An analysis of Russian perfective negative imperatives in terms of the causal model

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1 Introduction: Kuehnast's (2008) analysis of preventive negative imperatives with perfective aspect

This paper aims at shedding a new light on negative imperatives with perfective aspect in Russian by applying a version of Copley & Kagan's (2021) analysis of Russian perfective aspect in the context of negation. In Russian, prohibitive negative imperatives about an intentional action (e.g. Don't open the window! / Don't kill Ivan! etc.) are marked by imperfective aspect only, while preventive imperatives towards a non-intentional situation are marked by perfective aspect, as in (1) and (2).

(1) Ne upadi! (Kuehnast 2008: 189)

not fall-PFV.IMP 'Be careful! Don't (inadvertently) fall down!'

(2) Ne razbej čašku! (idem. 190)

not break-PFV.IMP cup 'Don't (inadvertently) break the cup!'

This aspectual "division of labor" leads to ask why and how perfective aspect allows, in the negative context, non-intentional situations to be compatible with imperatives, which by their essence require an intentional action on the part of the addressee. Kuehnast (2008: 190) points out that "preventives depict a complex situation representing cause-effect chain, from which only the last link is addressed". According to this author, (2) may thus be uttered by a mother when "there is a cup on a table and [her] child is pulling the tablecloth" (idem. 192). The child understands that pulling the tablecloth may cause the cup's falling down and ultimately its breaking and can infer that (2) "is a hint to change the current behavior, which is not mentioned explicitly" (ibid.). Therefore, "the imperative force is directed to an activity or a state of affairs [in the preparatory phase] which the addressee is indeed able to control" in (2)]" (ibid.). Kuehnast (2008: 184) further points out that "negation affects the perfectivity of the predicate by discarding the change of state expressed by the perfective verbs. The spotlight of the verbal reference time span moves from the resulting state [where the cup is broken for (2)] back to the source state [where the child is pulling the tablecloth]". Thus, according to this author, the role of perfective consists of invoking an implicit state of affairs in the preparatory phase which is controllable by the addressee. However insightful, Kuehnast's analysis seems to remain speculative and even ad hoc: it crucially refers to an implicit preparatory phase, whose status should be clarified and independently justified. It should further be stated in a more general and principled way to be applicable to other cases. Copley & Kagan's (2021) analysis of perfective aspect in past negative contexts turns out to offer such a general framework.

2 Copley & Kagan's (2021) analysis of perfective aspect in past negative sentences

Copley & Kagan (2021) first point out that, in past negative sentences, "the choice of [perfective] aspect means that something happened in the world that made an instantiation of the negated event plausible, expected, or feasible". They use the term 'specificity effect' to refer to this meaning of perfective aspect. Thus, the example (3) "informs the addressee that, although the killing of Ivan by Anna did not successfully take place, it was reasonable to expect such a murder. For instance, it is possible that Anna tried to kill Ivan but failed as he was stronger [in this case, the murder event effectively took place but did not reach completion]. Alternatively, she may have planned the murder but ultimately decided not to perform it (because that would be too risky) [in this case, the murder event did not even begin]."

(3) Anna ne ubila Ivana. (Copley & Kagan 2021: 4)

Anna NEG killed-PERF Ivan 'Anna didn't kill Ivan (end up killing Ivan).'

They further propose a causal model " $\textcircled{N} \to \textcircled{E} \to \textcircled{R}$ ", which is read as follows: S (= implicit state of affairs in the preparatory phase: e.g. Anna-plan-to-kill-Ivan) is efficacious for E (= denoted event: e.g. Anna-kill-Ivan), which is efficacious for R (= result: e.g. Ivan-dead). The "specificity effect" is due to a presupposition, induced by the perfective aspect, that S effectively occurs (represented by \exists s.S(s)=1). Now, the above two scenarios conceived for (3) are modeled by (4a) and (4b), where Y represents some inhibitory influence.

