Tense, Aspect and Relevance

By

Vladimir Žegarac

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of PhD

University College London
1991

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this thesis is to consider some consequences of the relevance theory of Sperber and Wilson (1986) for explaining a number of phenomena relating to verbal aspect. Chapter one introduces some basic notions relating to aspect and illustrates the interaction of aspect and tense and gives an outline of the main tenets of relevance theory. Chapter two considers the aspectual categories (simple-progressive) of English and (perfective-imperfective) of Serbo-Croat in relation to each other, and also in relation to the the classification of verbs according to the situation types they denote. Problems of defining the aspectual categories of these two languages are examined, and the suggestion is put forward that relevance theory provides the framework which makes it possible to maintain a fairly austere semantics of aspectual categories as well as to explain aspectual choice. Chapter three examines the treatment of aspectual categories in terms of subjectivity. It is argued that speakers' intuitions about the aspectual categories being expressive of subjectivity can be explained pragmatically, in terms of the notions of loose use and interpretive use. In Chapter four, I argue that in addition to the feature of completion, the semantics of aspectual categories of both English and Serbo-Croat needs to be characterised in terms of reference to particular events instantiating the property denoted by the predicate. I show how this assumption makes it possible to explain a number of uses of the English progressive. I then proceed to argue that the progressive of English and the perfective of Serbo-Croat differ with regard to completion but that they both point indexically, as it were, to a particular event instantiating the property denoted by the predicate. This assumption is shown to be crucial in explaining aspectual choice in the two languages. Although the data discussed are drawn solely from English and Serbo-Croat, the central ideas presented should carry over to Slavonic languages in general.

Chapter five looks at situation type aspect in the light of Sperber and Wilson's (1986) view that conceptual information is stored in three types of entries. It is shown that the difference in the behaviour of verbs which intuitively seems to correlate with dynamicness and stativity, is best explained in terms of a three-way distinction determined by meaning postulate-like rules in the logical entries of concepts for individual verbs. I also give evidence in support of the view that accomplishment VPs fall into two classes depending on whether or not they grammaticalise completion, and I show that the grammaticalisation of completion in some predicates of this type is pragmatically explained.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Putting it in the most general terms, the main aim of this study is to examine some issues pertaining to the category of aspect in the light of the relevance theory of Sperber and Wilson (1986) (S&W hereafter). This chapter addresses some preliminary questions. Which linguistic phenomena does the term *aspect* (or *verbal aspect*) refer to? What distinguishes aspectual categories from the closely related category of tense?

The term aspect, or verbal aspect, was originally used rather narrowly in relation to the linguistic expression of semantic distinctions presumed peculiar to Slavonic languages (cf. Forsyth (1970)), or as a descriptive cover term for a number of language particular categories characterised by partial semantic overlap and defined in terms of the grammaticalisation or lexicalisation of certain features of meaning or the combinations of these features. Only more recently has aspect been considered from the point of view of general and theoretical linguistics, although it should be mentioned that a well established tradition which looks at aspectual distinctions as universal was, for a long time, associated with philosophy. It will be examined in the next chapter. So, what could be the rationale behind the language particular and the language universal approaches to aspect?

This chapter looks at some of the arguably defining semantic features of aspectual categories, and considers the relation between aspect and Aktionsart. The interaction of aspect and tense in determining the temporal interpretation of the utterance is illustrated.

7

The problem of characterising the meanings of aspect and tense and explaining their interaction is shown to be largely due to the view of verbal communication as an encoding - decoding process characterised by strict isomorphism between the linguistic meanings of natural language expressions and the contents of the conceptual representation which these expressions purport to communicate. It is shown that (explicit or implicit) reliance on the code model of verbal communication poses insurmountable difficulties for a plausible analysis of this relation, and two basic tenets of the relevance theory of S&W (1986) are introduced in order to indicate a way in which the problem could be tackled. The first one is the claim that the linguistically encoded meaning of the utterance characteristically severely underdetermines the conceptual content of the mental representation which the utterance purports to represent. This idea is known as the underdeterminacy thesis. The second tenet is the distinction between two kinds of semantics: *linguistic semantics* and *real semantics* (i.e. *truth-conditional semantics* or *the semantics of mental representations*).

1.1. ASPECTUAL CATEGORIES

Aspectual categories are characteristically defined in terms of the pairing of certain features of meaning with certain natural language entities (words, derivational or inflectional affixes, or syntactic constructions). Following is an incomplete list of these features. The presence or lack of each has been taken by one author or another as defining a pair of categories: (a) *complete*; (b) *habitual*; (c) *durative*; (d) *dynamic*; (e) *telic*; (f) *iterative*; (g) *ingressive*; (h) *resultative*; (i) *progressive*; (j) *perfect*. Let me illustrate them in turn.[1]

(a) complete

(1)   a.   The cat ate the rat.

          b.   The cat sat on the mat all morning (and, for all I know, she may still be sitting there).

