

Aspect and Iterativity in Macedonian

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The interaction of tense, aspect and mood in Slavic iterative contexts has been the subject of numerous studies. In this article I will show how Macedonian data fit into the proposed theories by focusing on the interaction of superordinate aspect (perfective/imperfective) and subordinate aspect (aorist/imperfect). While there is a potential four-way interaction between the aorist and imperfect on the one hand and perfective and imperfective on the other, in practice there is a tendency for the aorist to be formed from perfective verbs and imperfects to be formed from imperfective verbs, except in clearly modal contexts such as counterfactual conditions with the future particle *ke* which generally take the perfective imperfect:

- (1) Da znaev, *ke* dojde. (Pi)¹
'If I had known, I would have come.'

Teunissen (1984) suggests that for all practical purposes superordinate aspect determines subordinate aspect, not the reverse, since aorists are overwhelmingly perfective while perfective and imperfective imperfects are in complementary distribution: perfective imperfects occur only after particles such as *ke* and *da*. It is true that imperfective aorists are relatively marginal in the current literary language, though Koneski (1967), Lunt (1952), Friedman (1977), and others give sufficient evidence that examples do occur:

- (2) Go drža (Ia) tamo celi tri dni i tri noći.
'They held him there for three whole days and three nights.'

The use of aspect in the imperfect, however, requires further study.

Work to date on perfective imperfects has focused more on usage in specific contexts — e.g., in counter-factual conditionals, as in example (1), in its use to express relative futures, and in iterative-habitual constructions — rather than on the nature of perfectivity itself and possible contrasts within perfective imperfects. Starting from a definition of mood which states that actions which are not ontologically real are markedly modal, and

hence actions occurring after the speech event are markedly modal, there has been a tendency in the literature to consider perfective imperfects as belonging predominantly, if not exclusively, to the modal plane. Thus, for example, Friedman (1977) excludes perfective imperfects from his analysis of the Macedonian indicative. Absent from discussions of those contexts in which a perfective imperfect can occur, i.e., counterfactual conditions, relative future and iterative-habituals, however, is the potential contrast between perfective and imperfective imperfects. In this article, I will examine a context which allows for both perfective and imperfective imperfects, i.e., past iterative-habitual actions. In particular I will focus on aspect use in subordinate clauses headed by *koga* 'when,' *ako* 'if,' *štom* 'as soon as' and *otkako* 'after, since' — cf. examples (3) and (4):

- (3) Koga *ke* se razdeneše (Pi) vo snegot naogavme zaveani
zajaci i lisici, erebici i smi i drugi živčinjata.
'When it would grow light, we would find in the snow
covered hares and foxes, partridges and deer and other
animals.'
- (4) A prikvečer koga započnuvaše (Ii) prvot mrak da go
pokriva gradot, toj *ke* gi čueše lekite stapki na tetka Marija ...
i najposle na vratata *ke* se pojavеше tetka Marija.
'But towards evening when the first gloom would cover
the city he would hear the light steps of Aunt Marija and at
last Aunt Marija would appear at the door.'

Aronson (1977), in a departure from Jakobson (1957), demonstrated that the categories of mood and aspect are closely related phenomena that can both be described, in Jakobsonian terminology, as characterizing the narrated event, but according to different criteria. Mood qualifies the event, i.e., it presents an objective evaluation of an action as real (indicative) or non-real (modal). Timberlake (1982) departs from the notion of invariant meaning as the primary motivating force in defining aspect and seeks a semantically based definition that will take into account various Vendlerian verbal categories. The relevance of the semantic class of the verb to iterated action and the role of telicity discussed by Timberlake (1982) and the relationship between aspect and mood proposed by Aronson (1977) will both be relevant to our discussion here. Taking a definition of mood from both Gołab (1964), who describes mood as referring to ontological reality, and Chung and Timberlake (1985:206),

who recognize that "[d]ifferent temporal locations of an event — past, present, and future — are inherently correlated with differences in mood and aspect. An event that will occur after a speech moment is non-actual and potential" It follows that the future, as well as the so-called future in the past, belong to the modal plane since future events are presented as potential, not real events. For our purposes, we will use the definition of aspect given by Jakobson, namely: Perfective aspect denotes the accomplishment of an action, or it can denote a series of actions viewed as a whole. It directs the listener's attention to the completion of the act. Imperfective verbs focus upon the action itself without specifying its completion, and so they may frequently be durative or iterative. While Timberlake (1982) raises interesting arguments against this traditional view, those arguments are not relevant to the present discussion. Thus, perfective verbs describe the action as a fulfillment (*izvršenost*), while the imperfective verbs describe it as a process (*proces*).

