

# The Representation of Aspect

## 2: States and Viewpoint Aspect

Bronwyn M. Bjorkman

EKG 2014 @ Debrecen

### 1 Variation in compatibility between categories

- Recall the differences between languages in terms of the compatibility of states and overt viewpoint aspect.

**Russian:** incompatibility between stative predicates and derived perfective forms.

**English:** incompatibility between stative interpretations and progressive, but produces an **activity reading**

- (1) a. My friend is liking her new house.  
b. The children are being polite.

**French:** incompatibility between stative interpretations and *passé composé*, but produces an **inchoative reading**.

- (2) French (*from Smith, 1991, p. 255*):
- a. Tout d'un coup, j'ai compris!  
All of-a stroke, I-have understand.PTCP  
"All of a sudden, I understood!"
- b. A ce moment il a su la vérité  
At that moment he has know.PTCPthe truth  
"At that moment he knew the truth."

**Kinande:** stative predicates (e.g. *eriluha* 'be tired') fully compatible with viewpoint aspect. True stative interpretations require special morphology:

- (3) Kinande (Patrick Jones, elicitation notes)
- a. n-ámá-lúh-a  
1SG-PFV-be.tired-SUFF  
"I get tired (now)."
- b. n-ga-luh-â  
1SG-IMPF-be.tired-SUFF  
"I'm always tired." (e.g. after such-and-such event, on particular days of the week)
- c. n-yí-lúh-ire  
1SG-STAT-be.tired-SUFF  
"I'm tired (now)."

**Japanese:** stative predicates require the *-te iru* construction. This same morphology results in resultative or progressive interpretations with other verb classes.

- (4) Japanese (Ogihara, 1998, p. 96)
- a. Hanako-wa hahaoya-ni ni-te iru.  
Hanako-TOP mother-DAT resemble-TE IRU-PRES  
"Hanako resembles her mother."
- b. \*Hanako-wa hahaoya-ni ni-ta.  
Hanako-TOP mother-DAT resemble-PAST  
[intended] "Hanako came to look like her mother."

### 2 Featural vs. semantic explanations

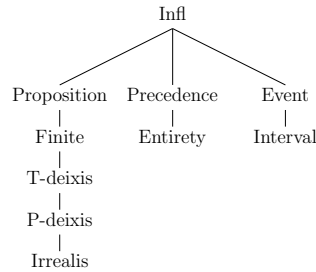
- Concentrating on languages where states "resist" aspectual morphology: **Why?**
- Intuition: there is a mismatch between states and viewpoint aspect. Viewpoint aspect really seeks to locate an *event time* (in some sense), which states don't have.

A semantic explanation: (**Hallman, 2009a,b**)

- Proposes that aspect (specifically progressive) that interacts with temporal **intervals**.
- Events are properties of intervals.
- Intuitive view of states as having duration (i.e. applying to intervals). But do they really?
- States are non-dynamic: no change is involved. That means that you can evaluate whether they're true by looking at a single moment.
- In that sense, states are properties of **moments**.
- There is thus a **type mismatch** in English between the progressive and states.

A syntactic explanation: (**Cowper, 2003, 2005**)

- A similar account, but framed in terms of syntactic features instead of semantic interpretations.
- Cowper's account is framed in terms of a particular view of syntactic features:
  - Framed after the contrastivist view of phonological features in Dresher (2009).
  - Core idea: a contrastive particular feature can be relevant only in sub-domains.
  - For Cowper, framed in terms of syntactic *dependencies*.
  - A feature that is "dependent" on another can only occur in the presence of that other feature.
  - For example, the full feature system from Cowper (2005):



– More recent work assumes a further distinction between *inherent* (contrastive) and *modifying* (non-contrastive) features, following work by Wiltschko (2009).

- Events are distinguished from states by the presence of an EVENT feature on a head Event<sup>0</sup> (~ Asp<sup>0</sup>viewpoint).
- Only in the presence of this feature can the feature INTERVAL also be present, yielding the progressive.

Both these approaches have ways to talk about the contrast between, e.g., English and French.

**English:** In the past, overt marking of the progressive, “simple” verb has perfective interpretations.

- (5) a. I read the book.  
b. I was reading the book.

**French:** In the past, overt marking of the perfective, “simple” verb has imperfective interpretations.

- (6) a. J’ai lu le livre.  
b. Je lisais le livre.

- Difference in morphosyntactic “markedness” of the aspectual forms.
- In French, perfective is “marked”; in English, progressive is “marked”.
- States aren’t actually imperfective or perfective: they lack inflection for viewpoint aspect altogether, and so look like one or the other class of verbs.
- Bjorkman (2011): difference in which member of the aspectual contrast is specified via a syntactic feature.
- Only specified features can interrupt a relationship between T<sup>0</sup> and V<sup>0</sup>, resulting in an auxiliary verb.

**What about the “coerced” readings?**

- This does a pretty good job of explaining why we get “unexpected” readings of stative predicates with perfective inflection in French but with imperfective inflection in English.
- Doesn’t necessarily explain fully why you get the specific eventive readings that you do.