Intuitively, (1a) is most likely to be understood as describing a complete event, and (1b) as describing a state of affairs in the past which lasted for some time and was, probably, terminated before speech time. This feature is taken to be definitional of the aspectual categories *imperfective* and *perfective* of Serbo-Croat (and Slavonic languages in general), to be examined more closely in Chapter two.

(b) habitual

(2)   a.   The cat sits on the armchair when it wants to be stroked.

          b.   The cat is sitting on the armchair now.

          c.   John walks to school.

          d.   John is walking to school at the moment.

The utterances (2a) and (2c) describe characteristic (or habitual) behaviour of their subject referents and contrast with (2b) and (2d) which are about events ongoing at the time of communication. But, note the slight difference in the ways (2a) and (2c) depict habitual or characteristic behaviour. In fact, it is not clear that (2a) is habitual at all. On the assumption that habitual utterances are to be explained as generalisations based on individual instances of events, it seems obvious that (2c) should be considered habitual, whereas (2a) might still be a statement about the causal connection between individual

occurrences of the cat's sitting on the armchair and its desire to be stroked.[2]

(c) durative

> (3) a.   John swam across the river in ten minutes.
>
>   b.   John's swimming/swim across the river lasted ten minutes.
>
>   c.   John arrived home in ten minutes.
>
>   d.   */?John's arriving/arrival home lasted ten minutes.

The important observation here is that (3a) can be paraphrased by (3b), while (3d) is rather unusual at best. What these examples show is that events may be conceptually represented as taking time to take place, (3a), or as momentary, i.e. as not involving duration at all, (3c).

(d) dynamic

> (4) a.   Mary ran on the beach.
>
>   b.   The book lay on the table.
>
>   c.   The cage contained the bird.
>
>   d.   The box contained five chocolates.

The utterances in (4a) and (4c) describe processes, i.e. states of affairs which involve continuous change (more precisely, activities, since the change is caused by an agent); those in (4b) and (4d) describe states, i.e. states of affairs which do not involve change (but may be brought about and altered by some change which is external to them). The distinction between state verbs and process verbs is discussed in some detail in Chapter two and Chapter five.

10

(e) telic

    (5)   a.   He fell down.

             b.   He blinked once.

Telic predicates like *fall down* denote events with some clear consequence(s) or outcome. With atelic ones the idea of outcome is absent, although it could be argued that events with the feature [+complete] always involve an outcome, which is more salient in some cases (if one falls down on a surface, one ends up being on that surface as a consequence of the fall) and less in others (making a blink is not readily associated with the idea of outcome or consequence).

(f) iterative

    (6)   a.   John was/kept blinking.

             b.   John blinked once.

The event in (6a) is made up of a series of events of the same kind. The utterance (6a) is about one occasion on which John produced a series of blinks which are seen as sub-parts of a single more inclusive instance of blinking, in contrast to (6b) which is about one single blink.

(g) ingressive (inceptive, inchoative)

    (7)   a.   They were about to leave.

             b.   They were on the point of leaving.

The feature ingressive is probably best characterised by reference to the onset of an event or state and, possibly, the event or state itself. The examples in (7) are only near English translations. In Serbo-Croat, for

11

example, this feature is associated with the prefix *uz-*. So, the verb *pisati* means 'to write', while its ingressive counterpart *uspisati* conveys the idea of starting writing and getting fully engaged in this activity. With verbs which do not involve change, the prefix *uz-* indicates merely transition into the state. For example *moći* means 'can', 'be able to', and *uzmoći* means something like 'change from the state of not being able to into the state of being able to'.

(h) resultative

    (8)   a.   John built a house.

           b.   John ran a mile.

The difference between the features telic and resultative is not always easy to draw. If the distinction is to be useful at all, the feature [+resultative] should be reserved for those verbal predicates denoting events which bring about the existence of their object referents. By this criterion, (8a) would be resultative, while (8b) would be merely telic. The two categories would stand in a relation of inclusion: all resultative predicates would also be telic, but not all telic predicates would be resultative.

(i) progressive

    (9)   a.   The cat was sitting on the mat all morning.

           b.   The cat sat on the mat all morning.

One of the differences between the progressive and the simple is illustrated by the overtones of dynamism and vividness conveyed by (9a), in contrast to (9b), where these overtones are absent. Although progressiveness is sometimes assumed to be a single feature, it should

12

be clear from the examples given here that, at the semantic level, it could be seen as resulting from the combination of the features [-complete] and [+ dynamic].

(j) perfect

(10) a. I have seen that film.

b. I saw that film.

c. I have written a letter.

d. I wrote a letter.

Both pairs of utterances in (10) locate events in the past, but carry different overtones. The present perfect highlights the idea of current relevance of the event, the simple past tends to focus, as it were, on the circumstances in the past related to the occurrence of the event.

