WIELDING AND LOSING CONTROL: RUSSIAN PERFECTIVE PERFORMATIVES IN INTERACTION

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Action and control. From the 1950s onward, a growing body of sociological and psychological research has explored several different constructs related to the multifaceted notion of 'control', which has accordingly been given distinct and sometimes conflicting definitions. One fundamental theoretical distinction, as elaborated on, a.o., in SKINNER (1996), has been drawn between 'objective control' (i.e., the necessarily causal relationship between a source response or stimulus and a desired outcome) and 'subjective' or 'perceived control', which has rather a phenomenological character (i.e., fed by the subject's relative and ever-changing perception of reality). Linguistic applications of the notion(s) of 'control', which started gaining a foothold in the 1970s, have played a pivotal role both in setting up formal theories of action (i.e., BRENNENSTUHL 1982: 7–24) and in grammatical theory, where a basic opposition between the semantic categories of 'control' and 'non-control' (and their morphosyntactic reflections thereof) has been sporadically assumed as the cornerstone of some natural semantic taxonomies of lexical predicates (KLAIMAN 1991). Likewise, in Soviet (then Russian) linguistics an intuitive notion of 'control' has been a central classificatory criterion (BULYGINA 1982: 68–82) with respect to the well-formedness of several Russian morphosyntactic constructions (a.o., preventives, prescriptive infinitives, dative-infinitive constructions, and aspectual imperfective (IPF) futures in egophoric utterances). Non-binary definitions of 'control' have been often proposed against the background of the speaker's Ⓢ contextual intentions (ZALIZNJAK 1992: 63–64), concerning both Ⓢ's goal-oriented mental operations and physical energies ('intensional' vs. 'denotational' control in KUSTOVA 1992: 145–146). More recently, a tighter connection between Ⓢ's (contextually salient) objective or perceived control and the abstract temporal schemata underlying aspectual morphology has been put forward as well; special reference is being made to the constraints on the licenseability of perfective (PF) forms in particular syntactic environments, such as explicit performative utterances, a particular kind of self-referential declaratives which are assigned a different illocutionary force in the syntax (GROENENDIJK, STOKHOF 1976; SEARLE 1989).

The puzzle. Russian performative verbs in egophoric utterances typically come as IPF present forms (e.g., *proš-u* 'I ask for'). PF present forms (e.g., *po-proš-u* 'I ask for') can be licensed as well insofar as a certain number of preconditions at the syntax-pragmatics interface are met, a.o., the availability and salience of Ⓢ's control in the speech act event. This can be derived if we assume that Russian PF entertains two basic pragmatic components, i.e., an assertion that the corresponding action has reached its end-point and a corresponding inference (generated as a scalar implicature) that the action has started (GONCHAROV 2020: 58). Interestingly, the vast majority of Russian unpreverbed performatives enter their aspectual pair with a PF predicate obtained via morphological attachment of the aspectual operator PO-. A cluster of such performatives, conveniently enlisted on the basis of the illocutionary act they formally realize (i.e., declarations, commissives, and directives), is given in (1 a–c);

(1) a. *ka-ja-t'-sja*^IPF/***PO**-ka-ja-t'-sja*^PF 'to confess', 'to repent'
     b. *klj-a-s-t'-sja*^IPF/***PO**-klj-a-s-t'-sja*^PF 'to swear';
         ruč-a-t'-sja^IPF/***PO**-ruč-i-t'-sja*^PF 'to assure';
         spor-i-t'^IPF/***PO**-spor-i-t'*^PF 'to bet';
     c. *pros-i-t'*^IPF/***PO**-pros-i-t'*^PF 'to ask (for)';
         sovet-ova-t'^IPF/***PO**-sovet-ova-t'*^PF 'to suggest';
         xodatajstv-ova-t'^IPF/***PO**-xodatajstv-ova-t'*^PF 'to solicit';
         treb-ova-t'^IPF/***PO**-treb-ova-t'*^PF 'to demand'

