
DONVM SEMANTICVM

OPERA LINGVISTICA ET LOGICA IN HONOREM BARBARAE PARTEE A DISCIPVLIS
AMICISQVE ROSSICIS OBLATA

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Abbreviations

1	First person	GEN	genitive
2	Second person	I	noun class I
3	Third person	II	noun class II
AA	animate attributive	III	noun class III
ABL	ablative	IN	in
ABS	absolute	INF	infinitive
ACC	accusative	INS	instrumental
ACT	active	IPF	imperfective
AFF	affective	IRR	irrealis
AGR	agreement	IV	noun class IV
ALL	allative	LOC	locative
AOBL	oblique attributive	M	masculine
AOR	aorist	N	noun
ATTR	attributive	NDIR	non-directed
AUX	auxiliary	NEG	negative
CNT	count	NEUT	neuter
COM	comitative	NH	non-human
COP	copula	NOM	nominative
CVB	converb	OBL	oblique
D	determiner	P	adposition
DAT	dative	PA	active participle
DEF	definite	PFV	perfective
DEM	demonstrative	PFX	prefix
DU	dual	PL	plural
EL	elative	POSS	possessive
ERG	ergative	PRED	predicative
F	feminine	PRS	present
FUT	future	PRT	particle

PST	past	TOP	topic
PTCP	participle	TR	transitive
REFL	reflexive	V	verb
SG	singular	VBE	existential verb
SUPERS	superessive	VEXP	experiential verb

On the quantification of events

Ivan Kapitonov

Quantification is perceived as a phenomenon characteristic of the nominal domain. Determiners, prototypically involved in building generalised quantifiers, syntactically combine with nominal elements. The things that constitute the D_I are typically expressed by nominals. However, they are not the only things that can be quantified over. The present paper discusses the quantification of events and an analogy between locative sentences in the spatial and temporal domains, in the spirit of Partee's (1973, 1984) observations of analogies between tenses and pronouns.

8.1 The *na*-construction in Greek

In a recent paper, Iatridou (2014) discusses semantics of a particular verbal construction in Modern Greek:¹

- (1) Echo tria chronia na dho ton Mano.
 have.1SG.PRS three years na see.1SG the.ACC manos.ACC
 'The last time I saw Manos was three years ago.'

This construction demonstrates a number of interesting properties. It carries an existential presupposition of the event described in the *na*-clause. The presuppositional status of the existence inference is evidenced by the fact that it is not cancellable and projects from under operators such as negation and questions. The assertion is about the length of the period from the last occurrence of the event to the utterance time (or, more correctly, reference time). Iatridou compares the *na*-construction with the negated Perfect (2a) and

¹ All Greek examples are from Iatridou 2014, with her transliteration and glosses.

with what she calls the *since*-construction (2b) in English. She concludes that the negated Perfect is different because the existence inference is cancellable, hence is a conversational implicature. For the *since*-construction, see below.

- (2) a. I haven't visited Boston since 2010.
 b. It has been three years since the last Summer Olympics.

The Greek *na*-construction is a Perfect, i.e., semantically it is associated with a perfect time span (PTS; Iatridou, Anagnostopoulou & Izvorski 2001, Pancheva 2003). The left boundary (LB) is associated with the description in the *na*-clause, and the right boundary (RB), i.e., the *reference time* in Reichenbachian terminology, is modulated by tense. Iatridou uses the existential presupposition to distinguish between the *since*-construction and the *na*-construction. She shows the former to carry a uniqueness presupposition, thus being akin to definite descriptions. The event description in the *na*-construction, on the contrary, is neither definite nor specific. Rather, Iatridou argues that it includes free choice universal quantification over events. In what follows, I will use the shorthand EQ to refer to constructions of event quantification. She claims that *na*-construction instantiates U[niversal]-Perfect, i.e., the kind of Perfect where a statement holds of any subinterval of the PTS. The semantics that she provides for the construction is given in (3). Compositionality is left for future research.