There are two important and related questions regarding the perfect which deserve to be mentioned here. First, what exactly is the feature encoded by this grammatical form (if only one feature is at stake)? Second, does the perfect belong to the category of aspect, or to some other category, such as tense? Clearly, the answer to the second question will crucially depend on how the domains of aspect and tense are defined, and how the meaning of the perfect construction is characterised.

Ten seems a good number to stop at. To be sure, the list could be expanded to include more categories. One possible objection might be that this great number of allegedly aspectual distinctions is arrived at by failing to put emphasis on the notions of lexicalisation and grammaticalisation, on the expression of aspectual contrasts by derivational affixes and syntactic constructions, and by conflating the

notions of aspect and Aktionsart. In so far as aspectual categories concern the linguistic expression of conceptual contrasts, one could dismiss the distinction between syntactic and morphological means of expressing these contrasts as irrelevant. But what would be the difference between aspect and Aktionsart? The distinction between these two terms is examined briefly in the following section.

1.2 ASPECT AND AKTIONSART

The term Aktionsart has been used very inconsistently, causing considerable confusion. It could be used to capture the distinction between grammaticalisation and lexicalisation (as Lyons (1977:705-706) suggests). The term aspect could be reserved for the former, and Aktionsart for the latter. For example, the progressive grammaticalises incompletion. Hence, it would be an aspect. A verb like *play* denotes continuous activity. As incompletion is part of the lexicalised meaning of the verb, the feature [- complete] would in this case pertain to Aktionsart, and not to aspect.

Another possibility is to use the term aspect to cover only inflectional markers of certain meaning contrasts, while reserving the term Aktionsart for the marking of aspectual distinctions by derivation. A fairly clear example of an aspectual distinction by this criterion would be the contrast between the *passé simple* and the *imparfait* of French: the former denotes an event as a whole, the latter, as an ongoing process in the past.

(11) a.   Il reigna trente ans.

       b.   Il reignait trente ans.

            He reigned/was reigning for thirty years.

By these same criteria, the contrasts between pairs of verbs like *camp - encamp* of English, *battre - abattre* ('beat' - 'demolish') of French, and *ići - otići* ('go' - 'go away') of Serbo-Croat, fall within the scope of Aktionsart on formal grounds, and in the scope of aspect, on semantic grounds (because the first member of each pair indicates incompletion, while the second one indicates completion).

One possibly useful way of maintaining the distinction is to confine the term Aktionsart to the contribution that various markers of (in)completion and change (the typical example being the prefixes of Slavonic) make to the lexicalised meaning of the verb, as illustrated by the opposition between verbs of Serbo-Croat *ići* ('go'), *doći* ('come'), *otići* ('go away'), *proći* ('go through'). Aspectually, the last three verbs would all be perfective (i.e. completive), but each would have a different Aktionsart. In contrast to these prefixes, the perfectivising suffix *-nu*, as in *metnuti* ('put'), as opposed to *meatati* (roughly, 'be putting'), is strictly aspectual, since it does not change the lexical meaning of the verb beyond indicating completion.

Aktionsart seems a somewhat confusing, and, therefore, not particularly useful term. On the one hand, it has been used in many different ways. On the other hand, if one decides, following Lyons' suggestion, to introduce the term in order to draw the distinction between lexicalisation and grammaticalisation, Aktionsart will be found to overlap with the well established, and fairly consistently used term *situation type aspect*, to be examined in Chapter two. Regardless of the way in which this terminological quibble is resolved, the question of what caused the massive proliferation of aspectual distinctions imposes itself. The answer is obvious, at least in part. When the meaning of aspectual categories is defined in terms of semantic features such as completion, the picture may be complicated in two main ways.

First, given a particular feature, say [+/- complete], the following situations may arise in a language: (a) both the positive value [+ complete] and the negative value [- complete] may be grammaticalised, as illustrated by the perfective - imperfective contrast of Slavonic languages; (b) only one value may be grammaticalised while the other one is unspecified, e.g. the *-ing* suffix of English with the value [- complete], in contrast to the simple aspect, which is (so one could argue at least) unspecified with respect to the feature in question, and (c) it is possible, in principle at least, that neither value of a particular feature is grammaticalised or lexicalised in a language. Given the possibilities (a) and (b), the apparent differences across languages could be attributed (i) directly to differences in the values which are grammaticalised, and (ii) to the ways in which the aspectual choices available in the language system interact with the pragmatic principle(s).

