

# Hear-say, inference, surprise: (self-)distancing in Balkan Slavic<sup>1</sup>

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⇒ application of 'distance' to the analysis of Balkan Slavic / Bulgarian perfect-like forms (*l*-forms)

- semantic basis
- contextual specification
- functional relevance

## 1. '*l*-forms' in Balkan Slavic

- form: *l*-participle (+)auxiliary 'to be'

(1) *săm / si / (e) jala*  
be.Prs.1/2/3 eat.*l*-ptcp.fem

- meaning: perfect, conclusive, renarrative, admirative

(2) perfect

A: Čičo Koki, takava pāržola može i da *săm jal* njakoga, ama ne si spomnjam. [...]  
B: Na vašata vila *si jal* takava pāržola. (Hinrichs et al. 2000: 139)

A: Uncle Koki, it might be that I *have eaten* such a chop before, but I don't remember.  
B: At your dacha you *have eaten* such chop.

(3) conclusive

Izgležda, kogato se e počukalo na vratata, toj e sedjal i *e pišel*.  
It appears that when a knock came at the door he'd been sitting there and *writing*.  
(Alexander & Zhobov 2009: 68)

(4) renarrative

Luka Toni *Øzapočnal* pregovori s Roma (<http://topsport.ibox.bg>, 27.11.2009)  
[It is said that] Luca Toni *started* negotiations with Roma.

(5) admirative

– Ništo njama be, čovek! Kakvo *si se zajal*?! (Alek Popov, *Misija London*)  
– Nothing's wrong, man! What *are you arguing about*?!

(6) irony

A: [...] Nie prosto složixme tam dve stolčeta do palatkata, gledaxme zvezdite ...  
B: A-a, te *Øbili* do samata palatka? (Hinrichs et al. 2000: 29)

A: We simply put there two little chairs beside the tent, looked at the stars ...  
B: A-a, they *were* right beside the tent?

⇒ Question I

Are these different categories or can there be developed a unified analysis?

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## 2. The same but different

### 2.1 Homonymy

- different paradigms (e.g. Nicolova 2008) with homonymous forms: perfect, conclusive, renarrative, admirative

- (7) a. Ti *si bil* v Germanija? perfect  
You have [already] been to Germany?
- b. Ti *si bil* v Germanija! admirative  
You – [here] in Germany!
- (8) – Čuxte li novinata? – izvika Mark Avrelij [...]  
– Kakva novina? – obadixme se vsički.  
– Baj Ganju *se vārnal* ot Evropa! renarrative  
– Ne može da bāde!  
– Kak „ne može da bāde“, be, gospoda, az go vidjax, govorix s nego. renarrative?  
(Aleko Konstantinov, *Baj Ganju*)  
– Did you hear the news? – shouted Mark Avrelij.  
– Which news? – we all said.  
– Baj Ganju *has returned* from Europe!  
– Impossible!  
– How, “impossible”, I saw him, talked to him.
- (9) A (Sluša.): Psst, mi se čini krevetot krcna! (Mac)  
B: Krcna?  
A: Se protegnuva!  
B: Se protegnuva?  
A: Se prodzeva!  
B: Se prodzeva?  
A: *Se razbudil!* perfect? conclusive? admirative?  
B: *Se razbudil?* (Vasil Iljuski, *Čorbadži Teodos*)  
A (Listens): Psst, the bed seems to creak.  
B: Creak?  
A: He is stretching!  
B: He is stretching?  
A: He is yawning!  
B: He is yawning?  
A: *He has woken up!*  
B: *He has woken up?*
- (10) – Ox, maj *sām zagubil* ključa – izmānka toj. (Alek Popov, *Misija London*)  
– Oh no, I seem to *have lost* the key – he mumbled.

⇒ Assumption I

The obvious context-dependency suggests a unified analysis; polysemy instead of homonymy.

### 2.2 Polysemy

- perfect-like complex (Ivančev 1978[1976]); transitional usages (Friedman 1982); meaning continuum (Guentchéva 1990); generalized past (Alexander 2001)

- ‘distance’ as underlying principle
  - Lunt (1952: 91): *l*-forms show “an action viewed as distanced in time or reality”
  - Fielder (1995): distance narrator – narration; foregrounding/backgrounding
  - Topolinjska (2009): semantic category of ‘distance’ (–evidential and +admiring)
- distance speaker/narrator – predication/narration
- Lazard (1999): mediated expression of facts with different implications
  - “Speakers are somehow split into two persons, the one who speaks and the one who has heard or infers or perceives.” (Lazard 1999: 95)
- distance ‘within’ speakers

⇒ Question II  
What is the semantic basis for ‘distance’ and the interpretations ascribed to it?

### 3. ‘Distance’

#### 3.1 Semantic basis: coding of distance

⇒ contribution of *l*-participle and ±auxiliary

- components
    - state connected to some previous event *e-CS*
    - time of utterance *TU*
    - time of observation *TO*
    - assertion / topic time *TT*
  - semantics (cf. Sonnenhauser 2012, 2014; based on Izvorski 1997)
    - assertion of connected state: *TT(CS)* follows some prior event *e*
    - *TO* included within *TT*
    - *TO* included or not included in *TU*
- (11) a. *l*-participle +aux  
            $[e \not\subseteq TT \ \& \ CS(e) \subseteq TT] \ \& \ [TO \subseteq TT(CS) \ \& \ \mathbf{TO} \subseteq \mathbf{TU}]$
- b. *l*-participle -aux  
            $[e \not\subseteq TT \ \& \ CS(e) \subseteq TT] \ \& \ [TO \subseteq TT(CS) \ \& \ \mathbf{TO} \not\subseteq \mathbf{TU}]$
- crucial relations: *e-CS* and *TO-TU*
    - speaker – predication, speaker – speaker (cf. above)
    - information vs. knowledge (on that distinction cf. Akatsuka 1985)

⇒ Assumption IIa  
*l*-forms code two kinds of distance: information-based (*e-CS*) and knowledge-based (*TO-TU*)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Guentchéva (1996: 67) also takes the ‘double nature of the perfect’ as basic its distancing functions. However, she focuses on the mutual conditioning of *e* and *CS* only.