If in both cases a state is eventivized (by a feature, by an operator, same thing?) why don’t perfective states act like perfective activities?

Why don’t progressive states act like progressive achievements?

- (7) a. Hier, j’ai dansé.  
b. Hier, J’ai compris la solution.
- (8) a. I am reaching the end of this section.  
b. I am liking the neighbourhood where I live.

- This suggests that there might be something more going on than simply “eventivizing” a state. But what?
- Further puzzle: what about the languages where states have special morphology themselves? Are states still “bare eventualities” in these languages?
- What about the class of states in English that don’t act like activities in the progressive: verbs of position and posture.

- (9) a. The lamp is standing in the corner. ≈ The lamp stands in the corner.  
b. The picture is hanging on the wall. ≈ The picture hangs on the wall.

- Are these events? Why don’t they “feel” like events in the way other progressive states do?

**A similar puzzle: Perfectivity and Present**

- There is a semantic incompatibility between perfective viewpoint and present tense.
- If the Utterance Time is a moment, a perfective event can’t fit “inside” it.
- So what happens if you try to combine perfective and present inflection on a single verb?

**Ineffable:** In languages like Arabic and Hindi, there is no perfective present. The perfective verb form is simplex, and always has a past interpretation (in matrix indicative clauses).

- (10) Arabic (*Benmamoun, 2000*)
- a. darasa  
study.PAST.PFV.3SGM  
“He studied.”
- b. ya-drusu  
3M-IMPF.study  
“He studies.”
- c. kaana ya-drusu  
be.PAST.3SGM 3M-IMPF.study  
“He was studying / He used to study.”

- (11) Hindi (*Bhatt, 2007*)
- a. Lataa-ji-ne kai gaane gaa-ye.  
Lataa-HON-ERG many song.M sing-PFV.M.PL  
“Lataa-ji sang several songs.”
- b. Lataa-ji gaane gaa-tii hē / thi:  
Lataa-HON song.PLSing-HAB.F BE.PRES.PL / BE.PAST.F.PL  
“Latta-ji sings/used to sing songs.”

- c. Lataa-ji-ne kai gaane gaa-ye hē /  
 Lataa-HON-ERG many song.M.PL sing-PFV.M.PL BE.PRES.PL/  
 the  
 BE.PAST.M.PL  
 “Lataa-ji has/had sung several songs.”

**Future:** In Russian, the “present” form of perfective verbs has a future interpretations.

- (12) Russian (*Mezhevich, 2006, p. 48*)  
 a. Liza pro-čitala knigu.

Liza PFV-read(PAST) book  
 “Liza read/has read a/the book.”

- b. Liza pro-čitajet knigu.  
 Liza PFV-read(PRES) book  
 “Liza will read a/the book.”

**Recent Past:** In Kinande, perfective morphology receives a recent past interpretation, in the absence of additional past morphology.

- (13) Kinande (Patrick Jones, elicitation notes)  
 N-ámá-bung-ir’ omw’ iríma  
 1SG-PFV-walk-IRE in field  
 “I (just) walked in the field.”

### 3 Comparing English and Japanese “progressives”

- Japanese and English both have an auxiliary verb construction that has been identified as “progressive”, with similar properties.

- (14) English progressive  
 a. John runs (\*right now).  
 b. John is running (right now).
- (15) Japanese *-te iru* (*Clarke, 2013, p. 8*)  
 a. John-wa (\*ima) hashi-ru.  
 John-TOP (now) run-NONPST  
 “John runs.”  
 b. John-wa (ima) hashi-tte i-ru.  
 John-TOP (now) run-TE be-NONPST  
 “John is running (right now).”

- We’ve seen that the English progressive interacts somewhat differently with different verb classes:

States	<i>ongoing activity</i>	e.g. ‘is being polite’
Activities	<i>ongoing activity</i>	e.g. ‘is swimming’
Achievements	<i>preparatory stage</i>	e.g. ‘is winning the race’
Accomplishments	<i>ongoing activity</i>	e.g. ‘is building a house’
Semelfactives	<i>iterative</i>	e.g. ‘is blinking’

- Somewhat more complex interaction in Japanese.
- *-te iru* has quite different interpretations with different verb classes.
- Classification of Japanese verbs by Kindaichi (1950) (cited by Ogiwara 1998 Clarke 2013) according to how they interact with *-te iru*:

	Interpretation of <i>-te iru</i>	Example
Stative	*	<i>iru/aru</i> ‘be, exist’; <i>dekiru</i> ‘can’
Instantaneous	resultative	<i>shimu</i> ‘die’; <i>aku</i> ‘open’; <i>taku</i> ‘(the light) comes on’
Durative	progressive	<i>oyogu</i> ‘swim’; <i>hashiru</i> ‘run’; <i>yomu</i> ‘read’
“Stative potentials”	stative (require <i>-te iru</i> )	* <i>niru</i> ‘resemble’; * <i>sobieru</i> ‘tower (over)’

