Markedness in aspect morphology in Inuktitut

Bettina Spreng, (Bettina.spreng@usask.ca)
University of Saskatchewan

In Inuktitut, a polysynthetic Eskaleut language spoken in the Canadian Arctic, verbal agreement inflection does not include tense or grammatical aspect marking. Tense morphology is separate from agreement marking but has been shown to be inflectional, obligatory, and thus predictable (Hayashi 2010, Hayashi & Spreng 2005). Viewpoint aspect, i.e. grammatical aspect is often argued to be derived or dependent on lexical aspect; either in a markedness relation, where telic verbs are claimed to be perfective by default (Bohnemeyer and Swift 2004), or in a correlative relation, where telicity is equalled with viewpoint aspect (Basilico 2008). This paper argues that the relation between lexical aspect and viewpoint aspect is as follows. **A)** Viewpoint aspect correlates with punctuality, not telicity. Punctual telic verbs are by default perfective, while telic and atelic durative verbs are by default imperfective. **B)** Inceptive and iterative are preferred imperfective aspects for punctual telic verbs in contrast to durative verbs, which are by default interpreted as ongoing or progressive.

The proposal is framed in a modified Reichenbachian framework (Reichenbach 1947), following Borik and Reinhart (2004). Borik and Reinhart (2004) propose that perfective viewpoint in English is based on two conditions: <u>1. (R)eference time ⊆ (E)vent time and 2. (S)peech time ∩R = ø.</u> If either one of these conditions fails to hold, we get imperfective viewpoint. This means that imperfective viewpoint has one or both of the following conditions: <u>1. E ⊆ R or 2. S∩R≠ ø.</u>

I argue that the second condition for (im)perfectivity is specific to English tense/aspect morphology and is not relevant for Inuktitut. E is instantaneous with punctual verbs, which renders E a subset of R by default. Therefore, punctual telic verbs are by default perfective. This explains the difference in tense marking between English and Inuktitut. English simple past forms are ambiguous between present perfective and past events, allowing for a 'just now' alongside a past interpretation; hence the second condition as proposed in Borik and Reinhart (2004). In Inuktitut, only verbs unmarked for past tense are interpreted as 'just now', while only verbs overtly marked for past tense are compatible with a past adverbial (1).

Both telic and atelic durative verbs are interpreted as imperfective with intransitive agreement in Inuktitut. Even with past marking, imperfective aspect is retained (2). With durative verbs, E is an interval, which renders R a subset of E by default. Therefore, durative verbs are by default interpreted as imperfective. I argue that this is true also for English verb roots, which accounts for the marked behaviour of achievement verbs in progressive forms (3a). With those that are compatible with the progressive form, their interpretation however is inceptive (3b), not progressive or ongoing, which contrasts them with durative verbs such as accomplishments and activities.

In Inuktitut, A) is supported in that unmarked achievements and semelfactives are interpreted as perfective (1a, 4a, 7a), and unmarked durative verbs are interpreted as imperfective (2) regardless of tense marking. When punctual verbs are interpreted as imperfective, they have to be marked with the inceptive antipassive marker *-si*. This imperfective can be iterative as in (4b) or inceptive as in (6). While *-si* is the default marker for imperfective antipassive constructions, iterative *-saq* can be used with a subset of verbs (6).

Thus, imperfectively interpreted punctual verbs are more marked morphologically in Inuktitut (4), than either activities or accomplishments (2), thus further supporting A). In addition, achievement verbs require inceptive and iterative markers to convey inceptive and iterative interpretations (4-6) thus supporting B). The proposal demonstrates that the punctuality feature of lexical aspect is just as relevant for the relation between lexical aspect and viewpoint aspect as telicity. Moreover, telicity is not the sole deciding factor in marking imperfectivity in Inuktitut. Bohnemeyer and Swift (2004) argue that default atelic verbs need to be marked in order to be interpreted as perfective and default telic verbs need to be marked in order to be interpreted as imperfective. This however does neither hold for telic accomplishments (2c, 7b) nor for atelic activities (2a).

While antipassives have long been argued to have indefinite direct objects (Bittner, 1994), and the backgrounded, indefinite or non-specific objects has long been shown to indicate atelicity (Kiparsky, 1998) in some languages, a direct correlation cannot be confirmed for Inuktitut antipassives since not all direct objects are indefinite (5b) (Johns, 2001). The requirement of the overt antipassive marker for punctual telic verbs confirms that antipassives in Inuktitut have an imperfective reading. This situates Inuktitut within languages where the antipassive morphology on the verb is aspectual (Polinsky 2008). (1, 2, 4-7 from fieldwork)

(1) a. jaan tikit-tuq
John(abs) arrive-part.3sg
'John (just) arrived'

b. * jaan tiki-tuq ippatsaq
John(abs) arrive- part.3sg yesterday
'John arrived yesterday'

c. jaan tiki-lauq-tuq
John(abs) arrive-past-part.3sg
'John arrived'
-lauq: earlier than today

(2) a. Piita pisuk-tuq
Peter(abs) walk-part.3sg
'Peter is walking'

b. Piita pisu-lauq-tuq
Peter(abs) walk-past-part.3sg
'Peter was walking'

c. arnaq miqsuq-tuq qarling-nit
woman(abs) sew-part.3sg pant-mik.dl
'the woman is sewing a pair of pants'

d. arnaq miqsuq-lauq-tuq qarling-nit
woman(abs) sew-past-part.3sg pant-mik.dl
'the woman was sewing a pair of pants'

(3) a. #Mary is spotting her friend at the party. (Rothstein 2004:36)
b. We are arriving in 5 minutes. (5 minutes from now).

(4) a. Piita-up nanuq kapi-jaa
Peter-erg polar bear (abs) stab-part.3sg/3sg.
'Peter stabbed the polar bear.'

b. Piita kapi-si-juq nanur-mit
Peter(abs) stab-icpt-part.3sg polar bear-mik
'Peter is stabbing/poking a polar bear'

(5) a. Piita tiki-si-juq
Peter(abs) arrive-icpt-part.3sg
'Peter is arriving (about to)'

b. Piita aqtuq-si-juq Miali-mit
Peter(abs) touch-icpt-part.3sg Mary-mik
'Peter is touching (about to) Mary'

(6) a. anguti kunik-saq-tuq ikaralimaamut
man(abs) kiss-iter-part.3sg for.an.hour
'the man is kissing someone for an hour'
literally: kissing repeatedly ("Inuk type kissing on the nose") spreng

b. anguti kunik-si-juq ikaralimaamut
man(abs) kiss-icpt-part.3sg for.an.hour
'the man is kissing someone for an hour (making out)' ("English type making out")

(7) a. anguti-up arnaq kunik-taa
man-erg woman(abs) kiss-part.3sg/3sg
'the man kissed the woman'

b. anguti-up qamuti uniaq-taa
man-erg sled(abs) pull-part.3sg/3sg
'the man pulled the sled'

Abbreviations: dl: dual; part; participial mood (=declarative); erg: ergative case; abs: absolutive case; icpt: inceptive; iter: iterative; *-mik* is the oblique case for the antipassive object, sometimes analyzed as accusative (Bittner 1991). *-si* is commonly treated as meaningless antipassive marker (Bittner 1994). However, its inceptive meaning contradicts this.

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