Second, an objection to the language universal view of aspect, particularly widespread among Slavicists, is that the choice of an aspectual category in one language, e.g. the imperfective in Slavonic, does not (or does not systematically) convey the same idea as the arguably corresponding category in another non-Slavonic language, e.g. the English progressive. Hence, the following argument: (a) there is no strict correspondence between aspectual categories across (different groups of) languages, *therefore* (b) aspectual categories are language particular. Forsyth (1970) is a representative exponent of this view. Of course, once the argument is spelled out it becomes obvious that it doesn't hold. The conclusion from (a) to (b) is simply not warranted. When a semantic feature is seen as definitional of a binary pair of categories then, given the potential grammaticalisation of its values, the following contrasts illustrated above could arise: [+/-], [0/-], [+/0] and [0/0] (where '0' indicates that the value is not grammaticalised). For

example, assuming that the simple - progressive contrast of English is adequately characterised as [0/- complete] part of the difference is in the ideas and overtones conveyed by the choice of the progressive in English, and the choice of the imperfective in Slavonic would (in some way which needs to be pragmatically explained) follow from the differences in the aspectual choices available in the two languages, the choices which determine what I will call the functional identity of aspectual categories within the language system. For example, the interpretation of a form with the value [- complete] will predictably vary depending on whether the value [+ complete] is also grammaticalised or not. This question and other closely related issues are discussed in more detail in the chapters to follow. The main point here is to emphasise that the reasoning behind the language particular view of aspect is flawed. The Slavicist's possible response to these objections would be that they are misplaced and that aspect is not to be defined only in terms of semantic features which never appear in isolation from other less salient facets of verb meaning. Completion and incompletion are, arguably, merely the most salient elements of aspectual semantics but do not exhaustively define the aspectual categories of perfective and imperfective. This leaves a range of apparently closely related meanings as an unexplained residue of the more salient and systematically grammaticalised contrast between completion and incompletion, a residue which, seemingly, happens to be peculiar to Slavonic languages. Of course, one way of dealing with problems is to eschew them, but it is not a particularly interesting one.

The discussion in the chapters to follow rests on the fairly uncontroversial assumption that the feature [+/- complete] is indeed definitional of the aspectual categories perfective - imperfective of Slavonic and simple-progressive of English. Moreover, this feature plays a part in the interpretation of sentences in which neither of the

values can be said to be determined by the linguistic meaning of the predicate, such as *John read the newspaper*, for example. Depending on the context in which it is used this sentence can be taken to convey two thoughts with different truth conditions, roughly: *John spent some time reading the newspaper* and *John read the whole newspaper / finished reading the newspaper*. This example shows that aspectual distinctions are crucially related to the temporal interpretation of the utterance. Most strikingly, on one interpretation the past event of John's reading the newspaper could be construed as extending over the time of communication, whereas on the alternative interpretation the event would be completed in the past and, therefore, could not be extending over the present. So the interaction of aspect and tense seems worth looking at in some detail.

1.3. TENSE AND ASPECT

It is traditionally assumed that tense is a deictic category whereas aspect is not. Tense arguably determines the temporal location of a state of affairs or event relative to the time of communication, while aspect determines the temporal properties internal to the state of affairs or event. At the end of section 1.2 I hinted at the need for looking at aspectual distinctions at the level of the conceptual representations, whether they are grammaticalised in a given language or not. In this section I further illustrate this point and show that on a par with what could be tentatively called *grammatical* and *semantic* aspect, there is a case for drawing a distinction between *grammatical* and *semantic* tense. This section considers two well known analyses of tense. My main aims are to highlight the relevance theoretic distinctions between *pragmatics* and *semantics*, on the one hand, and two kinds of semantics (*linguistic semantics* and *truth-conditional*

18

semantics), on the other, by looking at examples which illustrate the contribution of tense and aspect to utterance interpretation.

1.3.1 Jespersen's analysis of tense

In terms of traditional grammar tense is a verbal form expressing time. We conceive of time as past, present and future, and tense forms tell us which of these three is being talked about. In Jespersen's own words:

> *It is important to keep the two concepts time and tense strictly apart. The former is common to all mankind and is independent of language; the latter varies from language to language and is the linguistic expression of time-relations, so far as these are indicated in verb forms;*
>
> ...
>
> *By the essence of time itself, or at any rate by a necessity of our thinking, we are obliged to figure to ourselves time as something having one dimension only, thus capable of being represented by one straight line.*
>
> (Jespersen (1961:1))

The relevant conceptual temporal distinctions on the time line are schematically represented in Figure 1:

A: past   C: future
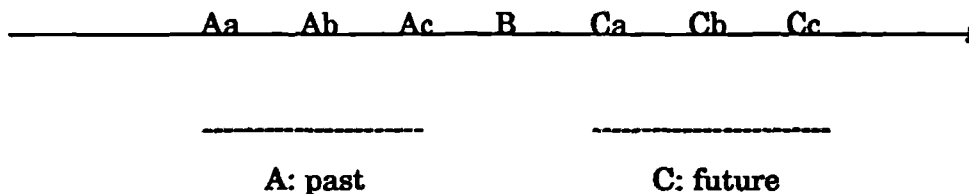
Fig. 1.