Aronson (1977) states that there is a context in which the opposition between qualifier (mood) and quantifier (aspect) is neutralized: the categories merge and are capable of marking aspect and/or mood. This context is that of subordinate clauses which are either modal conditional or aspectual iterative. Compare the following in English and Serbo-Croatian sentences in example (5), in which our understanding of the main clause is dependent on the subordinating conjunction:

- (5) Svakog bi dana igrao golf, dok je/kad bi živeo u Čikago.
'He would play golf every day when/if he lived in Chicago.'

The choice of aspect for denoting iterative actions has been the subject of interesting cross-Slavic analyses (*viz.* Stunová 1986, Chung and Timberlake 1985, Fielder 1985, 1993, Eckert 1985, etc.). Different languages resolve by various means the conflict between the completion of a sub-event which would normally be expressed by a perfective verb if the action were not iterated, and the multiple event which is generally expressed by an imperfective verb. It is clear that the iterated event belongs both to the temporal and modal plane. While projecting repeated events beyond the speech event, individual occurrences of the event may be negated:

- (6) a. Samo od vreme na vreme ke pukneše po nekoja puška
dolu od seloto.
b. *Samo od vreme na vreme ke pukneše puška, ama ne
pukneše.

- a. 'From time to time a gun would shoot below the village.'
b. *'From time to time a gun would go shoot but it didn't
shoot.'

Further evidence that past iterative actions may be seen as real is the restriction of the use of *da* in past iteratives. In past irreal conditions either *da* or *ako* may be used in the protasis:

- (7) a. Ako beše vremeto ubavo, ke sednevme nadvor.
b. Da beše vremeto ubavo, ke sednevme nadvor.
a./b. 'If the weather had been nice, we would have sat outside.'

In non-past conditionals, however, the use of *da* signals an irreal, unfulfillable condition. In past iterative contexts as well, *ako* describes an action as potential, as being iterated over time in the past whereas *da* signals only an unfulfilled condition, *e.g.*, *Ako se doblizevme do niv, stražarite ne gonea*. 'If we approached them, they chased us away.' But **Da se doblizevme do niv, stražarite ne gonea*. With *da* in the first clause, *ke* must occur in the second clause and the sentence expresses an unfulfilled condition and unequivocally means that we did not approach them.

On the other hand, past iteratives preserve a modal, potential nuance. Although a given action may have occurred on a number of occasions, any individual sub-event may be negated, for example: *Sekoj den toj ke dojdeše, ke ja zemeše knjigata, i ke rešavaše zadači, ama na onoj den ne dojde*. 'Every day he would come, take a book and would solve some problems, but on that day he didn't come.' The definition proposed by Chung and Timberlake (1985:221) captures this contrast between the overall iterative action which is, at the same time, a series of individual actions, namely: iterative events are composed of a multiple number of essentially equivalent sub-events that are iterated over time (or in some cases, over possible occasions in possible worlds). Such events have a complex structure, in which individual events (each with its own event frame) form a larger, inclusive macro-event.

Taking the notions of iterativity proposed by Aronson (1977) and Chung and Timberlake (1985) as our starting point, we will now turn our attention to Macedonian data and compare them to a similar study of Bulgarian data made by Fielder (1985). Fielder demonstrated that in Bulgarian the use of perfective aspect vs. imperfective aspect in subordinate iterative contexts is tied to the modality of the

subordinating conjunction. In Bulgarian, *kogato*, which can be used with an independent perfective verb not in subordination to a modal particle, occurs with both perfective and imperfective imperfections:

- (8) *Kogato svāršaše (li)/svāršeše (Pi) rabotata, vrāstaše se v kāšti.*
'When he finished the job, he returned home.'

The conjunction *štom* occurs with both aspects as well, but clearly the perfective is preferred:

- (9) *Štom ?svāršaše/svāršeše rabotata, vrāstaše se v kāšti.*
'As soon as he finished the job, he returned home.'

The conditional *ako*, however, occurs exclusively with the perfective:

- (10) **Ako svāršaše/svāršeše rabotata, vrāstaše se v kāšti.*
'If he finished the job, he returned home.'

