

On the Essence of the Concept of “Aspectual Situation”

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Abstract. *This article is devoted to the scholarly investigation of the concept of the “aspectual situation,” which is widely used in the field of aspectology. The author analyzes the views of international linguists on this issue and synthesizes their scientific approaches. The results of the study contribute to a deeper understanding of the essence of this concept and broaden the possibilities of its application in linguistics.*

Key words: *category, semantics, method, approach, field, aspectual situation, terminativity, processuality, iterativity, durativity, inchoativity.*

Introduction. It is well known that F. de Saussure directed linguists' attention to the relationships between linguistic units, identifying two main types of such relations: paradigmatic and syntagmatic. The grouping of linguistic units into certain paradigms based on specific semantic features later led to the development of the “field theory” in linguistics. In linguistic studies, a field is defined as a set of language units (primarily lexical units) that are united by a shared meaning and reflect conceptual, referential, or functional similarities among the phenomena they denote. The notion of the field as a fundamental element of grammatical structure emerged in the first quarter of the 20th century in Germany. Historically, the term semantic field was introduced into linguistics by the German linguist G. Ipsen. A field is a set of linguistic units that collectively represent concepts or referents which are semantically related and similar [Gribeshenko, 2008, p. 8]. Today, the concept of field is widely used within the framework of functional grammar. The notion of a functional-semantic field is closely associated with the term situation. The introduction of the terms semantic field by L. Weisgerber and linguistic functionalism by R. O. Jakobson, N. S. Trubetzkoy, and S. O. Karcevsky into general linguistics laid the foundation for A. V. Bondarko's development of the concept of the functional-semantic field and his application of the concept of situation to the study of aspectuality [Bondarko, 2002]. Bondarko's proposal to use the term aspectual situation (AS) for the analysis of aspectual elements significantly advanced research in this area and contributed to the classification of verbs based on their aspectual features. According to R. Abutalipova, the development of the concepts functional-semantic field and aspectual situation, grounded in the functional grammar model, owes much to the Leningrad School of Aspectology and its leading figures—Yu. S. Maslov, A. V. Bondarko—and their students, who made significant contributions to the field [Abutalipova, 2009, pp. 6–7].

An aspectual situation is one of the categorical expressions that reflects conceptual reasoning. It encompasses various aspectual meanings such as the perfective/imperfective aspect, the boundedness/unboundedness of verbs, durativity, iterativity, spatiality, and perfectivity. In addition, the aspectual situation also includes features associated with the category of tense, such as locativity/non-locativity and taxis [Bondarko, 2002, pp. 302–303].

Literature review and methods. In this article, the main methods used to analyze the phenomena of aspectuality and temporality include explanation, interpretation, comparison, and the lexical-semantic approach.

The study is primarily based on the theoretical perspectives of A. V. Bondarko and B. Kh. Rizaev concerning aspectuality. The theoretical foundation of this research draws upon several key monographic works, such as A. V. Bondarko's *The Theory of Meaning in the System of Functional Grammar: Based on the Material of the Russian Language* (2002), and B. Kh. Rizaev's works, including *The Problem of Aspectual Semantics in the Tense Forms of the German Verb*, *The Aspectual Semantics of the Preterite* (1999), *The Aspectual Semantics of Perfect and Pluperfect Forms of the German Verb* (2003), and *The Functional-Semantic Field of Limitativity in Modern German* (2013). In addition, the study relies on more than 40 examples extracted from literary texts such as J. W. Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1975) and A. Zegers' *The Dead Remain Young* (1980).

Discussion. According to G. Mirsanov's observations, the aspectual situation (AS) is determined not only within the scope of the predicate but also through the use of all linguistic units in the broader context. Furthermore, the variation in how aspectual meanings are realized across languages is also linked to speakers' mental capacities and the study of cognitive mechanisms [Mirsanov, 2019, p. 145]. The author defines the aspectual situation as the aspectual meanings reflected in a sentence through linguistic means—such as the initial phase of an action, its progression toward a final point, the flow of action, or its completion. Mirsanov also identifies several types of aspectual situations. For instance, he labels the beginning of an action as the inchoative aspectual situation (InAS), repeated actions as the iterative aspectual situation (IAS), ongoing actions as the processual aspectual situation (PAS), actions that have reached their endpoint as the terminative aspectual situation (TAS), and actions that have resulted in a particular outcome as the resultative aspectual situation (RAS) [Mirsanov, 2009, p. 61]. In agreement with these views, we interpret the aspectual situation as follows: it is not limited solely to grammatical or lexical means that indicate boundedness/unboundedness (i.e., perfectivity/imperfectivity, terminativity/ processuality), but also encompasses various modes of action (such as initiation, continuation, repetition, resultativity) and the aspectual meanings that arise from their combinations. These aspectual situations, moreover, may interact with other aspectual features within a given context.