The subdivisions read as follows: <u>Aa</u> - *before past* (e.g. *John had already left at five*); <u>Ab</u> - *past* (e.g. *John left at five*); <u>Ac</u> - *after past* (e.g. *John was to leave at five*); <u>B</u> - *present* (e.g. *John is at the party*); <u>Ca</u> - *before future* (e.g. *John will have left by five*); <u>Cb</u> - *future* (*John will leave at five*) <u>Cc</u> - *after future* (e.g. *If John arrives, Mary will soon be leaving*). Jespersen also recognises that 'we have other time relations which do not fit into the series because they imply something else beside the pure idea of time' (p.360). He calls them *prospective* and *retrospective*, and indicates them by means of arrows. For example, (←—B) is retrospective present (as in *John has arrived*), (B—→) is the prospective present, (as in *John is about to leave*). As Jespersen's own examples show, the temporal location of states of affairs or events described by the utterance is largely determined by the context, both extra-linguistic (e.g. in *John left at five*, when exactly did John leave? *At five on the day of the utterance, the day before*, or *the Tuesday before the day of the utterance*) and linguistic (e.g. in *If John arrives, Mary will soon be leaving*, it is not clear whether Mary's leaving is to take place soon after the time of communication or soon after John's arrival).

The good side of Jespersen's system is that it can accommodate a wide range of temporal distinctions. It also turns out to be its main disadvantage. The system is efficient, but - and precisely because - it is ad hoc. Potential exceptions can always be handled by introducing new symbols, whose number is unconstrained, or at best not constrained enough to allow for theoretically interesting predictions and explanatory insights. However, traditional grammar at its best, as practised by Jespersen, had an important merit. It was explicit enough to provide the basis for accounts which would not suffer from (some of) its deficiencies. One such analysis of tense was proposed by Reichenbach.

1.3.2 Reichenbach's analysis of tense

Reichenbach (1947) developed a system of tense according to which the temporal relations expressed by utterances can be represented exhaustively in terms of ordering relations between three universals: *speech time* (S), *reference time* (R), and *event time* (E). Let me illustrate just a few combinatorial possibilities.

(12) a. E___R___S John had already left at five.
   b. E,R___S   John left at five.
   c. E___R,S   John has left.
   d. E,R,S   John is eating pancakes.
   e. S___E___R John will have left by five.

The past perfect, in (12a), by virtue of its grammaticalised meaning, locates the event in the past relative to a reference time in the past, i.e. a reference time preceding the time of speech. In (12b), the adverbial *at five* specifies the reference time in the past at which the event occurred. The present perfect in (12c) locates the event in the past, but speech time is the reference time. This is presumably determined by part of the grammaticalised meaning of the present perfect. Hence the incompatibility of the construction with past time adverbials (*John has left at five o'clock*). On the most natural interpretation of (12d) the three points coincide. The future perfect reading of (12e) is somewhat misrepresented. The reference time must be in the future relative to the time of speaking, but the event itself needn't be located in the future relative to S. The event time may precede S or be simultaneous with it. Consider the following situation:

(13) A: Has John left?
   B: I'm not sure, but he will have left by five.

Speaker B guarantees merely that *John will leave before five*, not that *John has not left before* or that *John might not be leaving* at the time of speaking (cf. Comrie (1985:128)). This may be merely a notational problem. However, there are other temporal contrasts which Reichenbach's framework does not capture. Consider the following examples:

(14) a. John has done his homework.

b. John has lived in London (but now he lives in New York).

c. John has lived in London (for three years now).

There are some significant differences between (14b) and (14c). While (14a) normally conveys the idea that John's homework was due for the day of the utterance, or the like, (14b), especially with the continuation in brackets, does not carry the overtone of current relevance. In contrast to (14b), (14c) clearly relates the situation to the present, but, unlike (14a), the utterance (14c) describes a state of affairs which actually obtains at the time of communication. However, in Jespersen's notation all three are instances of the retrospective present (←----B), and on Reichenbach's, they are E__R,S configurations. If Jespersen's and Reichenbach's systems are taken to represent the meanings encoded by the tense forms of natural languages, they are clearly inadequate. The main point here is that the two analyses of tense, even when they are successful in representing temporal relations, do not really capture the distinctions which can plausibly be regarded as encoded in the language, but those that natural language expressions receive in use. This is what I tried to illustrate by the contrast between (14b) and (14c). Given different contextual information, as explicitly stated in the brackets, one and the same sentence, may be used to convey two different thoughts. The same point is exemplified in (15):

(15) A: What did you do on Sunday morning?

B: (i) I read the *Sunday Times*.

(ii) I read Robyn's review of *Gavagai*.