- (3) $\forall t(t \in \text{PTS} \rightarrow (\forall_{FC} e(\text{na-clause}(e) \rightarrow (\exists i(i \neq \emptyset) \text{ between } e \text{ and } t)))$

Finally, where does the existential presupposition come from? Iatridou resorts to metaphorisation of time as space. A time interval is likened to a container that holds time like substance. The container, a space, is defined by its boundaries, and likewise the temporal interval is defined by its boundaries. As far as there is an interval, its boundaries are presupposed to exist. The event of the *na*-clause names the LB, and since that is presupposed to exist, existence of the event is presupposed as well.

8.2 Russian: same function, different form

Iatridou (2014) provides a basis for a broader crosslinguistic outlook. In what follows, I will contribute to that with observations of a construction in Russian in the light of Iatridou's ideas, and along the way I'll pick up a few related topics.

8.2.1 Aspectual composition

The construction in question is presented in (4):²

- (4) Ja ne videl zemletriasenija tri goda.
 I.NOM not see.3SG.PST earthquake.GEN three year.CNT
 ‘I haven’t seen an earthquake in/for three years.’

Although it looks like a negated perfect, there is an existential presupposition rather than an implicature, unlike what has been said about English. The sentence in (4) gives rise to the inference that I saw an earthquake before, and asserts that the specified time span lacks my seeing earthquakes. The inference cannot be cancelled:

- (5) Ja ne videl zemletriasenija tri goda. #Da i voobsche
 I.NOM not see.SG.M.PST earthquake.GEN three year.CNT PRT and in.general
 nikogda ne videl.
 never not see.SG.M.PST
 ‘I haven’t seen an earthquake in/for three years. #And actually I never saw any.’

Thus the existence of an event described by the VP is not implicated. It is not asserted either: it projects out of questions (6) and negation (7) (on projection see Karttunen (1973), Potts (2015: §2), and references therein):

- (6) Kak davno ty ne xodila v gory?
 how long you.NOM.SG not go.SG.F.PST in mountain.PL.ACC
 ‘How long have you not been to the mountains?’

² With a different word order the construction allows an optional temporal complementizer *kak* ‘as’/‘when’ (i), without any obvious effect on meaning.

(i) (Ja) tri goda kak (ja) ego ne videl.
 (I.NOM) three year.CNT as (I) he.ACC not see.PST
 ‘It’s three years since I saw him last.’

It is probable that such a configuration renders the event description as the complement of the adverbial. I’m leaving these data for future research.

- (7) Nepravda, chto ja ne pil vodku tri dnia! {Ja
false that I.NOM not drink.SG.M.PST vodka.ACC three day.CNT {I
vchera pil. / Ja uzhe nedeliu ne pil! /#Ja
yesterday drink.SG.M.PST / I already week.ACC not drink.SG.M.PST / I
nikogda v rot ne bral!}
never in mouth not take.SG.M.PST
'It's not true that I didn't drink vodka for three days. {I drank yesterday! / I
haven't drunk for a week! / #I never even tried it!}

We are led to conclude that the existence of the event is a presupposition. The presupposition seems to be a feature of the construction as a whole: if the temporal adjunct is substituted for a different one or completely removed, not only can the inference be cancelled, it is gone:

- (8) Ja ne videl zemletriasenija (za tri goda) v Los-Angelese,
I.NOM not see.3SG.PST earthquake.GEN in three year.CNT in LA
gde uzh tam govorit' o Moskve!
where PRT there talk.INF about Moscow
'I haven't seen an earthquake (in three years) in Los Angeles, let alone Moscow.'
[⇒ I never saw any]

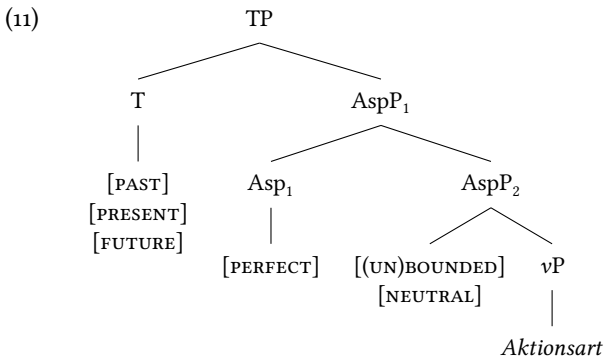
Besides the characteristic behaviour in these 'hole' environments, the construction shows the expected division of *at-issue* and *not-at-issue* content (Simons et al. 2010). It can answer questions about the length of the period of the event or situation denoted by the VP (9a), but since the existential inference is actually a(n informative) presupposition (i.e., not-at-issue), the construction cannot answer questions about the event existence (9b):

