

Interactions Between Lexical and Aspectual Meanings in Albanian

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Abstract

In this paper, part of a more wide study, we introduce and analyze some elements of aspect with its typical interactions with lexical verb classes in Standard Albanian. The grammatical meaning of the verbal aspect interacts with the lexical meaning of a given verb in group-specific ways, so that the kind of interaction in the case of a given aspect opposition can be used in order to classify verbs. The main criterion for the classification is the temporal dynamics expressed by the verbs in question, i. e. the probability according to which a given action or a particular state may change over time. In the specific case of the perfective aspect (aorist), the relationship between the operator and operandum consists in the action carried out with the presence, or less, of a result, or in the beginning of the action, or simply in the limited duration of verbal action. On the other hand, the imperfective (imperfect - synthetic and analytical forms) can be combined, in principle, with all verbs, but also in this case, with the typical effects according to their verbal action. One particularly efficacious method for underlining similar syntactic irregularities consists in the analysis of the degree of coincidence between each given verbal class and a selected set, as with a time complement or with aspectual verbs. As regards particular problems, in some cases, we have also investigated the subject and the object in the sentence. The study of these questions and the semantic-syntactical analyses have made it possible to present the particularities of the verbal classes according to the verbal action of the Albanian language.

Keywords: Interactions Between Lexical and Aspectual Meanings in Albanian

INTRODUCTION

We focused on the semantic and syntactic features of some groups of verbs by using the origins and procedures of textual linguistics. Verbs included in verbal action, in terms of expression, are not always equal. In some cases, exists characteristic means for the formation of the words able to express the different verbal actions. Furthermore, for their expression, as is indicated in the development of each verbal action, exists special verbal constructions, too. Based on these indications we can say that, in Albanian, verbal actions, even those that express lexical meanings, are not, in terms of their expression, a clear lexical category, but also influence syntax and the formation of words. So, from this point of view, they can be defined as a lexical-grammatical category. Moreover, in order to favour the expression of a specific meaning, parallel to the verbal action, different lexical indices, which regard the context, are often helpful. That's why to determine the principal verbal classes according to verbal action we have based our research on contextual semantic-lexical analyses. Consequent to the development of the action we have also paid attention to the syntactic means of the sentence as the structural elements of the sentence, or rather to the means of conjunction in both simple and composed sentence, interdependence and the position of second members and the position of words. These are seen, above all, as elements of the structure of the sentence, which have merely a simple syntactic function and which also assist in the characterisation of the action. A particularly efficacious method, for underlining similar syntactic irregularities, consists in the analysis of the degree of coincidence between each given verbal class and a selected set, as with a time complement or with verbs of aspect¹.

¹ The study of these questions and the semantic-syntactical analyses have made it possible to present the particularities of the verbal classes according to the verbal action of the Albanian language. It comes in a comprehensive monograph of Alimhilli Prendushi (2009).

2. INTERACTION BETWEEN ASPECTUAL, TEMPORAL AND LEXICAL GROUPS

2. 1. *The morphological opposition aorist/imperfect*

In Albanian morphological opposition between aorist and imperfect¹, from the point of view of content-function, is characterized by the relationship between "achievement of all the constraints of a verbal action" vs. "failure to achieve these limits". This means, in other words, that the aorist achieves the totality of a state of fact expressed by a verb, including all its limitations intended at least as probable, while the imperfect merely expresses the existence at the time axis of the event in question at the reference time. The morphological aspectual opposition is limited in Albanian in the preterite while the present, the future, the perfect, etc. are not differentiated from the aspectual point of view. So, only in the preterite can be achieved, in aspectual intertwining, the opposition between the functional description of the situation (imperfect) and the change in the situation (aorist). The perfective member also assumes the function of expression of actions not marked as regards the aspect, in case that these are not put in relation to each other in an aspectual intertwining, but, instead, remains aspectually isolated from each other. In these cases the aorist assumes, so to say, the purely temporal function of a preterite, otherwise as the imperfect unites its aspectual and temporal functions. In this article we will deal just with its relevant function in aspectual terms.