Each of B's answers may be taken to mean two different things: (a) B spent some time reading the newspaper/the review, and (b) B read the whole newspaper/review. Also, for some reason which needs to be spelled out, (a) is probably, the preferred understanding of the answer in (i), and (b) for the one in (ii). The apparently easy way out is to say that these are not distinctions pertaining to tense, but to aspect, and that the feature of completion is crucially involved. But there is a clear sense in which this aspectual feature should be recognised as significant for the temporal interpretation of the utterance. Consider the examples in (14) again. (14b) is clearly about a state of affairs in the past, while (14c) is at least partly about a state of affairs which obtains at the time of the utterance. Thus, in a number of languages, such as French or Serbo-Croat, (14b) would be translated by a past tense sentence (*Jean a vécu à Londres...*; *Jovan je živeo u Londonu...*), and (14c) by a present tense one (*Jean vit à Londres depuis trois ans*; *Jovan živi u Londonu već tri godine*). Now, the examples in (14) could be explained in terms of ambiguity. It may seem reasonably plausible to assume that the present perfect is simply three (or more) ways ambiguous. However, this would be a partial explanation. One would still have to explain how disambiguation is carried out, how the hearer decides which of the meanings the speaker intends to convey by using a particular form. In addition to this, the multiple ambiguity solution presents a general methodological problem for anyone committed to a Gricean pragmatics. It has become something of a truism that, other things being equal, a simple theory is preferable to a more complex one. In a line with this position Grice put forward the requirement (his 'modified version of *Ockham's rasor*') that ambiguities should not be

23

multiplied beyond necessity. In other words: other things being equal, the simpler the semantics, the better the analysis. I will show later that relevance theory which provides a reasoned account of the relation between the meaning encoded by natural language expressions and the meanings that they are used to communicate, constrains the proliferation of ambiguities in a principled way, thereby making it possible to maintain a fairly simple semantics. Moreover, the same principle which provides the explanation of the relation between the linguistically encoded meaning of an expression and the conceptual content which that expression is used to communicate also provides an explanation for disambiguation. The examples in (14) and (15) were intended to show that the problem of explaining the relation between the linguistic meaning of a natural language expression and the information communicated by that expression is a real one. Reichenbach's notion of reference time is also of interest in this connection.

The term *reference time*, which Reichenbach left undefined, is far from clear, as illustrated by the examples below.

(16)　　a.　　John arrived too.

　　　　b.　　Tolstoy wrote many novels.

(17)　　That will be John at the door.

　　　(i)　　John is at the door now.

　　　(ii)　　If the hearer opens the door (or the like) he will find out that John is at the door.

In both (16a) and (16b) reference time is in the past, but it is implicit. The speaker does not say when John arrived or when (Shakespeare) wrote many plays) However, the specific point of time is intuitively

more significant in (16a) than in (16b). In addition to information about
where John arrived, and who else arrived at the gathering which is
talked about, the hearer will want to know something about the time
of John's arrival, or at least about the time at which the gathering took
place. In (16b), very vague assumptions about the pastness of the state
of affairs described would normally be quite sufficient. So, the
questions are: How specific a representation of R must the hearer
arrive at? What does that depend on? In (17) there really seem to be
two reference times rather than one. The speaker is asserting his
commitment to the truth of the present tense proposition in (i) (hence,
the contradiction in *That will be John at the door, but I am not quite
sure that he is here at this very instant*), as well as to the future tense
proposition in (ii). Not only is reference time partly determined on the
basis of contextual information, but more than one R may be conveyed
by a sentence with one tense form. What the *-ed* suffix and the modal
verb *will* indicate by virtue of their meanings does not amount to a full
temporal specification of the propositions expressed by the utterances
in which they are used. In terms of truth conditional semantics
tensedness is a requirement for propositionalisation. For a
representation to be capable of being true or false, it must be
temporally interpreted, i.e. tensed. It would then seem that
Reichenbach's reference time is a way of talking about this
requirement. If temporal interpretation of the utterance to the level of
a fully fledged proposition is a pragmatically driven process, like
reference assignment in the case of pronouns, and is in some way
guided by the meanings of natural language tense forms, the notion of
reference time seems superfluous. What is really there are the
meanings of the morphological tense markers, and tensedness as a
property of propositions. A possible way of preserving the notion of
reference time might go as follows. In (17), for example, the sentence
has present tense (assuming that modal verbs such as *will* have present

25

tense), the tense of the proposition expressed by the utterance of (17) is present, as indicated in (i), while the reference time is future - it is an indication encoded by the present tense modal *will* that future tense assumptions should be brought to bear on the contextualisation of the proposition expressed by the utterance (in other words, the derivation of the consequences of integrating the proposition with other assumptions in the encyclopaedic knowledge of the hearer). On this view, it would be the reference time which somehow or other leads the hearer to interpret the proposition (i) against a context which includes (ii) and/or other future tense propositions. However, this leaves us with the problem of explaining those uses of *will* in which the proposition expressed by the utterance has future tense. On the assumption that every utterance expresses only one proposition, one should be able to test the tense by constructing examples like (17'):

(17')   a.   *That will be John at the door, but he may not be there now.

   b.   That will be John at the door, but he'll be gone if you don't open the door immediately.[8]

Clearly, the epistemic use of *will* in utterances like (17) communicates two reference times: present and future. Examples like (17'a) and (17'b) show that (17) expresses a present tense proposition. If (17) had future tense, (17'a) would not be contradictory, but (17'b) would. I assume that tense, in the semantic sense, is, roughly, that part of a mental representation concerning the time at which the truth conditions for the state of affair which that mental representation purports to represent are guaranteed to be met. Obviously, the Reichenbachian notion of tense as a relation between reference time (R) and speech time (S) is not correct, because utterances like (17) have two reference times (present and future), but only one tense (present). The characterisation

26

of tense in terms of the relation between reference time and speech time is simply too vague to be useful.