- (9) a. Ty chasto naveschaesh' roditelej? — Ja u nix
you.NOM.SG often visit.2SG.PRS parent.PL.ACC I.NOM at they.GEN
poltora goda ne byla.
one.and.a.half year.CNT not be.SG.F.PST
'Do you visit your parents often? — I haven't visited them for a year and a half.'
b. Ty byl na Karibax? — #Ja tam (uzhe) tri
you.NOM.SG be.SG.M.PST on Carribean I.NOM there (already) three
goda ne byl.
year.CNT not be.SG.M.PL
'Have you (ever) been to the Carribean? — #I haven't been there for three years (already).'

The right boundary of the PTS can be modified by tense:

- (10) Cherez chas budet sutki, kak ja tebia ne videl.
 across hour be.SG.FUT day as I.NOM you.SG.ACC not see.SG.M.PST
 ‘In an hour it will be one day since I last saw you.’

Russian EQ construction, unlike the Greek one, is an E-Perfect. It denies (as there is obligatory negation) the assertion that some event has occurred in the specified time interval. However, we notice that the verb must be morphosyntactically imperfective to get the relevant reading.³ Here’s a double puzzle: how does an imperfective verb end up in a perfective construction? Why does it *have* to be imperfective? The answer to the first question is relatively straightforward if we employ [Pancheva’s \(2003\)](#) theory of perfect as the higher aspect. On her theory, perfect introduces an additional Aspect projection below T and above the viewpoint aspect. Its semantics is to relate “the interval of evaluation (the PTS), a reference time of sorts, to the reference time introduced by the tenses” (p.285). The resulting structure looks like this (p.284, (9a)):



The layers above the vP allow to derive the full range of readings compositionally. Postulating AspP₂ in the Russian EQ construction is further supported by the fact that they optionally include the adverb *uzhé* ‘already’, which is arguably a perfect level adverbial.

The answer to the second question is less obvious. I will offer three types of possible explanations, but without decisively choosing one of them. The first one relates the viewpoint aspect directly to the properties of the event. Imperfective provides the feature specification [UNBOUNDED]. This specification is required for the universal perfect interpretation, where both boundaries of

³ On the usual tests for imperfective ([Borik 2002](#), [Romanova 2007](#)).

the PTS should be included in the event interval (Iatridou, Anagnostopoulou & Izvorski 2001). According to Pancheva 2003, 282,(7b.ii), [UNBOUNDED] does just that:

$$(12) \quad \llbracket \text{UNBOUNDED} \rrbracket = \lambda P \lambda i \exists e [i \subseteq \tau(e) \& P(e)]$$

Semantics in (12) says that reference time is a subset of the event time. The main problem with this answer is that a universalist approach cannot account for both Russian and Greek. It has been noted that Greek does not have U-Perfect, which is dependent on the availability of imperfective perfect participle (Iatridou, Anagnostopoulou & Izvorski 2001: 169–171). However, Iatridou 2014 takes U-Perfect to be “a semantic label for universal quantification over subintervals of a time span, and not as the name of a syntactic construction” and claims that U-Perfect in Greek is expressed by imperfective verb forms. In the *na*-construction, on the contrary, only perfective forms of the verbs are used (Iatridou ms.). Another possible answer, namely, that the imperfective in Russian is required to allow for *repeatability* of the event (see next section) is weakened by the same fact. Apparently, the viewpoint aspect is not a universally relevant property of such constructions and one might as well seek language-specific solutions.

Yet another type of explanation refers to Russian adverbs. The adverbs used in the Russian construction are always durative, and durative adverbs cannot combine with perfective. Since the adverbs are obligatorily present in this construction (and in general in Russian U-Perfect), they restrict the possible aspect of the verb.