The primary meaning (lexical) of a verb relevant in terms of the aspect changes, depending on its belonging of a particular aspectual class, from the addition of the grammatical component of the aorist, and as result is obtained a sense determined by interaction between lexicon and grammar.

The nature of this aspectual meaning depends on the terminative characteristic of the class to which the verb belongs. In principle, a verbal state of fact (primary lexical meaning of a verb) can be completely unlimited, may have a limit of inherent beginning and, eventually, also a limit of inherent ending. Fundamental to the aspectual behavior of the verb are especially the presence and the nature of the term limit.

2. 1. 1. Verbs² *njoh* 'know', *shoh* 'see', *duroj* 'endure' etc. label situations and changes of situation. This semantic feature makes them grouped in a durative verbs class called STATE verbs, which does not have an inherent time structure. When used in the imperfect³ *njihja*⁴, *shihja*, *duroja* the situation expressed by them is as available to a given situation, regardless of its terminative characteristic. In contrast, when used in simple past tens *njoha*, *pashë*, *durova* their inherent terminative borders are obligatorily realized; in this case we have only a beginning time limit, which is the only one realized. *I met someone, I recognized someone or something* express a conclusion border. Precisely, with non-permanent state verbs that express relativity of conditions, finds its usage in aorist. While on permanent states verbal action constitutes a characteristic of the subject, so, it is, a permanent feature of it. In this sense, the action has no rigid boundaries that define his extending in speakers or writers vision. Verbs, which express such meanings, not pose in past tense any action starting point, but simply are used as a verbal tense. The presence of this underclass is reflected by the verbs: *ngjaj* 'resemble', *jam* 'be', *besoj* 'believe' etc.

¹ For an analysis of the aspectual system of Albanian see Dhrimo (2008) and for the morphological opposition aorist-imperfect see Alimhilli Prendushi (2015: 44-47); Breu (2008: 96-100).

² Hereafter, the term "verb" will be used for "verbal meaning."

³ In Albanian language the present and the imperfect are realized through:

1. imperfective indeterminate forms (temporal-aspectual imperfective forms), such as: *punoj* – *punoja*.

2. perfective determinate forms (temporal-aspectual perfective forms) made with constructions:

a. particle *po* + the present of indeterminate imperfective (*po punoj*)

particle *po* + the imperfect of indeterminate imperfective (*po punoja*)

b. *jam* + gerund. (*jam duke punuar*)

jam in imperfect of indeterminate imperfective *isha* + gerund. (*isha duke punuar*)

⁴In Albanian language all verbs, including irregular verbs, with except of verbs *jam* 'be' and *kam* 'have', in the imperfect receive these inflexional endings: *-ja*, *-je*, *-te* or *-nte* (for the singular) and *-nim*, *-nit*, *-nin* (for the plural).

In the simple past tense verbs (as well the most of irregular verbs) in singular take inflexional endings *-(v)a*, *-(v)e*, *-i* or *-u*. While in plural take inflexional endings: *-më* or *-m*, *-të* or *-t*, *-në* or *-n*. For more see *Gramatika e gjuhës shqipe I* (1995: 285-291).

2. 1. 2. Another verbal class consists of the so-called ACTIVITY verbs, which pose the mode of action in process, unlimited in time, as to: *këndoj* 'sing', *qesh* 'laugh', *fle* 'sleep', *mbaj* 'hold'. Nothing is given for the beginning and the end of the action, but only for its extension. Although, in these verbs, in fact, besides the starting instant of the action we also have that of the end in the form of an opportunity to complete the process, since there can't be an unlimited extension of it. Such actions may be suspended several times by the subject within the same event or the same episode, too. The moment, at which the action ends or terminates it is not set by the action itself, but by external circumstances, such as the will of the speaker or of the interlocutor. When such action is expressed in aorist *këndova*, *qesha*, *fjeta*, *mbajta* its possible termination (in addition to a required starting point) can only be realized as a time limit. So it turns out, as we might say, a sense of "limiting". If these actions are expressed in imperfect *këndoja*, *qeshja*, *flija*, *mbaja*, they are in progress at a given moment of the past, without any data to their start or end.

