The typology of aspect in the Slavic imperative

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The Slavic languages - closely related. Expectation: verbal aspect used quite similarly
However, for 7 parameters/types of contexts of aspect use (Dickey 2000): IPF significantly more
widespread in East-Slavic than in West-Slavic.

One verb for missing from Dickey (2000): the imperative (Alvestad 2013)

So: how is aspect used in Slavic imperatives?
Expectation: PF most widely used
Is this borne out?

What I did:
ParaSol corpus; Kak zakaljalas’ stal’ (Nikolaj Ostrovskij, 1936); non-negated imperatives
(‘imperative’: pair of particular form (2. p. sg. or pl.) + one out of a set of particular kinds of
functions (order, command, request, permission, invitation, etc.), cf. Kaufmann (2012));
all of Vendler’s (1957) situation types; counterparts in 11 other Slavic languages

Answer: as far as the West-Slavic languages Slovak (Sk) and Czech (Cz) and Slovene (Sn) are
concerned: yes. As far as the East-Slavic languages Russian (Ru), Belarusian (By) and Ukrainian (Uk)
are concerned: no. As far as the rest are concerned, i.e., Bulgarian (Bg), Polish (Pl), Serbian (Sr),
Croatian (Hr), Macedonian (Mk), and Upper Sorbian (US): to varying degrees.

East-Slavic: 60% IPF; West-Slavic: 30% IPF.

East-Slavic:
Ru: Я знаю, почему он не стонал и вообще не стонет. На мой вопрос он ответил:
– Читайте IPF роман “Овод”, тогда узнаете.

(1)

(1) a. Ru: Я знаю, почему он не стонал и вообще не стонет. На мой вопрос он ответил:
– ЧитайтеhoffIPA roman "Овод", тогда узнаете.
(ParaSol. Ostrovskij: Kak zakaljalas’ stal’ (KZS))
I know now why he never groans. I asked him, and he replied: – Read the novel “The
Gadfly” and you’ll know.

g. US: – ČitajtehoffIPA roman “Spinadlo” a budžeće wědžeć!
i. Pl: – PrzeczytajciehoffIPA powieść “Szwerszeń”, to się dowiecie.
l. Cz: – PřečtětehoffIPA si román “Stfeček” a dovite se to!

1 http://www.slavist.de, compiled by Ruprecht von Waldenfels et al.
(ParaSol. Ostrovskij: KZS)

Turn out your pockets! Come on, hurry up! Do you hear me? Turn [them] out!

b. By: – Выверните́/IPF кишёнки! … Выворачивайте́/IPF!

c. Uk: – Вивертайте́/IPF кишені! … Виверніть/IPF!


e. Bg: – Обърнете/IPF джобовете си! … Обръщайте/IPF!

f. Hr: – Izvrnite/IPF дже́п Howe! … Izvrсите/IPF, kad вам говорим!

Qs:
1) Why is IPF so widespread?
2) How do we explain the cross-Slavic variation?

Claim: Variation due to differences in how the languages resolve cases of aspectual competition. When IPF wins, it is semantically perfective. Past tense indicatives: the general-factual IPF. Grønn (2004): two main types: the existential and the presuppositional

IPF is used to simply assert the existence of a given event in the past: existential, as in (3a-f).

(3) a. Ru: – “Как вы все это помните? Вы изучали/IPF лабиринты?”
   – “Нет. Я вспомнил старинный текст, который однажды читал/IPF.”
(ParaSol. Eco: Il nome della rosa)
   “How do you know all that? Are you an expert on labyrinths?”
   “No, I am citing an ancient text I once read.”

b. Uk: – “Ні, я цитую з однієї давньої книги, яку колись прочитав/IPF.”

c. Bg: – “Не, цитирам ти един древен текст, който прочитах/IPF.”

b. Pl: – “Nie, recytuję tylko stary tekst, który kiedyś czytałem/IPF.”

e. Hr: – “Nisam, izgovaram dio starog spisa koji sam jednom прочитao/IPF.”

g. Sr: – “He, navodim iz jednog starog teksta koji sam некада прочитах/IPF.”

h. Mk: – “He, само цитiram eден антички текст што одамна го имам прочитано/IPF.”

i. Cz: – “Kdepak, cituji starý text, který jsem si kdysi прочитал/IPF.”

j. Sn: – “Не, наважам из стариgа spisa, ki sem ga nekoč прочрабал/IPF.”

