

Imperative and aspectual variation: theory and practice

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1. Research considerations

The aspectual differences in the use of the imperative in Slavic languages have enjoyed attention from a number of linguists. Bulgarian language sticks out with a generalized use of only one type of aspect, namely *imperfective*, in negative imperative forms. Certain competition between *perfective* and *imperfective* is observed only in positive imperative forms. Although qualified rather as a “small” language, Bulgarian enjoys certain favoritism in respect to verbs aspect research, which comes to show that even a more peripheral to the mainstream linguistic research language can offer an interesting insight to a very intriguing and debatable ‘big’ grammatical issue, such as *verb aspect*.

In regards to aspectual use in imperative forms Bulgarian language manifests the following:

A. In positive imperative forms:

- The use of *perfective* is neutral when employed for singular (non-repetitive) actions;
- The use of *imperfective* is neutral when employed for expressing unlimited repetitive actions (predominantly marked with the relevant adverbial feature);
- The use of *imperfective* is emphatic when employed for singular (non-repetitive) actions. This particular use is grammatically marked with additional meaning which implements anxiety for conducting the given order. In such cases it receives a nuance of greater urgency and to a certain extent rudeness, as compared to the neutral implementation of *perfective*.

B. In negative imperative forms only *imperfective* forms are employed.

2. Aims, resources, method

The current investigation analyses speech production of non-native speakers of Bulgarian, that is, non-original speech production. It reveals systemized data describing aspectual variation in the use of imperative forms, which are interpreted into the contrastive platform of comparing the interlanguage and the target language. Since interlanguages are by definition dynamic systems, the present investigation is based on experimental data, excerpted from the interlanguage of adults acquiring

Bulgarian language (subjects of the same methodology of teaching Bulgarian as a foreign language). The realization of such 'big' grammatical issue is reviewed in the interlanguage of speakers of the following language background: native speakers of English (American English), Hungarian, Spanish, French, Greek, Turkish.

3. Further findings

The conceptual complexity of the grammatical category verb aspect, as well as the idiosyncratic influence of the imperative onto the functioning of the verb types, leads to impediments in acquiring the use of the aspect: the *perfective* is often used instead of the *imperfective*, and vice versa, in positive forms the *imperfective* is employed instead of the *perfective*. Therefore, the specific character of the aspectual use in positive forms hampers the adequate use of these forms. Furthermore, the rule regarding the use of *imperative* only in negative forms is not successfully acquired, as the data demonstrates, both verb types are in parallel use.

Selected references:

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