The last type of explanation is in terms of strengthening of an imperfective statement under negation (Levinson 2005 as discussed in Partee 2008, Partee & Borschev 2009): imperfective under negation entails that perfective does not hold (and the entailment is reversed in affirmative). Since achievements, for the lack of the activity phase, don’t show the entailment, but still must be imperfective, such an analysis might have to suppose that the strengthening has grammaticalised to a restriction of selectional kind. At the same time, achievements may be rescued by appealing to the fact that in imperfective they exhibit ‘diminished referentiality’:

- (13) a. Ja ne naxodil kliuchi.
I.NOM not find.IPF.PST.M keys
'I did not find any keys.'
- b. Ja ne nashiol kliuchi.
I.NOM not find.PFV.PST.M keys
'I did not find the keys [I was looking for].'

The utterance (13a) does not give rise to the inference that there was an event of searching for some keys, which could lead to finding them. The utterance (13b) does. Given that the event in the Russian EQ construction is non-specific, it might require the imperfective form. So far it is difficult to find where the outlined analyses could give divergent predictions. Moreover, they are not mutually exclusive and may collaborate.

8.2.2 An indefinite event description

Recall that [Iatridou 2014](#) argues for free choice semantics of the Greek construction. For the Russian construction I will use a narrow scope indefinite.

One of the crucial properties of the *na*-construction is that the event should be in principle repeatable. It carries some sort of an *non-uniqueness* conversational implicature. The same is true for Russian. An utterance like (14) gives a feeling that applying to universities is Ilya's habit, perhaps because he is unfortunate but keeps trying (or used to, for that matter).

- (14) Ilya chetyre goda ne postupal v universitet.
Ilya four year.CNT not apply.SG.M.PST in university
'Ilya hasn't applied to university in four years.'

Uniqueness modifiers are out, but they are predictably good in the analogue of the *since*-construction:

- (15) a. Kirill dva goda ne ezdil na NYI (# v pervye).
Kirill two year.CNT not go.SG.M.PST on NYI for.the.first.time
'Kirill hasn't been to NYI for two years (#for the first time).'
- b. Uzhe dva goda s tex por kak Kirill ezdil na NYI
already two year.CNT since Kirill go.SG.M.PST on NYI
v pervye.
for.the.first.time
'It's been two years since Kirill went to NYI for the first time.'

This requirement of possible plurality of events suggests that this event description behaves like an indefinite: established uniqueness of the referent requires definite descriptions, and (possible) plurality is associated with indefinites (Hawkins 1991, Heim 1991). Russian EQ construction can be given a compositional analysis as a narrow scope (non-specific) indefinite, not a free choice universal à la Greek. The narrow scope claim is confirmed by a number of facts. First, the construction cannot refer to a specific event: (4), repeated here as (16), is not about any one of the earthquakes I might have seen (i.e., it is infelicitous if I also saw one two years ago):

- (16) Ja ne videl zemletriasenija tri goda.
 I.NOM not see.3SG.PST earthquake.GEN three year.CNT
 ‘I haven’t seen an earthquake in/for three years.’

Therefore, it does not provide an antecedent for subsequent anaphora, although as the indexing in (17) shows, pronominal reference to events is possible in Russian:

- (17) [Ja ne [videl zemletriasenija]_k tri goda]_i, i
 I.NOM not see.3SG.PST earthquake.GEN three year.CNT and
 ty eto_{i/*k} znaesh’.
 you.NOM.SG this know.2SG.PRS
 ‘[I haven’t [seen an earthquake]_k in/for three years]_i, and you know it_{i/*k}.’ [i.e.,
that I haven’t seen them for three years, not that I have seen them before]

Third, modals also scope over the indefinite:⁴

- (18) Sasha ne dolzhna byla videt’ Mashu (uzhe) dve nedeli.
 S. not must.F be.PST.F.SG see.INF M. (already) two week.CNT
 ‘It must be that Sasha hasn’t seen Masha for two weeks already.’
 $\Box > \neg > \exists$ but not $*\neg > \exists > \Box$

The semantics that I propose for the discussed sentences is given below in (19e), derived compositionally from its components:

⁴ First, even though our object may appear as a negative quantifier, I don’t think that it’s a negative indefinite and don’t consider split scope readings (e.g., Zeijlstra 2011) here. Empirically, in (18) intermediate scope reading of the modal doesn’t seem possible. Second, the modal can be read either epistemically (in the presence of *uzhe*) or deontically (without *uzhe*). This does not affect its scopal properties.