IPF is used to refer to an event that has been introduced in the context previously, by means of a PF VP: presuppositional/anaphoric, as in (4).

(4) Ru: В этой портной я написал/IPF первое любовное письмо к Вере. Писал/IPF карандашом.
   (Grønn (2004: 192), from Forsyth (1970: 86))
   In this tavern, I wrote my first love letter to Vera. I wrote [it] in pencil.

These uses of IPF in the imperative? Not obvious, but my findings strongly suggest that they do. But: imperatives are not associated with facts, so new term needed: “fake” IPF (cf. Iatridou 2000, Grønn 2013)

Past tense indicatives: existential type fake IPF most widespread
The imperative: the presuppositional/anaphoric type fake IPF most widespread

Claim: (1a-h): the existential type fake IPF in the imperative; the underlined IPF imperatives in (2):
the presuppositional type

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2 The English translation is also from ParaSol.
3 ‘Pisal’ is underlined to show that the event referred to is presupposed.
However: two problems with (2) w.r.t. (4):

1) The focus problem
2) The inaccessibility problem

The focus problem: In (4), there is a partition into presupposition—pisal—and focus—karandašom. In (2), however, there is no such clear partition.

The inaccessibility problem: In formal semantics, imperatives are often considered to be modal operators. This makes the eventive discourse referent of PF Vyvernite inaccessible to the eventive discourse referent of IPF Vyvoračivajte.

And: modal operators are analyzed in terms of quantification over possible worlds. Since imperatives describe events in possible worlds, then if (2) were a direct parallel to (4), the two imperatives in (2) would have to refer to the exact same event(s) in the exact same world(s). Perhaps ok for (2), but problematic in (5):

(5) A: – Выключи[^PF] свет!
     B: – Выключай[^PF] сам!
     A: – Turn off the light!
     B: – Turn it off yourself!

Thus: the strong hypothesis of event token identification cannot be upheld.

Resolving the focus problem:
The focus problem occurs in presuppositional type fake IPFs in declaratives clauses too, cf. B’s reply in (6):

(6) A: Конь поня[^PF]?
     Did you water the horse?
     B: Поня[^PF].
     Yes, I did [water [it]]. (Mueller-Reichau 2012, his (1))

B does bring some new information into the context: the fact that the proposition is true. Focused in B’s sentence: the truth of the proposition (Verum focus, Höhle 1992)

For clause types other than declaratives: illocution type operator focus
Focused in Vyvoračivajte: the mere speech act, of ordering/demanding

Resolving the inaccessibility problem:
Event token identification impossible in (7): the two events of selling the chest are included in distinct reference times:

(7) Ru:
    “Come on, let’s sell the chest while Roman’s not here...” “No”, Klaša said to Skavronov. “No, no, no. As soon as/When I’m dead, sell it. But while I’m alive, I won’t give it away.” (S. Antonov)

[^PF] Following Kaufmann (2012), I take imperatives to be necessity modals and, thus, analyze them in terms of universal quantification over possible worlds.
Solution: event type presuppositions – identification at the level of predicate type. In DRT (Kamp 1981, Kamp & Reyle 1993), predicates can be treated as constants, on a par with propositions (Asher 1993: 225ff). Constants are not subject to ordinary accessibility constraints.

Finale
Assuming that aspects, on a par with times and individuals can be indefinite or definite (anaphoric), I introduce an Aspect Neutralization Rule: when i) the aspect is definite, (as in the underlined IPF VPs in (2) and (4), but also (5), (6), and (7)) or ii) the aspect and tense are indefinite (as in (1) and (3)), a semantically perfective verb is to be morphologically neutralized to IPF. The Slavic languages adhere to this rule to varying degrees. This explains the differences in aspect use.

References