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# Truncated Perfect in Serbian – a marker of distance? \*

Munich, 6th April

\* This contribution was developed within the project 'Perspectivity in Balkan Slavic' sponsored by DFG (<http://www.slavistik.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/projekt/index.html>).



## 1. Point of departure

L-participles as 'distanced forms' in Macedonian

Lunt (1952: 91): "these forms show an *action viewed as distanced in time or reality*"

- distance in time: an action took place somewhere in the past, the result of this action is still relevant or visible
- distance in reality: speaker signals that she did not witness this action

"This distinction between vouched-for and distanced actions is rigidly observed in the spoken language, and Macedonians even carry it over into Serbocroatian." (Lunt 1952: 93)

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05.04.13

## 2. Situation in Serbian

Perfect forms: I-participle + auxiliary 'to be' in present tense

- have replaced aorist and imperfect in most instances
- function as a generalized past
- express neither the presence nor the absence of distance

Truncated perfect forms: I-participles without auxiliary

- seem to form the marked counterpart to the full perfect forms

### Central questions of this contribution:

- What is the difference between the full and the truncated perfect forms?
- Does the truncated form function as a marker of distance?

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## 3. Previous approaches

Grickat (1954)

- omission of the auxiliary provokes
  - deletion of the anchoring of the represented information with the time of utterance
  - deletion of the predicative character of the sentence
    - presentation of the information as a given state
    - emphasis of resultative meaning

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### 3. Previous approaches

Mikkelsen (1983)

- opposition between truncated perfect and aorist/imperfect
  - aorist/imperfect connect the event with the standpoint of the speaker
  - truncated perfect signals the absence of such connection
- displacement of aorist and imperfect by the perfect leads to the fading of this opposition as well as of the specific meaning of the truncated perfect
  - today, both perfect forms function as generalized past
  - purely stylistic difference between truncated and full perfect forms

### 4. Analysis of the truncated perfect

Opposition between marked and neutral forms (Lazard 1999)

- neutral forms: no reference to the origin of information
  - marked forms: reference to an unspecified origin of information
    - split between the speaker and an observer, whose viewpoint is expressed by the speaker
- ⇒ distance of the speaker from what he is saying

### 4. Analysis of the truncated perfect

Opposition of marked and neutral forms

- neutral forms: full perfect as generalized past
- marked forms: truncated perfect
  - [- auxiliary] as marked feature signals that the information is not conveyed from the standpoint of the speaker

⇒ truncated perfect as marker of distance

### 4. Analysis of the truncated perfect

Distance as the split between speaker and observer

- underlying principle of evidential meanings (mirativity, hearsay, inference) (Lazard 1999)
- also functions beyond of evidential meanings
  - truncated perfect combined with the 1st Person
    - uninvolved, unconsciousness (cf. Wedel & Savova 1991)
    - irony, indignation

## 5. Explanatory potential: application

Admirative meaning

(1) - U pet dolazi ovaj ... Kako se zove? Duvančić!

- Ja baš **tela<sub>TP</sub>** da kažem Krompirančić. (Savić & Polovina 1989: 164)

- At five arrives this one ... What is his name? Duvančić!

- I've just **wanted<sub>TP</sub>** to say Krompirančić. [translation A.M.]

⇒ divergence of different viewpoints within the speaker:

- the speaker's viewpoint at the moment of utterance
- her viewpoint at the moment of the event, from which the event is presented

## 5. Explanatory potential: application

Irony

(2) [on the phone]

Alo! Da, jeste ... Da. Ajd, Paja! / Paja zove. (smeju se) Radim, **zauzela<sub>TP</sub>** ovde tvoju poziciju i ne mrdam... (Savić & Polovina 1989: 118)

Hallo! Yes, [there] it is ... Yes. Come on, Paja! / Paja is calling. (laughter) I'm working, I **have occupied<sub>TP</sub>** your position and do not wiggle... [translation A.M.]

⇒ divergence between how the speaker sees the event and how she is presenting it

## 5. Explanatory potential: application

Uninvolvement

(3) Pa da / ti se vratiš iz vojske. Ja nema me - u Americi. **Otišla<sub>TP</sub>** da se probijam. (Savić & Polovina 1989: 163)

So that / you will return from the army. I'm not there – in America. [I've] **Left<sub>TP</sub>** to make a living. [translation A.M.]

⇒ reference to a state (resulting from a past event) at which the speaker is no longer present

## 6. Concluding remarks

Truncated perfect as a marker of distance

- [- auxiliary] as the marked feature of the truncated perfect in opposite to the neutral, full perfect forms
  - signaling the divergence between the speaker and observer
- resultativity conveys the impression of the event as a given state
  - emphasizes the uninvolvement of the speaker respective to the represented point of view
- the meaning of the distal form has to be interpreted within the current context

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