

On the Role of Experiencer in the Interaction of Aspect and Unaccusativity in Russian

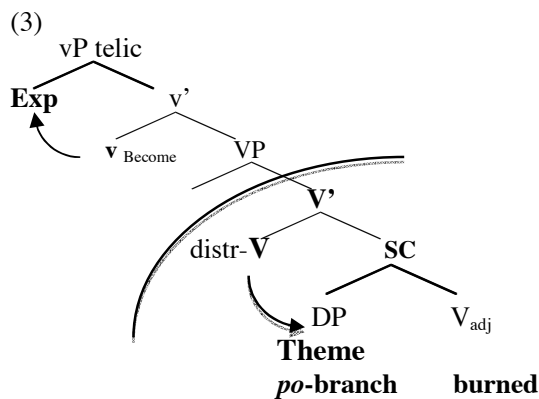
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Introduction. In this paper, I offer an account to a new puzzle that arises from the interaction of three factors: telicity, animacy and unaccusativity. I will show that the effects that seem to undermine the value of a standard unaccusativity diagnostic in Russian and reveal an unordered interaction between telicity and unaccusativity are in fact expected if (i) animate subjects of unaccusative verbs must bear an Experiencer role (ii) there is another ‘flavor’ of little v_{BECOME} (extension of Folli and Harley (2005), (2007), Marantz (1997)) that assigns an external role of an Experiencer (iii) extending on ideas of Dowty (1991), Hale and Keyser (1993), Baker (2002), Folli and Harley (2005) Ramchand (2005), I assume that quantized (telic) intransitive predicates, unlike homogeneous (atelic) predicates, select for a Small Clause complement (AdjP (Baker (2002), SC (Folli and Harley (2005), ResultP (Ramchand (2005))), whereby the SC encodes the final state of the event, the single argument being the subject of the SC. **Data.** The pattern of data arises from application of a Russian unaccusativity diagnostic (distributive po-phrase (Pesetsky (1982), Babyonyshev (1996), Harves (2002)) to telic/atelic verb forms. The observations are as follows: (i) an animate subject of an atelic predicate is ungrammatical as a complement of a distributive po-phrase, contra to the test expectation (see (1) d, (2)d) (for reasons of space I disregard iterative interpretations); (ii) animate subjects of telic predicates are grammatical with the distributive po-phrase *only* if they can receive an interpretation of being ‘deanimatized’ by the change-of-state expressed by the predicate (see contrast (1)c, (2)c). None of the above mentioned effects are observed with inanimate subjects of telic/atelic predicates (see (1)a,b and (2)a,b). **Analysis.** Distributive po-phrases are grammatical as objects of transitive and subjects of unaccusative predicates (Pesetsky (1982), Babyonyshev (1996), Harves (2002)). For a distributive po-phrase to be licensed it needs to occur in a position c-commanded by a distributor at LF (Pesetsky (1982), Babyonyshev (1996)). The distributor occupies a fixed position in the tree: base generated on the verb (see (3)). Arguments optionally reconstruct to a theta position. The tree diagram in (3) demonstrates the account of (1) and (2) in telic contexts: V takes a SC as its complement; inanimate subjects are assigned a Theme role by the V head, the position is located within the c-commanding domain of the po-licensor at LF, thus, the distributive po-phrase is grammatical in both (1)a, (2)a. Animate subjects of verbs denoting a change-of-state compatible with ‘deanimatization’ (here ‘burn’ (1)c vs ‘grow’(2)c) are assigned a Theme role and receive a similar account as inanimate arguments (1)c). Animate arguments of verbs incompatible with ‘deanimatization’ must be assigned an Experiencer role (2)c. The position of the Experiencer argument is outside of the c-commanding domain of the Dist at LF, thus the distributive po-phrase can not be licensed. In atelic contexts, the SC layer of structure is missing: V takes a Theme argument as its complement. This change produces no effect on inanimate arguments. Animate arguments can no longer be ‘deanimatized’: the assignment

of a Theme to animate arguments is contingent on the presence of the SC (it represents the end point of the change-of-state). In the absence of a SC, the Experiencer role must be assigned in both (1)d and (2)d, which explains the unacceptability of distributive *po*-phrases with these subjects.

Verbs that pattern similarly: ‘fall’, ‘drown’, ‘redden’ etc.

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| (1) a. | <i>po vetke sgorelo v každom kostre</i> | telic |
| | <i>po branch_{Dat} burned in each campfire</i> | |
| b. | <i>po vetke gorelo v každom kostre</i> | atelic (process) |
| | ‘A branch was burned _{tel} /burning _{atelic} in each of the campfires’ | |
| c. | <i>po žil’cu sgorelo na každom etaže</i> | telic (result: dead body) |
| | <i>po tenant_{Dat} burned on each floor</i> | |
| d. | <i>*po žil’cu gorelo na každom etaže</i> | atelic (*process) |
| | ‘A tenant has burned _{tel} /was on fire _{atelic} on each floor’ | |
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| (2) a. | <i>po derevu vyroslo v každom dvore</i> | telic |
| | <i>po tree grew in each yard</i> | |
| b. | <i>po derevu roslo v každom dvore</i> | atelic (process) |
| | <i>po tree grew in each yard</i> | |
| | ‘A tree grew/was growing in each yard’ | |
| c. | <i>*po malyšu vyroslo v každom dvore</i> | telic (no ‘deanimatization’) |
| | <i>po baby grew in each yard</i> | |
| d. | <i>*po malyšu roslo v každom dvore</i> | atelic (*process) |
| | <i>po baby grew in each yard</i> | |
| | ‘A baby grew up/ was growing up in each yard’ | |



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