- (16) Stative verb:  
 a. Akiko-ga uchi-ni i-ru.  
 Akiko-NOM house-DAT be-NONPST  
 “Akiko is at home.”  
 b. \*Akiko-ga uchi-ni i-te i-ru.  
 Akiko-NOM house-DAT be-te be-NONPST
- (17) Instantaneous verb:  
 a. Akiko-wa taore-ta.  
 Akiko-TOP faint-PAST  
 “Akiko fainted.”  
 b. Akiko-wa taore-te i-ta.  
 Akiko-TOP faint-te be-PAST  
 “Akiko had fainted.” (i.e. and was lying on the ground) (also experiential)
- (18) Durative verbs:  
 a. Akiko-wa hon-o yon-da.  
 Akiko-TOP book-ACC read-PAST  
 “Akiko read a book.”  
 b. Akiko-wa hon-o yon-de i-ta.  
 Akiko-TOP book-ACC read-te be-PAST  
 “Akiko was reading a book.” (also experiential)
- (19) “Stative potential”:  
 a. \*Akiko-wa yomi-kaki-ni sugure-ru.  
 Akiko-TOP read-write-DAT be.excellent-NONPST  
 b. Akiko-wa yomi-kaki-ni sugure-te i-ru.  
 Akiko-TOP read-write-DAT be.excellent-te be-NONPST  
 “Akiko is excellent at reading and writing.”  
 NOT: “Akiko is being excellent at reading and writing.”

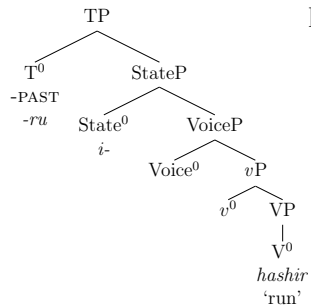
How can we account for these similarities and differences?

**An uninteresting answer:** the *-te iru* construction is multiply ambiguous in Japanese.

**A more interesting solution:** despite apparent similarities, *-te iru* is very different from the English progressive.

A proposal in Clarke (2013):

- Unlike English, where eventivity is syntactically specified, **stativity** is syntactically specified in Japanese.
- The progressive reading of durative verbs is the result of stativizing a non-variable event.



- Resultative and experiential readings come from an interaction with a lower feature specifying **atomicity**.
- Atomic events cannot be turned into ongoing activity states. The only state available is a result state.
- [+ATOMIC] can occur in two places for Clarke:
  - As a **root modifier** (on “instantaneous” verbs)
  - At the *vP* level (deriving experiential readings)
- Feature system for English:

EVENT : on Asp<sup>0</sup>viewpoint

–ATOMIC : on Asp<sup>0</sup>viewpoint in progressive

+ATOMIC : on roots in achievements

- Incompatibility between [–ATOMIC] and [+ATOMIC] invoked to explain oddness in (20):

- (20)
- #John is noticing the painting.
  - #Joe is forgetting the number.
  - #Jen is spotting her friend.

(p. 62)

## References

- Benmamoun, Elabbas. 2000. *The feature structure of functional categories: A comparative study of Arabic dialects*. Oxford University Press.
- Bhatt, Rajesh. 2007. Ergativity in indo-aryan languages. Talk given at the MIT Ergativity Seminar, November 2007.
- Bjorkman, Bronwyn M. 2011. *BE-ing Default: the Morphosyntax of Auxiliaries*. Doctoral Dissertation, MIT.
- Clarke, Sarah. 2013. *Aspectual scope and contrast in english and japanese*. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Toronto.
- Cowper, Elizabeth A. 2003. Tense, mood and aspect: A feature-geometric approach. Ms. University of Toronto Online: [www.chass.utoronto.ca/cowper/Cowper.TMA2003.pdf](http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/cowper/Cowper.TMA2003.pdf).
- Cowper, Elizabeth A. 2005. The geometry of interpretable features: Infl in English and Spanish. *Language* 81:10–46.
- Dresher, Elan. 2009. *The contrastive hierarchy in phonology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hallman, Peter. 2009a. Instants and intervals in the event/state distinction. Ms. UCLA.
- Hallman, Peter. 2009b. Proportions in time: Interactions of quantification and aspect. *Natural Language Semantics* 17:29–61.
- Mezhevich, Ilana. 2006. Featuring Russian tense: A feature-theoretic account of the Russian tense system. Doctoral Dissertation, University of Calgary.
- Ogihara, Toshiyuki. 1998. The ambiguity of the *-te iru* form in Japanese. *Journal of East Asian Linguistics* 7:87–120.
- Smith, Carlota S. 1991. *The parameter of aspect*. Kluwer Academic Press.
- Wiltschko, Martina. 2009. What’s in a determiner and how did it get there? In *Determiners: Variation and universals*, ed. J. Ghomeshi, I Paul, and M Wiltschko, 35–66. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.