2. 1. 3. Aspectual verbal classes described so far, can be included in non-telic. They are opposed by telic verbs, at which termination of the action is inevitable, closely associated with processes that they express. In Albanian, there are two separate verbal classes within this group, ACCOMPLISHMENT and ACHIEVEMENT verbs.

The latter is the class of non-durative processes, verbs: *gjej* 'find', *qëlloj* 'hit', *vetëtin* 'flash' show an unexpected action, very fast at the time of its completion. In these verbs, with fully telic meaning, the end of the process is defined once he starts, with no possibility of its break. So, with the verbs of this class is not possible to obtain an imperfect localized in time. This means that such an action may refer to a given situation only in terms of an action repeated continuously, or when it concerns with some action items: *gjeja*, *qëlloja*; while aorist: *gjeta*, *qëllova* only confirms internal lexical boundaries found in the verb, so, from the lexicon-grammatical point of view, its use is redundant. The simple past tense express, through the action in question, a change of state.

In some processes, labeled by such a verbs, we can distinguish starting stage (we are dealing, here, with micro changes), while it seems difficult to impossible to say anything about its final stage. So the verbs *çel* 'open', *vij* 'come' in contrast, accept imperfect's use even with a single action (localized in time). This class of verbs in this tense: *çelja*, *vija* express a previous stage to the change of state (situation). Aorist: *çela*, *erdha* shows, on the other hand, the consequence of this change, characterizes the new situation through the resulting situation due to the verbal action in question.

2. 1. 4. Achievement verbs shows common points with another class of telic verbs, which belong to durative. The latter are characterized by processes that lead to the achievement of a particular termination or result. So at *lava* or *bleva* verbs *laj* "wash", *blej* "buy" as part of these phrases are durative, ACCOMPLISHMENT verbs. The appropriate expression of the accomplishment verbal action is realized by syntactic tools.

Tense forms *laja*, *bleja*, do not present an accomplishment durative action, but an activity one. In specific contexts, accomplishment verbs in imperfect tense shows a conative coloration type (i. e. they show attempts to perform an action), or the imperfect can be used instead of aorist to express that such action is over, when its outcome stands in front of the speaker or writer. So, telic verbs, in the forms of the imperfect, do not exclude the possibility of expressing the action as conducted and fully completed at a given time of the past.

A temporal analysis of processes

A process consists essentially of a nuclear phase during which the activity takes place. Processes, generally, can be segmented into a series of smaller temporal segments. This 'core' of the process, the nucleus, is in turn broken down into three basic parts: the initial phase, the central one and the final one. There are then two more phases, one of which precedes the process or the nucleus, and is said *onset*, while the other follows it and is said *coda*¹. During the onset a process can not yet be said 'in progress' in the strict sense, but is still starting, so it is in a 'preparatory' stage, which is different from the initial phase of the nucleus. The coda of a process is a phase subsequent to the end of the nucleus, so it is an 'ending' stage in relation to the process. Both these phases express tendencies. It is not so easy to distinguish clearly

¹ Freed (1979: 37-40) use the term *event* corresponding to a segment that contains the *onset*, *nucleus* and *coda*. Brew (2003: 151-153) uses the term *stato di fatto* (Azione) with the structure: *fase preiniziale, persistente e postterminale*. We in the monograph (2009: 106-118) talk about a *proces* comprising *fazë nisje, bërthamë dhe fund*.

when these segments begin or end, because of the nature of the verbs that characterize these different temporal segments. Moreover, for the reason of the possible interruption of the processes these intervals can be further divided.

The various aspectual categories outlined by Vendler, Dowty, Freed¹, Johnson, etc., can be clearly correlated to the segments. It is well known that types of aspectual verbs as well as the process segments can be temporally characterised, so, we can try to explain one of them in relation to the other. The time segments of onset, nucleus, and coda are parts of processes. The verbal categories of activity, accomplishment, achievement, state, portray expressions with different temporal properties.

Taking into account the Albanians aspectualizers *nis* 'start'(onset); *filloj* 'begin', *vazhdoj* 'continue', *ndaloj* 'stop'(nucleus); *mbaroj* 'finish'(coda), you can establish a correspondence between them and the phases of a process.