My aim in this section was to make the following points. First, the meanings of morphological or other tense markers only partly determine the temporal specification of the propositions expressed by natural language utterances. Second, I hope to have shown with sufficient clarity that aspectual distinctions may interact with morphological tense markers and play a crucial part in constraining the temporal relations conveyed by the utterance, i.e. in determining tense as a semantic property of propositions. Third, the examples in (14) and (15) show that the semantic contrasts pertaining to aspect, may play a crucial role in the temporal interpretation of the utterance without being grammaticalised. Fourth, Jespersen's and Reichenbach's analyses, as well as those in terms of formal semantics, and many other approaches for that matter, fail to do justice to the observation that the linguistically encoded meaning of an utterance characteristically severely underdetermines the content of the proposition expressed by the utterance. This last point, the view that the content of a natural language expression severely underdetermines the content of the mental representation which that expression communicates is known as the underdeterminacy thesis. It is central to the relevance theory of S&W (1986), the framework for the analysis to be presented in the following chapters.

1.4   THE UNDERDETERMINACY THESIS - TWO KINDS OF SEMANTICS

The view of natural language as a code and of verbal communication as being primarily an encoding - decoding process is deeply rooted in common sense. It was taken for granted in traditional

27

grammar and semiotic approaches to communication and still survives in more or less moderate or disguised forms.

On the common sense view of verbal communication words and utterances convey meaning. When a speaker produces an utterance the hearer knows what the speaker intended to communicate by virtue of his knowledge of the language. Proof: when someone addresses you in a foreign language which you don't know, you are unlikely to be able to work out what they meant because you don't know the language. The common sense view has permeated the study of language over centuries. Various definitions of the term sentence are illustrative in this connection. According to Fries (1959), the following definition of sentence was proposed (at around 500 A.D.):

A sentence is a group of words expressing a complete thought.

(Fries (1959:9))

This definition survived for a very long time in traditional and pedagogical textbooks of grammar, and was originally challenged on the grounds that the term *complete thought* could not be adequately defined and should, therefore, be dispensed with. The question of how ideas are actually communicated by means of language was postponed for better times and sometimes not considered central to the linguistic enterprise. However, some definitions of the term *sentence* come quite close to what would appear to be a plausible characterisation of the notion *complete thought.* Thus, Ries (1894) defines the term sentence as follows:

A sentence is a grammatically constructed smallest unit of speech which expresses its content with respect to this content's relation to reality.

(in Fries (1959:17))

28

Towards the middle of this century Sundén (1941) suggested the following definition:

> *A sentence is a portion of speech that is putting forward*
> *to the listener a state of things (a thing meant) as having*
> *validity, i.e., as being true.*
>
> (in Fries (1959:18))

With slightly different emphases, both definitions are near characterisations of *complete thought* as *a propositional mental representation*. However, what matters to me here is that sentence meaning is plausibly characterised in terms of conceptual content, and that the relation between the meaning content of a sentence and the conceptual content of the thought communicated by the utterance of that sentence is not one of identity. It is the observation that sentences communicate different thoughts when uttered on different occasions and its consequences which are of interest here. The examples considered in section 1.3 show that the temporal information at sentence level is less determinate than at the level of the proposition expressed by the utterance both with respect to tense and aspect. Other examples which illustrate the same point are considered in this section. It is shown that an inferential theory of communication can explain the gap between sentence meaning and utterance meaning, which cannot be accounted for on the code model view of verbal communication.

S&W (1986) argue that pragmatics plays a crucial part in establishing the propositional content of the utterance, and that its role is by no means confined to reference assignment and disambiguation, but is, in fact, far more significant than that. On their view the decoding of the linguistic meaning of the utterance yields a mental representation which they call *the logical form* of the utterance. The logical form is characteristically a less than fully propositional

29

representation, a structured string of concepts which needs to be further enriched and completed to the level of a fully fledged proposition, a mental representation (i.e. thought) capable of being true or false. Carston (1988) gives a detailed discussion of this point.

(18)   He went to the edge of the big rock and jumped.

(adapted from Carston (1988:165))

(i)   He went to the edge of the big rock and jumped over the edge of the big rock.

(ii)   He went to the edge of the big rock and jumped, but he didn't jump over the edge of the big rock.