Likewise, the same pattern happens to be productive for deloctives (2 a–b) and unpreverbed biaspectual performatives which still derive preverbed PF counterparts (3 a–b);

(2) a. *blagodar-i-t'*^IPF/***PO**-blagodar-i-t'*^PF 'to thank';
     b. *žel-a-t'*^IPF/***PO**-žel-a-t'*^PF 'to wish';
(3) a. *obešč-a-t'*^BA/***PO**-obešč-a-t'*^PF 'to promise';
     b. *vel-e-t'*^BA/***PO**-vel-e-t'*^PF (/*po-vel-e-v-a-t'*^IPF) 'to order'

In the abovementioned examples the aspectual operator PO- is endowed with a complex semantics; in addition to introducing an abstract temporal function alongside which the given event is measured out, thus providing the event with a temporal bounding in the manner of a VP-external preverb, it may additionally signal that a certain limit has been contextually achieved, thus functioning as a proper VP-internal telicizer. The proposed semantics for PO- is tentatively spelled out in (4) below;

(4) $[\![\text{PO-}]\!] =$

   a. $[\![\text{PO-}_{\text{DEL}}]\!] = \lambda P.\lambda t.\exists e[t \supseteq \tau(e) \wedge H(P)(e)] \oplus$
   b. $[\![\text{PO-}_{\text{RES}}]\!] = \lambda P.\lambda t.\exists e[P(e) \wedge \tau(e) \subseteq t]$

The proposal. In this talk I would like to propose that the selection of PO- as a perfectivizing operator for unprefixed Russian performatives is motivated by independent semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic reasons. More specifically, the main claim of the present contribution is that PO- functions as a specific piece of inflection spelling out lower in the structure a Perceived Control variable which is generated in the higher portion of the clausal spine (i.e., in the SpeechActP shell), relativized to $\mathbb{S}$ (which is also the syntactic subject) and therein mediated by a λ-operator (cf. more technical details in PORTNER, PAK, ZANUTTINI 2019; ZU 2018: 101–102). Thus, the proposal aims at showing that $\mathbb{S}$'s intention-based perceived control is indeed grammatically relevant in Russian. This claim is substantiated by relying on the following pieces of evidence:

Syntax-semantics interface: Historical data seemingly suggest that the "double-access" PO- in (4) evolved as a further contextual variant of a new delimitative reading assigned to the preverb from the 17th century onward, i.e., during a period of significant structural changes towards the grammaticalization of the East Slavic aspectual system (DICKEY 2007) which also included the later restructuring of the allocutive forms of Middle Russian pronominal referential system and the stable introduction of a grammaticalized T-V distinction. It is thus proposed that the temporal bounding imposed on the speech act event by $\mathbb{S}$ themselves can be contextually reinterpreted as a token of $\mathbb{S}$'s (Perceived) Control, which leads to an altering (either a strenghtening or a softening) of the intensity of the illocutionary force IF assigned to the speech act. Some examples in isolation (see 5 below) are indeed ambiguous between a more polite (↓ IF) and a more authoritarian reading (↑ IF) – both pragmatic effects being brought about by the structural relevance of $\mathbb{S}$'s (Perceived) Control;

(5)   ***PO**-proš-u*   *vaš-i*   *bilet-y.*
      ASK FOR.Pres.PF.1.sg.   your.acc.pl.   ticket.acc.pl.
      'Tickets(!)' (lit. 'I ask for your tickets')