Thus, there is a gradation in the choice between imperfective imperfect and perfective imperfect according to the conjunction in the subordinating clause and the degree of connectedness between the clauses. The notion of connectedness, proposed by Fielder (1985) will be central to our analysis of Macedonian data so we will present her definition here. Fielder expands on the notion proposed by Aronson's (1977) category of manner. Her proposed semantic feature of connectedness, used to describe both the aspectual and modal meaning of the perfective imperfect in subordinate clauses, applies to both the temporal and/or modal (here — causal) axes. The greater the causality between clauses, the greater the likelihood that the perfective aspect will be used. Since *kogato* is primarily a temporal connector and is neutral with respect to causality, it can describe actions as occurring contemporaneously or without explicit reference to sequentiality, and thus it can occur with imperfections of both aspects. The conjunction *ako*, which is clearly modal and explicitly states a causal relation between clauses, is used exclusively with the perfective, whereas *štom*, while used predominantly with perfective imperfections because of an implication of modal connectedness, can occur with an imperfective imperfect since this causality is not always made explicit.

Although in Macedonian we have a situation which is in many ways similar to the Bulgarian, the specific features of Macedonian morphology produce a somewhat more complex situation. Whereas Bulgarian *kogato*

can be used with verbs of either aspect, Macedonian *koga* is used exclusively with the imperfective. The particle *ke* must be present if a perfective occurs, e.g., *Koga ke dojdeš/ke dojdeše* 'When you come/would come.' Whereas all of Fielder's (1985) examples have an imperfective imperfect in the main clause, numerous Macedonian examples exist in which there is a perfective imperfect subordinated to *ke* in the main clause. What, then, are the conditions which influence aspect choice in both the main and subordinate clauses? When we speak here of perfective imperfections, we will restrict the term to those verbs which have paired perfective and imperfective forms. There has been a tendency in analyses of Macedonian to treat unpaired verbs as imperfective, but we agree with Aronson (1977), who treats such unpaired verbs as outside the opposition perfective/imperfective.

Let us look first at aspect choice in the subordinate clause. In examples with *koga* we note that in sentences that are iterative but in which the actions of the two clauses are simultaneous, an imperfective imperfect is used in both clauses:

- (11) *Spasija beše visoka i glavata ja držeše malku napred. Taa koga odeše po selskite kući so drugite ženi, zboruvaše so niv.*
'Spasija was tall and she held her head slightly forward. Whenever she walked about the village houses with the other women, she talked with them.'
- (12) *[Trena] koga im davaše na dečinjata nešto, se praveše kako da se čuvaše od drugite.*
'[Trena] when she gave something to the children, she made out like she was keeping it from the others.'
- (13) *Koga misleše na svoite, na seloto, mu olesnuvaše, podzaboravaše vo kakov pekol zapadna.*
'Whenever he thought of his own people, of the village, he forgot what hell he had fallen into.'

This use of the imperfective is consistent with a definition of imperfectivity stating that imperfective aspect looks at the process of the action, not the completion. In sentence (11), even though the verb *dava* 'give' describes a telic activity, the focus is on the manner in which Trena carries out the giving, not on the repeated completion of the stated activity. In examples (12) and (13), the actions in the

temporal subordinate clause are atelic. Native speakers did not reject the use of *ke* in these sentences, as in (11a):

- (11) a. Spasija beše visoka i glavata ja držeše malku napred. Taa koga *ke* odeše po selskite kući so drugite ženi, *ke* zboruvaše so niv.
'Spasija was tall and she held her head slightly forward. Whenever she would walk about the village houses with the other women, she talked with them.'

The speakers who suggested this example stated that in normal discourse *ke* would not be used. Its use here would connect this sentence to a larger narrative.²

The only other context where *koga* is followed by an imperfective imperfect is one in which there is neither clear causality between the two clauses nor is it explicit that the action in the subordinate clause was completed before the action in the main clause as in example (4), cited again here:

- (4) A prikvečer koga započinuvaž (li) prvot mrak da go pokriva gradot, toj *ke* gi čueše lekite stapki na tetka Marija ... i najposle na vratata *ke* se pojavuvaž tetka Marija.
'But towards evening when the first gloom would cover the city he would hear the light steps of Aunt Marija and at last Aunt Marija would appear at the door.'

In this example, the action in the main clause is not dependent on the completion of the action in the subordinate clause; therefore, the feature of connectedness is not present and, as expected, an imperfective imperfect is used.

Various scholars examining aspect choice in iterative contexts have suggested that there is a strong relationship between the semantic class of the verb and aspect choice, viz. telic verbs tend to occur with perfective aspect, atelic verbs with imperfective. It is evident that in Macedonian different classes of verbs must be taken into account in order to ascertain the aspectual choice. For example, in sentence (14) an interesting contrast is made between *koga* plus imperfective imperfect with an atelic verb of state (though here an unpaired verb) and *koga ke* plus perfective imperfect with a telic verb involving a change of state:

- (14) Toj beše parohiski sveštenik i vo nivnoto selo retko ideše, sproti zaslug na Sveti Nikola za da krsti voda, ili koga imaše (li) svadba, krstevka, ili koga nekoj *ke* se prostese (Pi) od životot ...
'He was a parish priest and came rarely to our village, for service on St. Nicholas Day to bless the water, or when there was a wedding, a christening, or whenever someone passed away.'