In the scholarly works of B. Kh. Rizaev, the following types of aspectual situations are distinguished: terminative, processual, ingressive, durative, terminative-durative, initial-terminative, durative-stative, initial-stative, bounded-stative, perfective-processual, and perfective-stative (see: [Rizaev, 2003, p. 32; 2013, p. 115]).

As is evident, aspectual situations are classified into various types according to the meanings they express. One such aspectual situation is the terminative aspectual situation (TAS), which signifies that an action has reached its internal endpoint. This kind of situation is primarily formed through perfective verbs. Perfective verbs always represent an action that has reached its completion and yielded a specific result, regardless of the context or tense. That is, a perfective verb expresses terminativity even when it appears in the present tense. In German, the verb *ankommen* can be confidently included in this group. Its lexical semantics inherently carry the meaning of a completed action that has reached its endpoint. The bounded verb *ankommen* is also identified as a perfective verb in numerous linguistic studies.

B. Kh. Rizaev understands perfective verbs as those that exclusively denote terminative (completed) actions. These verbs have clearly defined semantic boundaries (both beginning and end). Unlike simple bounded verbs, perfective verbs do not represent transformative-durative or durative-terminative actions. A perfective verb is not just a verb indicating boundedness—it conveys a terminative action that is independent of context or even past tense forms [Rizaev, 2003, pp. 15–16].

C. Among the examples collected for this research, several perfective verbs were identified, including *ankommen*, *erreichen*, *stürzen*, *sich begeben*, *stürmen*, *finden*, and *treffen*. Below, we

examine how the perfective verb *ankommen* consistently functions within a terminative aspectual situation (TAS), regardless of its tense form:

1. **Past perfect (Plusquamperfekt):** “Often he would stop his brisk pace, often he stood still and seemed to want to turn back; yet he kept moving forward again and again, and finally, with these thoughts and monologues, he had arrived at the hunting lodge almost against his will.” [...*war ... angekommen*] [Goethe, p. 102]
2. **Present perfect (Perfekt):** “Albert has arrived, and I will leave...” [...*ist angekommen*] [Goethe, p. 49]
3. **Simple past (Imperfekt):** “They arrived—but in a way completely different from what the couple had dreamed of.” [...*kam man an*] [Mann, p. 333]
4. **Present tense (Präsens):** “He still drifts into a few taverns, and when he arrives at the small inn on the outskirts, he is a bit tipsy.” [...*kommt ... an*] [Brecht, p. 63]

As demonstrated above, the verb *ankommen* expresses a terminative aspectual meaning in each of its tense forms. Its perfective semantics remain constant, emphasizing the endpoint or completion of an action irrespective of temporal context.

In all four of the provided examples, the perfective verb *ankommen*, through its inherent semantics, denotes a completed movement or action, thus expressing a terminative aspectual situation (TAS).

Unlike the highly productive perfective verb *ankommen*, the verb *kommen* is classified as a simple bounded verb. The aspectual situation expressed by a simple bounded verb depends on various factors such as context, the tense form of the sentence, and the presence of additional aspectual markers. While simple bounded verbs can also indicate a terminative aspectual situation, they differ from perfective verbs in that they are capable of participating in multiple types of aspectual situations.

For example, in his analysis of the aspectual semantics of the verb *kommen*, B. Kh. Rizaev identifies four distinct aspectual situations associated with its usage:

1. **Terminative AS:** *Doch da kam Albert aus der Haustür und schlappte durch den Vorgarten.* (“Then Albert came out of the front door and shuffled through the front garden.”) [Kleineidam, *Westland-Story*]
2. **Processual AS:** *Frau Dörr saß so, daß sie den Gartensteg hinaufsehen, und trotz der Dämmerung erkennen konnte, wer draußen, am Hackenzaun entlang, des Wegs kam. “Ah, da kommt er”, sagte sie.*
3. (“Mrs. Dörr sat in a position where she could look up the garden path, and despite the twilight, she could recognize who was coming along the fence outside. ‘Ah, there he comes,’ she said.”) [Fontane, *Romane und Erzählungen*]
4. **Terminative + Processual AS:** *Sie kamen näher und griff seine Hand wie damals, als er ihr erstmal gegenübergetreten war.* (“They came closer, and he took her hand as he had done the first time he had met her.”) [Schreiter, *Billeschak*]
5. **Ingressive AS:** *Je tiefer wir hinabstiegen, desto lieblicher rauschte das unterirdische Gewässer, nur hier und da, unter Gestein und Gestrippe, blinkte es hervor und schien heimlich zu lauschen, ob es ans Licht treten dürfte, und endlich kam eine kleine Welle entschlossen hervorgesprungen.*