ACTIVITY² – The verbs of activity, analysed as associated with homogeneous processes, are separable only in nuclear phases ("qualitatively" indistinguishable). So, we refer to the nucleus of a process, or to a process that consists only in the nuclear activity, when we use *punoj* 'work', *shkruaj* 'write', *flas* 'speak' etc. In this case, probably, we can mention the existence of a phase as the onset, in relation to these processes, but not of a coda, which is a segment that, instead, characterizes the telic processes. An activity verb is a verb which names a homogeneous ongoing process temporally not bound. They can occur with aspectualizers related to the nucleus phases. The activity verbs name a process, an uniform one, at every moment during which it is taking place.

Të punuarit 'working' names a homogeneous ongoing process. *Po punoj* 'I'm working' is true throughout the period during which this can be said to be taking place. Therefore, *punoj* 'working' is an activity verb which names a process which contains only a temporal segment called the nucleus.

There are other activity processes which have an onset in addition to a nucleus, but still have no coda. That is, some activities name processes which are temporally bound on the left-hand side only: *vijoj* (*vazhdoj*) + *Fildhore* 'continue + V_{conjunctive}' example *vijoj/vazhdoj të shkruaj* 'continue to write'. We may say that if V is an activity verb of this type then it names a process during the nucleus but not during the onset.

Filloj/zë/nis të flas 'begin/start to speak' names a process which is temporally bound on the left but which has no definite temporal ending. Therefore, *flas* 'speak' is an activity verb which names a process which contains both an onset and a nucleus.

ACCOMPLISHMENT - The verbs of accomplishment name a process that is temporally bound in both sides and has a definite temporal ending. The accomplishments refer to separable processes in all their segments and are characterized in particular by the presence of the coda. They occur with all aspectualizers, including the final segment ones. An accomplishment is true only after the coda has taken place. This phase, the coda, linked to aspectualizer *mbaroj* 'finish', is detectable only in relation to the telic processes indicated by accomplishments. Only these verbs can occur with this aspectualizer.

Të lexuarit e një letre 'Reading a letter' names a process which is temporally bound on the left- and right-hand sides and which has a definite temporal ending. Therefore, *të lexuarit e një letre* is an accomplishment verb which names a process that contains an onset, a nucleus, and a coda. These segments are named or referred to by the sentences *Ajo filloj /nisi /zuri të lexojë letrën* 'she started/began to read the letter' – the onset; *Ajo po lexon letrën* 'She reads the letter' or *Ajo vijon /vazhdon të lexojë letrën* 'she continues to read the letter' – the nucleus; and *Ajo e mbaroi /përfundoi së lexuari letrën* 'She finished reading the letter' – the coda. Furthermore, *Ajo po lexon letrën* 'She reads the letter' is true only during the nucleus of the process named by the accomplishment term '*leximi i një letre*' 'the reading of a letter'. That is, it is not strictly true

¹ In addressing this issue we are based on theoretical submissions of Freed, in her work *The Semantics of English Aspectual Complementation*, at the chapter " Events and aspectual verb-types" 47-63.

² The analysis that we present in this article is a continuation of the observations made in items Alimhilli Prendushi (2008: 1-13; 2013:161-169) as well as to the monograph (2009: 106-119).

that *Ajo po lexon letrën* 'She reads the letter' at the time at which it can be said that *Ajo ka filluar të lexojë letrën* 'She has begun to read the letter'. Furthermore, *Ajo e lexoi letrën* 'She read the letter' is true only after the coda has taken place.

