

Aspects of Deficient *v* in Russian

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A common assumption about the nature of unaccusative verbs is that they regularly lack the external argument. A number of Slavic languages possess a decausative derivation, which turns transitive predicates into unaccusatives. Moreover, the decausative derivation is usually restricted to a subclass of transitive verbs. In this paper we examine three classes of verbs in Russian: transitives which allow for decausativization ('Transitives 1' or T1-verbs), transitives which never undergo decausativization ('Transitives 2' or T2-verbs), and unaccusatives. We give an account for regular distinctions between the behavior of the three classes partly in terms of aspectual compositional semantics and partly in terms of syntactic restrictions.

Consider the distinctions between the three verb classes illustrated in (1). The availability of the bare unaccusative construction (where the verb lacks valency-decreasing morphology, as well as the external argument, and the internal one turns up as subject) and of the *s'a*-decausative construction distinguishes the three classes of verbs.

First, let us consider the distinction between the two classes of transitives. Here the crucial data comes from the aspectual interpretation of Russian past passive participles (PPPs), exemplified in (2). The T1-verbs in (2a) allow for the ambiguity between an eventive and a stative reading, while T2-verbs in (2b) do not. Furthermore, (3) shows that in agentive sentences the ambiguity found in (2a) disappears: under this condition verbs from the first class allow only for an eventive reading.

In our analysis we adopt Kratzer's (1994, 1996) treatment of the external argument. We assume that the external argument is not a lexical argument, and therefore it is not specified in a verb's lexical entry, but is introduced within the derivation in Spec vP by means of Event Identification. Moreover, in the spirit of Ramchand (2008) we assume that introduction of the external argument is possible iff the event structure contains a causing (initiating) sub-event.

We argue that the data in (2)-(3) can be accounted for if it is assumed that the interpretation of a T2verb stems (like *podmesti* 'sweep') includes a relation with a causing sub-event, while the interpretation of T1-verb stems (like *otkryt* 'open') does not include this relation, cf. (4) for a formal restatement. This assumption directly accounts for the contradiction in (5b) and the coherence of (5a). Thus, in (4a) we assume the lexical entry of T1-verbs to be predicates over states. Then, the stative reading in (2a) arises when the T1-verb stem is merged with a passive v^0 , which is spelled out as a PPP morpheme. In this case the v^0 head does not introduce an external argument. On the other hand, the eventive reading in (2a) arises when the verb stem is first merged with a phonologically empty causative head Cause0. This head introduces a causing sub-event, which enables further Merge with a passive v^0 which introduces an \exists -bound external argument. Now it is easy to see why the stative reading is unavailable in (3) where a T1-verb has an agentive external argument.

Obviously, T2-verbs unlike T1-verbs would not have a stative reading, since their lexical meaning contains the information about the causing sub-event to begin with. Finally, our analysis predicts that sentences like (5a) should only be coherent under the stative reading. Indeed, this prediction is borne out in (6).

We can now return to decausatives in (1). In this case v^0 contains the decausative morpheme and does not introduce an external argument¹. Then the decausative v^0 is incompatible with T2-verbs which (unlike T1-verbs) contain the information about a causing sub-event and hence require an external argument. Thus T1-verbs are similar to unaccusatives in that their interpretation does not involve a causing sub-event, and hence they do not require an external argument. The question now is why the bare unaccusative construction is not available with T1-verbs, and conversely, why the decausative construction is unavailable with unaccusatives? We propose that while all other verb stems have to be merged with v^0 on some stage of the derivation, unaccusative stems never syntactically combine with v^0 . First of all, this assumption explains why unaccusatives unlike T1 and T2 verbs, do not ever take a direct object in any syntactic configuration. Furthermore, it explains the

¹ Apparently, the aspectual structure of decausatives is more complex than that of stative PPPs, since they denote a transition but not a state. We attribute this complexity to a more complex aspectual interpretation of the decausative v^0 .

ungrammaticality of (1f), where the decausative v^0 fails to combine with the unaccusative *prijti* ‘arrive’. Finally, the contrast between (1a) and (1c) is due to a lack of v^0 in these configurations, which is tolerated by the unaccusative verb *prijti* ‘arrive’, but not by the T1-verb *otkryt* ‘open’.

(1)	Bare unaccusative construction	Decausative construction
Transitives 1 (T1) (<i>sломат</i> ‘break’, <i>zakryt</i> ‘close’, <i>razlit</i> ‘spill’, <i>podnjat</i> ‘raise’, etc.)	a. * Dver’ otryla The door opened	d. Dver’ otkryla-s’ The door opened-DECAUS
Transitives 2 (T2) (<i>sjest</i> ‘eat’, <i>opustošit</i> ‘empty’, <i>sprjatat</i> ‘hide’, <i>počistit</i> ‘clean’, etc.)	b. * Doroga podmela The street swept	e. * Ulica podmela-s’ The street swept-DECAUS
Unaccusatives (<i>rastajat</i> ‘melt’, <i>upast</i> ‘fall’, <i>teč</i> ‘flow’, <i>zabolet</i> ‘fall ill’, cf. Babby 1980, Pesetsky 1982)	c. Avtobus prišel The bus arrived	f. * Avtobus prišel-s’a The bus arrived-DECAUS

- (2) a. Dver’ byla otkry-t-a {2 časa / za 2 časa}. event/state
door was open-PRT-F.SG {2 hours / in 2 hours}
‘The door was opened for 2 hours / in 2 hours’
- b. Ulica byla podmete-n-a {*2 časa / za 2 časa}. event/*state
street was sweep-PRT-F.SG {2 hours / in 2 hours}
‘The street was swept *for 2 hours / in 2 hours’
- (3) Dver’ byla otkryta Ivan-om {*2 časa / za 2 časa}.
door was open Ivan-INST {2 hours / in 2 hours}
‘The door was opened by Ivan *for 2 hours / in 2 hours’
- (4) a. $[[otkry-]] = \lambda x \lambda s [open(x)(s)]$ (T1-verb)
b. $[[podme-]] = \lambda x \lambda s \lambda e [sweep(x)(e) \wedge swept(x)(s) \wedge cause(s)(e)]$ (T2-verb)
- (5) a. Okno v komnate bylo otkry-t-o, xotja ego nikto ne otkryval.
window inroom was open-PRT-N.SG though it.ACC nobody not opened
‘The window in the room was open, though nobody had opened it’
b. * Ulica byla podmetena, xotja eë nikto ne podmetal.
street was swept though it.ACC nobody not swept
Int.: ‘The street was swept, though nobody had swept it’
- (6) * Okno v komnate bylo otkryto za 5 minut, xotja ego nikto ne otkryval.
window inroom was opened in 5 min though it.ACC nobody not opened
‘The window in the room was opened in 5 minutes, though nobody had opened it’

References

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