(4)a.
$$\bigcirc$$
 ["event collider": e.g. Anna's reflection] (4)b. \bigcirc ["result collider": e.g. Ivan's strength] \bigcirc - \bigcirc - \bigcirc - \bigcirc (idem. 7)

(4a) corresponds to an "event collider" case where some $\[\]$ (e.g. Anna's reflection about the risk of murder) prevents $\[\]$ so occurrence; (4b) corresponds to a "result collider" case where another $\[\]$ (e.g. Ivan's strength) stops $\[\]$ s's realization. The necessity to refer to state of affairs in the preparatory phase is thus independently confirmed to account for the specificity effect in past perfective negative sentences. Copley & Kagan (2021) also argue that, while $\[\]$ is agentive and $\[\]$ s's effect of towards the occurrence of $\[\]$ is intentional in (3), $\[\]$ may be a mere circumstance and $\[\]$ s's effect towards the occurrence of $\[\]$ may be unintentional. Such a case is illustrated by "Anna didn't fall-PFV", where $\[\]$ may, for example, correspond to Anna's careless behaviors. According to their analysis, $\[\]$ s's realization is here presupposed. The sentence "Anna didn't fall-PFV" should thus mean that, in spite of an effective occurrence of $\[\]$ (e.g. Anna's careless behaviors), $\[\]$ (=her falling) didn't occur thanks to some inhibitory influence $\[\]$ (e.g. Ivan's intervention to stop her falling). The situation should be different in negative imperatives where no external inhibitory influence can be expected.

3 Proposals

To apply Copley & Kagan's causal model to perfective negative imperatives as in (1) and (2), I propose to paraphrase the above Kuehnast' remark about preventive negative imperatives as follows: "the imperative force (=an intentional inhibitory influence \mathfrak{T}) is directed to an activity or a state of affairs which the addressee is indeed able to control (=an implicit \mathfrak{T} , rather than to an uncontrollable event \mathfrak{T} or result \mathfrak{T})". The semantics of perfective negative imperatives in (1) and (2) may thus be represented in the causal model, as in (5a) and (5b).

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(5) \begin{tabular}{l} \hline (5) \hline (5) & \hline (6) &
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According to this proposal, as in Copley & Kagan's analysis, perfective aspect in preventive negative imperatives serves to existentially quantify \otimes . But unlike their analysis, negation here scopes over this existential quantification, which is represented by $\neg \exists s. \otimes (s)$. From this perspective, negative imperatives in (1) and (2) instantiate "preparatory phase collider cases" where the addressee's cautious action will prevent \otimes 's occurrence, which leads to non-realization of \otimes and \otimes . This hypothesis in terms of an externalization of negation is supported by the fact that, while a PPI indefinite *komu-nibud* 'someone' is not accepted in imperfective negative imperatives with a predicate denoting a priori a controllable situation, as *call* in (6a), it becomes acceptable with perfective aspect when the predicate is contextually interpreted as non-controllable, as in (6b).

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{nikomu/*komu-nibud}!
(6)a. Ne
                zvoni
                call.IPFV.IMP
                                 {anyone /*someone}
                                                              'Don't call anyone!' (Esipova 2021: 1)
     not
  b. Ne
                pozvoni
                                 slučajno
                                                 komu-nibud!
                call.PFV.IMP
                                accidentally
                                                 someone
                                                              'Don't accidentally call someone!' (idem. 2)
     not
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In sum, this paper answers the above question, by assuming not only E collider and R collider cases, but also S collider cases, as follows: perfective aspect allows non-intentional situations to be compatible with imperatives because it invokes, in negative contexts, a state of affairs in the preparatory phrase S, whose non-occurrence the addressee is required to realize though her intentional inhibitory influence S.

Reference: Copley, B. & Kagan, O. 2021. A causal approach to perfectivity. https://oasis.cms.fi/sites/oasis.cms.fi/files/files/Copley.Kagan_.Russian.perfective.pdf; Esipova, M. 2021. On abstinence and avoidance. https://esipova.net/files/esipova-aill-hdt.pdf; Kuehnast, M. 2008. Aspectual coercion in Bulgarian negative imperatives. In W. Abraham & E. Leiss (eds.). https://easis.cms.fi/sites/oasis.cms.fi/files/files/copley.Kagan_.Russian.perfective.pdf;