Pragmatics: Interface approaches to the structural mapping of discourse roles such as ZU (2018), however, have been criticized for being too rigid and substantially misrepresenting the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the speech act event, including the mutual accomodation of new propositions into the common ground (STALNAKER 2014) and the active role of the hearer $\mathbb{H}$ in (re)shaping context (WILTSCHKO 2021). Following BENZ's (2021) assumption that conversations are defined by sequences of joint coordinated actions between $\mathbb{S}$ and $\mathbb{H}$ (the so-called 'joint projects') constrained by epistemic maxims of licensing and uniqueness, it is therefore proposed that the contextual felicity and appropriateness of PF PO-performatives is being constantly evaluated and renegotiated against a set of pragmatic and conversational variables, a.o., the role and position of $\mathbb{S}$ towards $\mathbb{H}$ (viz. their ascendency over $\mathbb{H}$), $\mathbb{S}$'s perceived control over the eventuality, and the successful update of both $\mathbb{S}$ and $\mathbb{H}$'s information states. Consider the following complex communicative situation (6).

      [*Context*: You (i.e., '$\mathbb{S}$') have been employed as an office worker for the same company for the last twenty years. For some unclear reasons a new young colleague of yours, let him be called Vladimir Vladimirovič (i.e., '$\mathbb{H}$'), has been scoffing you at work for some time now. Tired of cracking light-hearted smiles in response to his constant banter, one day you eventually snapped and confronted him directly:]

(6) $\mathbb{S}$:   Vladimir   Vladimirovič,   ja   ser'ezno   govorju.
           Vladimir.nom.   Vladimirovič.nom.   I.nom.   seriously   SPEAK.Pres.IPF.1.sg.
           Ja   ot   Vas   ***PO**-treb-u-ju*,   čtoby   Vy   ko
           I.nom.   from   you.acc.pl.   DEMAND.Pres.PF.1.sg.   COMP   you.nom.pl.   towards
           mne projavljali   uvaženie!
           I.dat. SHOW.Past.IPF.m.pl.   respect.n.acc.sg.
      'Vladimir Vladimirovič, I am dead serious now. I demand that you show respect for me!'
      $\mathbb{H}$:   A   kto   Vy   takoj,   čtoby
           and   who.nom.   you.nom.pl.   such.m.nom.sg.   COMP
           otdavat'   takie   prikazy?
           ISSUE.Inf.IPF   such.m.acc.pl.   order.m.acc.pl.
      'And who are you to be issuing such orders?'
      $\mathbb{S}$:   Ja   tol'ko   *treb-u-ju*,   čtoby   Vy   prekratili
           I.nom.   only   DEMAND.Pres.IPF.1.sg.   COMP   you.nom.pl.   STOP.Past.PF.m.pl.
           izdevatel'stvo   nado   mnoj,   vot   i   vse.
           mockery.n.acc.sing.   over   I.inst.   PART   and   all.n.nom.sg.
      'I only demand / I am only demanding that you stop laughing at me, that's it'

The aspectual switch PF (***PO**-treb-u-ju*) → IPF (*treb-u-ju*) in the same joint project can be parsed in two possible ways; either $\mathbb{S}$ wrongly believes they can bring about a desired outcome by exerting control over the speech act event (PF is infelicitous), or $\mathbb{H}$ unexpectedly refuses to accomodate $\mathbb{S}$'s legit demands into the common ground (control encoding crashes and PO- is not spelled out). Following the definition of a context *c* <$\mathcal{P}$, cs> given in PORTNER, PAK, ZANUTTINI (2019: 16), the relation can be modelled as follows (7 a–c);

(7) $\mathbb{S}$: A: c ⟨P, cs⟩ ^ P = h : h(P_1) = {N_2} and h(P_2) = {N_1}   ($\mathbb{S}$'s perceived control – demand towards $\mathbb{H}$)
      $\mathbb{H}$: c ⟨P, cs⟩ ^ P = h : h(P_1) = {N_1} and h(P_2) = {N_1, N_2}   ($\mathbb{H}$ challenges $\mathbb{S}$'s control)
      $\mathbb{S}$: c ⟨P, cs⟩ ^ h : h(P_1) = {N_1, N_2} and h(P_2) = {N_2}   ($\mathbb{S}$ retreats – no spell-out of [control])

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