(“The deeper we descended, the more pleasantly the underground stream murmured. Here and there, it shimmered beneath rock and undergrowth, as if secretly listening to whether it might step into the light—and finally, a small wave resolutely sprang forth.”) [Heine] (see: [Rizaev, 1999, pp. 41–57])

Below, we examine the aspectual situations expressed by the simple bounded verb *kommen* based on the examples we have collected.

1. **TAS – Terminative Aspectual Situation:** *Gegen fünf kam er nach Hause, befahl der Magd, nach dem Feuer zu sehen und es bis in die Nacht zu unterhalten* (“Around five he came home, ordered the maid to check the fire and keep it going until night.”) [Goethe, p. 113]

Sie waren zusammen vor knapp drei Monaten nach Berlin gekommen

(“They had come to Berlin together nearly three months ago.”) [Seghers, p. 9]

In both examples, the perfective meaning of the verb *kommen* is supported by its semantic features and the tense form used in the sentence. Additionally, the following clause expresses the completion of an action, reinforcing the terminative interpretation. Although *kommen* is a bounded verb, it may also convey processuality, especially when used in the preterite tense.

2. **PAS – Processual aspectual situation:** *Geschke ging traurig auf Arbeit; er kam traurig heim in die leere Wohnung.*

(“Geschke went to work sadly; he came back sadly to the empty apartment.”) [Seghers, p. 176]

Here, **processuality** is conveyed through the repeated motion implied by the subject's habitual movement and emotional state.

3. **IAS – Iterative aspectual situation:** *Als Wilhelm Nadler am Potsdamer Bahnhof aus der Vorortbahn ausstieg und ein paar Straßen durchquerte, war ihm zuerst genauso zumute wie jedem, der nach einem langen Dorfleben in die Stadt kommt.*

(“When Wilhelm Nadler got off the suburban train at Potsdam station and crossed a few streets, he felt the same way at first as anyone who comes to the city after a long village life.”) [Seghers, p. 195]

The iterative aspect here is linked to the present tense form of *kommen* and the clause *genauso zumute wie jedem*, indicating a repeated psychological experience typical for anyone in such a situation.

In the analyzed examples, the bounded verb *kommen* appears in various combinations and often co-occurs with past participles (Partizip II) and contextual markers that further specify aspectual meaning.

4. **PAS + TAS – Processual + Terminative Aspectual Situation**

Das tat Christian auch von selbst; er kam aus dem Stall in die Küche gehumpelt, als das Gefeilsche um die Kuh auf dem Höhepunkt war. (“Christian did it himself too; he hobbled from the barn into the kitchen as the haggling over the cow reached its climax.”) [Seghers, p. 96]

Here, *aus* and *in* indicate directional movement—from inside to outside and vice versa—and the participle *gehumpelt* signals a processual motion, which, combined with the arrival, creates a processual + terminative situation.

5. **IAS + PAS + TAS – Iterative + Processual + Terminative aspectual situation:** *Er kam manchmal plötzlich an die Bank gerannt, um zu sehen, ob sie nicht verschwunden sei.*

(“He sometimes suddenly came running to the bench to see whether she had disappeared.”) [Seghers, p. 58]

In this sentence, iterativity is expressed by the adverb *manchmal*, processuality by the participle *gerannt*, and terminativity by the final purpose clause *um zu sehen, ob sie nicht verschwunden sei*, which defines the goal of the action. Thus, three aspectual features are combined in this single utterance.

Conclusion. From the analysis of the examples, we may conclude that, unlike perfective verbs, simple bounded verbs can participate not only in terminative aspectual situations but also in processual, iterative, processual + terminative, and even iterative + processual + terminative combinations. Therefore, an *aspectual situation* is formed under the influence of not only grammatical and lexical elements within the sentence but also contextual and extralinguistic factors. Its various manifestations depend on how these different means interact in a given linguistic environment.

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