

Decomposing Situation Aspect

The main question this talk will address is whether Vendler's (1957) famous four aspectual classes are underlying semantic properties of the verb or rather some of them can be derived from simpler ingredients. Using data from Bulgarian, I will argue that only states and activities are semantic primitives while achievements and accomplishments are derived from those by means of a telicity suffix.

The organization of the talk is as follows. First, I will briefly discuss other attempts to decompose situation aspect, both feature-based (Verkuyl 1967, 2002, Moens & Steedman 1988, Smith 1997) and non-feature-based (Dowty 1979, Krifka 1992). Next, I will show that what the various tests for distinguishing situation aspect target is telicity, agentivity, and duration. Then, it will be demonstrated that non-suffixed verbs in Bulgarian denote either states or activities but, if suffixed by a telicity morpheme, these verbs are turned into achievements or accomplishments, respectively. Finally, a first compositional account of situation aspect will be attempted.