- (19) a. event/VP: $P(e)$
 b. imperfective aspect, providing UNBOUNDED as in (12)
 c. time adverbials measure the PTS: $\llbracket 3 \text{ goda} \rrbracket = \lambda p \lambda i [length(i) = 3yr \wedge p(i)]^5$
 d. Perfect (Pancheva 2003: 284): $\lambda p \lambda i \exists i' [PTS(i', i) \wedge p(i')]$
 PTS(i', i) iff i is a final subinterval of i'
 e. $\neg \exists i (i \subseteq PTS \wedge \exists e (e \subseteq \tau(e) \wedge P(e)))$

The semantics is fully compositional, as the reader is welcome to verify for herself. But this semantics does not explain where the existential presupposition comes from. That is the subject of the next section.

8.2.3 Locative and existential constructions with events

In a discussion of Russian Genitive of Negation (GenNeg) Partee & Borschev 2002 introduce a notion of *Perspectival Centre* that allows to capture the distinction between two types of sentences expressing spatio-existential situations, i.e., the kind that the authors represent as “BE (THING, LOC)”. One type is the *existential* sentences (20a), and the other “doesn’t have a name except when put in contrast with the other kind”, and will be dubbed “declarative” (20b), following P&B’s use of Babby’s (1980) terminology.

- (20) a. There’s a unicorn in the garden.
 b. The unicorn is in the garden.

The difference, according to the *Perspectival Centre Hypothesis*, is in which of the two participants (an individual or a location) is chosen as “the point of departure for structuring the situation”, i.e., as the *Perspectival Centre*. The PC is presupposed to exist, which is evident in the fact that existential sentences presuppose the existence of the LOCATION, while declarative sentences presuppose the existence of the THING (regardless of the referential status of the NP).

I think there is a clear parallel between speaking about things in certain places and speaking about events in certain time intervals. For instance, Russian EQ construction instantiates a temporal analogue of declarative sentences.

5 Under the semantics assumed here, adverbs must combine with the viewpoint aspect before the perfect, which suggests that they might adjoin to Asp_1 . I’m remaining agnostic about their exact syntax.

The asymmetry of the event and the PTS is evident in the fact that the time interval adverbial cannot be topicalised:⁶

- (21) ??Čto kasaetsia poslednix dvux mesiacev, ja (ix)
 what concerns last.GEN.PL two.GEN.PL month.GEN.PL I.NOM they.ACC.PL
 ne xodil na katok.
 not go.M.SG.PST on icerink
 intended: ‘The last time I went to icerink was two months ago.’

Now we can say that the existential presupposition in Russian EQ construction arises due to the event being the Perspectival Centre of the sentence. Thus, the event is presupposed to exist in principle, but asserted to not occur in the PTS of a specified length.⁷ Existential sentences exist in the temporal domain, too. For instance, the negated perfect in English seems to structure the situation from the perspective of the time interval, and thus allows its topicalisation:

- (22) As for the last five years, he hasn’t had a seizure.

Where is the ‘existential’/‘locative’ predicate of temporal declarative sentences? Given the structure BE(EVENT, TIME), we might expect to find it above the projection that encodes the event and below the projections related to the PTS. It turns out that this position is exactly the viewpoint aspect projection, AspP₂ in (11). It relates the vP to the time interval created by the perfect and measured by the adverbial. My claim is that viewpoint aspect universally may have the force to introduce a Perspectival Centre, thus giving rise to presuppositions in a manner analogous to spatial existential and declarative sentences. Whether this force is optional or not is left for another occasion.

8.3 Conclusion

This paper discussed the variability of quantification over events, drawing on Greek and English data from Iatridou 2014 and novel data from Russian. We saw verbal constructions with semantics of free choice quantification, definite and narrow scope indefinite determiners. I also made a case for another parallel between the verbal and nominal domains, which concerns sentences expressing (non-)existence of certain things in certain places and

⁶ There is a certain relation between topics and PC. B&P use the PC to substitute for the Theme-Rheme account of GenNeg.

⁷ It may be further conjectured that then the temporal measure is indispensable on pain of contradiction, as the default left boundary of an existential perfect is the beginning of life.

certain events in certain time intervals. Finally, I suggested that the viewpoint aspect is involved in the operation of [Partee & Borschev's \(2002\)](#) Perspectival Centre in the domain of events — just as its name indicates.

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