

## Does Viewpoint Aspect Make Reference to Time?

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Klein (1994) proposed that viewpoint aspect (e.g. the perfective and imperfective) relates eventualities to times. This work, which I will refer to as the “neo-Kleinian analysis of aspect”, has been extremely influential (in part) because it attempts to make Comrie’s (1976) well-cited intuitions about viewpoint aspect formally precise:

- The imperfective portrays a situation “from the inside”:
  - The time with respect to which we evaluate an imperfective sentence is contained within the run time of the described event that warrants the assertion.
- The perfective portrays a situation “from the outside”:
  - The time with respect to which we evaluate a perfective sentence contains the run time of the described event that warrants the assertion.

A different approach to viewpoint aspect, and the imperfective in particular, was proposed by Bach (1986). He suggested that, mereologically speaking, and in terms of event semantics, there is a part-whole relation between the meaning of, e.g. ‘John was drawing a circle’ and ‘John drew a circle’:

- part of an event of drawing  $\approx$  part of a circle
- whole event of drawing  $\approx$  whole circle

This suggestion led Krifka (1992) to propose an analysis in which viewpoint aspect does *not* encode time. Instead, viewpoint aspect denotes a function from a set of events to a set of event parts. That is, viewpoint aspect is partitive, differing in terms of which events parts are in its range.

On the face of it, it is not clear which analysis—the neo-Kleinian or the Bach/Krifka—better captures Comrie’s original insight. More importantly, it is not at all clear which analysis has better empirical coverage and what sort of data can tease these two analyses apart.

In this talk I present my recent research (Altshuler 2014, Altshuler 2016: Chapter 6), which looks at the empirical phenomena below, and points out various consequences of adopting one approach to viewpoint aspect versus the other.

- aspectual stacking in English and Russian
- reference-time fixing with temporal locating adverbs and the progressive aspect in English
- the imperfective paradox and non-culminating accomplishments in English, Hindi and other languages.

The hope is that this discussion fuels future research on how tense, temporal locating adverbs and verb phrases interact with viewpoint aspect to mediate between events, states and times. Only when we understand such interaction can we address the question as to whether viewpoint aspect encodes time.

### References

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