The most frequent aspectual relationship in past iterative clauses where *koga* is the subordinating conjunction is the following: *koga ke* plus perfective imperfect and an imperfective imperfect in the main clause if only one action is mentioned. In the following examples, the feature of connectedness is present; as will be evident, the action in the subordinate clause must precede the action in the main clause as in example (3), cited again here:

- (3) Koga *ke* se razdeneše vo snegot naogavme zaveani zajaci, i lisici, erebici i smi i razni drugi živčinjata.
'When it would grow light, we would find in the snow covered hares and foxes, partridges and deer and other animals.'

In this example we see a sequential relationship between the actions, though the causal relationship is weak. In the examples (15) and (16), however, we see a much clearer modal connectedness between the actions:

- (15) Zabeleža deka sekogaš koga svadbenata vreva *ke* mu se približeše i celiot *ke* go obvieše, vo nego odednaš povtorno se budeše onaa potreba za rasplačuvanje od koja, ponekogaš, odvaj se vozdržuvaž.
'He noted that always whenever the wedding hubbub would approach and all of it would envelop him, once again there would arise that need to cry from which, at times, he could barely restrain himself.'
- (16) A babata Fotka se topeše od radost koga vnukata *ke* ja vikneše babo Fota!
'And Grandmother Fotka would warm with joy whenever her granddaughter called her Grandma Fota!'

Here the use of *koga ke* is close in meaning to *ako*. There is a clear, explicit relationship between the subordinate and main actions. This relationship is not solely a temporal one as in the preceding example, but due to the causal relationship between clauses, occurs on the modal axis as well.

In her study of Bulgarian iterative sentences, Fielder (1985) found no examples of *ako* followed by an imperfective imperfect, although speakers did admit the possibility of such an occurrence. In Macedonian, however, although the occurrence of a perfective imperfect with *ako* is more usual, Minova-Gurkova (1967) has shown that there are occurrences with an imperfective imperfect. As she has noted, these examples denote past iterated events:

- (17) Ako nekoj zaprašuvаше, toj seedno ja povtoruvаше svojata prikazna.
'If anyone ever asked, he always repeated his story.'

In sentence (17) and in other examples with an imperfective imperfect after *ako*, it may be that in the context of repeated action *ako* loses much of its modal character and is felt to be more temporal, *i.e.*, it is similar in meaning to *koga ke*. In checking examples with native speakers, I found that there was a strong tendency to reject an imperfective imperfect after *ako* even in cases where the original text had an imperfective imperfect:

- (17') Ako nekoj ?zaprashuvаше/zaprashеше, toj seedno ja povtoruvаше svojata prikazna.
'If anyone ever asked, he always repeated his story.'

The original text had an imperfective imperfect but informants changed it to perfective imperfect. In the following sentence, a group of informants accepted the use of an imperfective imperfect only after discussing amongst themselves a reading of *ako* as *vo slučaj* 'in the event that':

- (17'') Ako taa se obiduvаше/se obideše da mu pomogne, ja odvrakase.
'If she tried to help him, he refused her.'

Despite the occurrence of examples of an imperfective imperfect after *ako*, a perfective imperfect is much more common in the subordinate clause of past iteratives headed by *ako*, and it is the only possibility

after *štom* and *otkako*. In these sentences there is a close connectedness between the action in the two clauses: the action in the main clause is dependent on the repeated completion of the action in the subordinate clause. Note, for example, the following:

- (A) with *ako*:
- (18) Ako se doblizevme do niv, stražarite nè gonea.
'If we approached them the guards chased us away.'
- (19) Ako samo malku ja narušev pravilnosta poradi rasejanost ili poradi kakva bilo momenta prečka, go čuvstvuvav toa kako neprostima greška.
'If I broke the rule only a little because of absentmindedness or because of whatever momentary disturbance, I felt like it was an unforgivable sin.'
- (B) with *štom*:
- (20) Štom ke se najadeše, ke legneše da spie.
'As soon as he had finished eating he would lie down to sleep.'
- (21) ... štom ke mu udreše šlakanica, toj najmalku trojno se otplačaše.
'As soon as he would slap him, he would pay it back at least three-fold.'