2. 2. 3. **ACHIEVEMENT** - The verbs of achievement names a process that is not so easily correlated with the temporal analysis of events/processes. Achievements refer to a single process that happens in a given time, momentary process. Such a verbs as *gjej* 'find', *shpërthej* 'burst', *vdes* 'die' etc., are totally terminative. The action is not related with situations separable in phases, but it shows the result of the process. In some processes named by verbs such *dal* 'go out', *kthehem* 'return' it is possible to identify (at least) the initial nuclear segment (and for the rest of these events can be analyzed as sequences of micro-changes of state), while it seems more difficult to refer directly to a final segment of the nucleus. Belonging to Vendler for this category of verbs nothing can be said to have occurred until after they have taken place and they can't be described as taking place prior to their completion. This verbal class implies a relatively static result. Before we say that *Drita e shkroi letrën*, 'Drita wrote the letter' we may say *Drita është duke shkruar letrën* 'Drita is writing the letter'. However, before we point out that *Drita e kujtoi emrin e saj* 'Drita remembered her name' we cannot say, **Drita është duke e kujtuar emrin e saj* 'Drita is remembering her name'. In general, an achievement is an aspectual verb-type which names a not temporally segmentable event/process that has no duration and it is not uniform, too. There is no period during which the events/processes named by achievements take place. Rather we say of such events/processes, *Kur SE F_i? 'NP V-i at - o'clock'*, where V is an achievement.

2. 2. 4. **STATE** – is an aspectual verb-type that does not have an internal temporal structure, it is not an event/process. An 'event/ process' in this category can be defined as 'a change of state'. The verbs which can be classified as states do not normally occur with aspectualizers. *Mira është shqiptare* 'Mira is Albanian' names a state and not an event/process. It does not take place in time. The verbal action in the example is a feature of the subject, that is, its own attitude. These verbs, referring to events are not connected to situations separable in phases, not occur with aspectualizers. Such sentences as **Mira filloi/vazhdoi/përfundoi së qeni shqiptare* 'began/continue/finished being Albanian' are all anomalous.

Some verbs of state name a process that express the relativity of the states – a possible border of ending, such as *shqetësohem* 'worry', *vuaj* 'suffer', *besoj* 'believe', etc. Certain states establish in a 'gradual' manner. Some of the states do occur with certain of the aspectualizers: *Ai filloi të shqetësohej* 'He began to worry'.

3. CONCLUSION

The analyzes exposes several conditionalities, through the which are described the distinctions between activity, accomplishment, achievement and state verbs. These results were obtained by taking into account their distribution with aspectuals and relationships that result from their actions with the different verbs. It is highlighted, during the analysis, which is in essence, that the semantic effect of these verbs (*nis* 'start', *filloj* 'begin', *vazhdoj* 'continue', *ndaloj* 'stop', *mbaroj* 'finish') is of a temporal nature. So, they let us, in the constructions in which they appear, to distinguish the action time extension. These verbs with aspectual features, within specific groups of words are used to indicate the beginning, continuity, interruption and the end of the action expressed by the following word.

Based on the performed analysis, we present below the results of the two tests analyzed, but bearing in mind that many verbs, because of the multiple meanings that contain, may respond positively to tests for different classes:

If V occurs with *ndaloj* 'stop' in *SE ndaloj së F_{pjesore-i} 'NP stopped së V_{participle-i}'* and has as a consequence *SE F_i 'NP V_i'*, then V is an **activity**. In such cases V occurs awkwardly with *mbaroj* 'finish'.

If V occurs with *ndaloj* 'stop' in *SE ndaloj së F_{pjesore-i} 'NP stopped së V_{participle-i}'*, but does not have as a consequence *SE V_i 'NP V_i'*, then V also occurs with *mbaroj* 'finish' in *SE mbaroi së F_{pjesore-i} 'NP finished V_{participle-i}'* and is an **accomplishment**

If V occurs with *filloj* 'start' in *SE filloi F_{lidhore} (në orën X) 'NP started V_{conjunctive} (at - o'clock)'* and has as a consequence *SE F_i 'NP V_i'*, but does not occur with *ndaloj* 'stop' in *SE ndaloj së F_{pjesore-i} (në orën X) 'NP stopped së V_{participle-i} (at - o'clock)'*, then V is an **achievement**

If V cannot occur in the following frames with *filloj* 'start', *ndaloj* 'stop', or *mbaroj* 'finish' in * *SE filloi F* lidhore. 'NP started V conjunctive' or **SE ndaloj/përfundoi së F* pjesore-i 'NP stopped/finished së V participle-i', then V is a **state**.

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