact that I've read it to the end is nothing more than an invited inference);

b. Ja *prochital* [Pfv] etu povest' 'I have read this novel'.

If there are no explicit markers of the opposite, sentence (8b) means that the Resulting State is preserved at the moment of speech, while sentence (8a) - that it is not; in particular, the meaning of (8a) is often

described as bearing a connotation that the event took place long ago.

5) The notion of the Resulting state of the event allows us to have one and the same meaning definition for the Perfect in the Present, Past and Future Tense. Reichenbach's analysis presents Present Perfect as semantically different both from the Past and the Future Perfect: according to Reichenbach, in the Present Perfect the point of Reference coincides with the moment of Speech while in the Simple Past the point of Reference precedes the moment of Speech being itself in the past. So Perfect has no semantic invariant. Our analysis suggests that in the semantics of the Perfect the point of Reference coincides with the Resulting State of the event both in the Present and the Past or Future tense.

Let me note in conclusion that the Rule of single localisation, though it looks plausible, is not universal. For example, in Russian there are good reasons to believe that Past (and Passive) Participles of the type *prodan* 'sold', *vzjat* 'taken', when used without an auxiliary verb - in the Present Tense - behave much like Present Perfect forms in English:

- (9) a. *Kartina prodana* 'The picture has been sold';
 b. **Vchera kartina prodana* '*Yesterday the picture has been sold'.

But in Russian the restriction on the co-occurrence of the Perfective form with Past time adverbial holds only for adverbials in the thematic position - rhematic past time modifiers aren't prohibited:

- (9) c. *Kartina prodana vchera* [lit. 'The picture has been sold yesterday'].

So we have right to conjecture that in (9c) the Perfect aspect form of the verb characterises the time of the resulting state, while the past tense Adverbial localises the moment of transition.

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