In the first example with *štom*, the temporal meaning of *štom* is most important, that is, it is not necessarily true that the eating causes the lying down, whereas in the second example, we see not only a temporal sequence, but also a causal relationship. The action in the subordinate clause is a necessary condition for the fulfillment of the action in the main clause.

- (C) with *otkako*:
- (22) Otkako ke go ispraznevme poletoto ... odevme v orman.
'After we would clear the field, we headed to the forest.'

- (23) Otkako ke go pregledaše vesnikot, toj ke zapaleše cigara, i ke poležeše ušte malku taka zamislen.
'After he looked over the newspaper, he would light a cigarette and would lie there a little longer in thought.'

In these examples with *otkako*, the connectedness between clauses is one of sequentiality not causality. It appears that in Macedonian *štom* and *otkako* are restricted to a perfective imperfect while *ako* admits the occasional use of an imperfective imperfect. This may be due to the fact that while *štom* and *otkako* always express an explicit taxic relationship with the main clause, and thus are always marked for the feature of connectedness, *ako*, in certain contexts can be replaced by *koga* which is not explicitly marked for this feature.

Let us turn briefly to the question of aspect in the main clause. As a general rule we may state that, regardless of the subordinating conjunction and aspect in the subordinate clause, two factors come into play. First, the action in the main clause will be expressed by an imperfective imperfect if only one action is described. This seems to be consistent with the use of imperfective verbs to express iterative actions. The major exception to this rule is that when the main clause contains a series of actions, *ke* plus perfective imperfect usually occurs. This is, of course, consistent with the use of perfective aspect to express a series of completed actions. Compare, for example, the following:

- (A) with *koga*:
- (10) Koga ke razdeneše vo snegot naogavme zaveani zajaci ...
- (24) Navečer koga ke se vrataše od rabota ... ke go zapaleše kandiloto, ke pometkaše nešto niz kuća i ke si legneše.
'In the evening when she got home from work ... she would light the candle, mess around the house a bit and go to bed.'
- (B) with *ako*:
- (25) Ako samo malku ja narušev pravilnostia ... go čuvstvuvav toa kako neprostima greška.
'If I committed even the slightest error ... I felt it as an unforgiveable mistake.'

- (26) Ke stignev vo nekoj grad i ako stignev so vreme, ke go ostavev kuferot i ke izietav nadvor.
'I would arrive in some city or other, and if I arrived in time, I would leave my bag and would fly outdoors.'

A study of Macedonian iterativity particularly in subordinate clauses headed by *koga*, *ako*, *štom*, and *otkako* lends support to the hypotheses set forward by Aronson (1977) and Fielder (1985). Namely, there is a close relationship between perfectivity and modality: the greater the connectedness between clauses, particularly on the modal axis, the more likely it is that the verb will be perfective. As in Bulgarian, there is a gradation in the choice of perfective imperfect and imperfective imperfect dependent on the conjunction in the subordinate clause, but according to somewhat different criteria. The conjunction *koga* may be used with the imperfective imperfect, particularly when the action subordinated to it describes an atelic process. Unlike Bulgarian, however, in Macedonian one must take into account the role played by the particle *ke*, which must be present if *koga* is followed by a perfective imperfect. This particle adds an expected projected meaning. The particle *ako* most frequently occurs with the perfective imperfect, but it may occur with an imperfective imperfect if the causality between clauses is attenuated. This differs from *ako* in Bulgarian, which, according to Fielder (1985), may be followed only by the perfective imperfect. The greatest restrictions are placed on the conjunctions *otkako* and *štom*. These conjunctions must co-occur with the perfective imperfect to the exclusion of the imperfective.

The data presented here give further evidence that in Macedonian, as in Bulgarian, the feature of connectedness is a relevant semantic feature influencing the choice between the perfective and imperfective imperfects. As in Bulgarian, the greater the connectedness between clauses, particularly on the modal axis, the greater the likelihood that a perfective imperfect will be used. Furthermore, the data show that the semantic class of the verb will also be a relevant factor in aspect selection. The opposition between aspect choice in past iterative contexts remains an interesting domain for study since here the categories of tense, aspect, and modality interact differently in Slavic languages, and the study of this interaction sheds further light on the nature of these categories.

Notes

1. Throughout this paper I=imperfective, P=perfective, a=aorist, i=imperfect.
2. In collecting data for this paper the notion of extended narrative was significant. Past iteratives did not generally occur in journalistic writing, in plays or scientific writing. In narrative fiction, however, they are extremely prevalent.

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