### 3.2 Contextual specification: interpretation of distance

- components of ‘distance’ (cf. Dancygier & Vandelanotte 2009: 326)

source	<i>l</i> -forms
two locations, A and B	e, CS and TO, TU
observer, aligned with A or B	narrator, character
space between A and B	information, knowledge
directionality, A→B, B→A	inference, presupposition; assertion, entailment

Table 1

#### (12) perfect

- a. semantics  
 event – connected state  
 asserted asserted  
 $TO \subseteq TU, TO = TU$  (character = narrator)
- b. A: Vilica...  
 B: Pak li *săm* zabravila? (Hinrichs et al. 2000: 42)  
 A: Fork ...  
 B: *Have I forgotten* it again?

#### (13) conclusive

- a. semantics  
 e ← connected state  
 inferred asserted  
 $TO \subseteq TU, TO = TU$  (character = narrator)
- b. Ivan *e zaminal*. Kufarăt mu ne e v koridora. (Nicolova 2006: 31)  
 Ivan *has left*. His suitcase is not in the corridor.

#### (14) renarrative

- a. semantics  
 e → connected state  
 presupposed asserted  
 $TO \not\subseteq TU, TO \neq TU$  (character ≠ narrator)
- b. I toj *bil izvesten* s tova, če [...] za cjaloto vreme *ne izpolzuvaj* banjata [...] (Hinrichs et al. 2000: 267)  
 He *is said to be known* for *not washing* himself the whole time.

#### (15) admirative

- a. semantics  
 e – connected state  
 entailed asserted  
 $TO \not\subseteq TU, TO = TU$  (narrator ≠ narrator; self-distancing)
- b. B: Čakaj de! Dvesta ti dadoch ...  
 A: Ej znači, az *săm imal* mnogo pari ... (Hinrichs et al. 2000: 93)  
 B: Hey, wait! I gave you two hundred ...  
 A: Hey, this means that *I have* a lot of money ...

(16) irony

- a. semantics  
 e – CS  
 asserted asserted  
 $TO \subseteq TU, TO \neq TU$  (character  $\neq$  narrator; echoing)
- b. A: Buč, ti tuneli li tārsiš v taja torta, ta zaljagaš taka!  
 B: Metro...  
 C: ā-ā [...]  
 D: Eto, kāde *bilo* Sofijskoto metro! ... (Hinrichs et al. 2000: 42)
- A: Buč, are you looking for tunnels in that cake, ...  
 B: Underground ...  
 C: Ahh ...  
 D: Ah, there *is* the Sofia underground! ...

„The speaker dissociates herself from the opinion echoed and indicates that she does not hold it herself.”[...] (Sperber & Wilson 1995: 239)

	locations	observer	space	direction	interpretation
e – CS	$TO \subseteq TU$	character = narrator	information	–	perfect
e – CS	$TO \subseteq TU$	character = narrator	information, knowledge	←	conclusive
e – CS	$TO \not\subseteq TU$	character $\neq$ narrator	information, knowledge	→	renarrative
e – CS	$TO \not\subseteq TU$	narrator $\neq$ narrator	knowledge	–	admirative
e – CS	$TO \subseteq TU$	character $\neq$ narrator	information, knowledge	–	irony

Table 2

⇒ Assumption IIb  
 The contextual specification of the components of distance yields predictable interpretations instead of clear-cut grammatical paradigms.

### 3.3 Functional relevance: distance and point of view

- *l*-forms and discourse

(17) [K]ogato baba Jova razpravi za poslednija mu čas, vsički se uverixa, če toja pāt toj ne se šeguva. *Vārnal se čovekāt ot dārva, raztovaril magarenceto si, vārzal go, [...]* (Elin Pelin, *Na onja svjat*)

When grandmother Jova told about his last hour, everybody was convinced that this time he was not joking. The man *had returned* from the woods, *had unloaded* his donkey, *had tied* it.

(18) – A be, Toško, ti li *si bil*? – izvika toj – što šteš tuk v blatoto? ...  
 (Angel Karalijčev, *Toško Afrikanski*)

– Ah, Toško, *is it you?* – he shouted – what are you doing here in the swamp? ...

⇒ distance and point of view (speaker, narrator, non-narrator, character): text structuring

- ‘narrative’ (17) vs. ‘dialogical’ (18) mode (Paducheva 2011)
  - narrative mode: perfect, conclusive, renarrative
  - dialogical mode: perfect, conclusive, renarrative, admirative, irony<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Nicolova (2006: 43) points out that the admirative is used only in spoken; according to the analysis proposed here this is not so much due to ‘spoken’ language but rather to the dialogical mode.

⇒ functional relevance of 'distance':  
distance – point of view – narrativity

#### 4. To sum up

- unified account of perfect, conclusive, renarrative, admirative, irony in terms of 'distance'
- distance coded by 'l-participle (+)auxiliary'
  - information-based distance
  - knowledge-based distance
- contextual specification of the components of distance
- relevance of distance for point of view, text structuring and narrativity

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