What could the speaker have intended to communicate by the utterance in (18)? On the most natural interpretation, i.e. the interpretation of the utterance in the most readily conceivable immediately accessible contexts, (18) would be taken to convey a thought like (i), although, given the appropriate context, it could also be used to convey a thought like (ii). The point is that one and the same utterance is used to express two propositions which are not truth-conditionally equivalent: the state of affairs which makes (i) true makes (ii) false, and vice versa. Consider (19):

(19)   A: Is John very badly injured?

B: The man went to the edge of the rock and jumped.

premise: If John went to the edge of the rock and jumped from the edge of the rock, he is probably very badly injured.

conclusion: John is probably very badly injured.

30

The information that *John jumped over the edge of the rock*, as well as the premise and the conclusion in (19), could only be derived pragmatically (i.e. by inference), and not by decoding. But, the assumption that *John jumped off the rock* has a different status from the other two. It is construed as part of the explicit content of the proposition expressed by the utterance, *what is said* in Grice's terms, and plays a crucial role in the formation of both the premise and the conclusion in (19). In relevance theory terms this representation which is arrived at by the process of pragmatic enrichment and completion of the logical form of the utterance is called *the propositional form* of the utterance. The derivation of the premise and the conclusion in (19) crucially depends on whether one assumes that the information *John jumped off the rock* is part of the propositional form, the proposition expressed by the utterance, and that it is an *explicature* (i.e. a proposition which, in addition to being a development of the logical form, is one which the speaker intended to communicate by his utterance).

The premise and the conclusion in (19) are arrived at by inference, as implicatures, implicated assumptions which the hearer believes the speaker could rationally have intended to communicate by the explicature of his utterance when interpreted in context. It seems crucial to observe that implicatures have a different status from explicatures. Upon answering A's question B may continue: *By miracle he's got only a few bruises*, thereby cancelling the implicated information, but not the explicature (in Grice's terms 'what is said'), i.e. that *John went to the edge of the rock and jumped over the edge*. The blocking of the implicature does not lead to a change in the hearer's construal of the content of the intended explicature. But, once A has assumed that *John jumped over the edge of the rock*, B's continuation: *He didn't jump over the edge*, or *He didn't jump over the edge of the*

31

rock will cause a major revision of A's assumption about what B had actually said, the explicit content of his utterance. My point here is that one and the same sentence can be used in describing two different situations in the world, and that this difference cannot be explained plausibly in terms of the linguistic meaning of the sentence. The knowledge that the verb *jump*, can only be followed by certain prepositional adverbs such as *over, up, down*, and that the sentence is possibly elliptical, does not undermine this point. The decision about *the manner in which John jumped, the direction in which he jumped,* and the like are not to be regarded as determined by the linguistic meaning of the utterance, but by inference: by the formation of hypotheses on the part of the hearer about what the speaker could rationally have intended to communicate by his utterance. These hypotheses are partly constrained by the linguistic meaning of the utterance and partly by the way in which humans go about interpreting verbal (and other ostensive) stimuli. Central to S&W's theory of communication are the following claims about cognition:

> Humans pay attention to those phenomena which are relevant to them. In other words they pay attention to phenomena when doing so is likely to bring them some cognitive gain. The greater the gain, the greater the relevance. In constructing and processing representations in their *cognitive environment,* people aim at achieving the greatest possible gain while investing as little processing effort as possible. In a nutshell, relevance is a positive function of *cognitive effects* and a negative function of *processing effort.*

Utterances are ostensive stimuli, they are deliberate alterations of the cognitive environment aimed at attracting the attention of other individuals. This grants them a special status amongst all other phenomena which may impinge on us. Like any other ostensive stimulus, an utterance comes with the speaker's guarantee that it is worth paying attention to. In other words, every utterance comes with

a guarantee that the effort required for processing it will be offset by the cognitive effects achieved. This claim S&W call the principle of relevance. On a more technical formulation, it can be stated as follows:

The Principle of Relevance

Every utterance communicates the presumption of its own optimal relevance.

According to S&W the principle of relevance is a generalisation about the way humans go about processing utterances and other ostensive stimuli and the key to an inferential theory of (verbal) communication. S&W argue that ostensive communication including verbal communication is essentially inferential. By using a given utterance the speaker makes it mutually *manifest* to himself and to the hearer that he intends by using that utterance to make *manifest* or *more manifest* to the hearer a set of assumptions {I}. (According to S&W (1986:39) the *manifestness* of a fact to an individual is determined by that person's ability (a) to represent that fact mentally and (b) to accept the mental representation of that fact as true. The set of facts manifest to an individual make up that individual's *cognitive environment*.) But how does the hearer identify the set {I}?[4] The hearer makes hypotheses about what the speaker conforming to the principle of relevance could rationally have intended to communicate by his utterance. The intended interpretation is the first one which is found to be consistent with the principle of relevance. The essentially inferential process of utterance interpretation is helped by the natural language code. The meaning encoded by the utterance provides evidence for the construction of hypotheses about the speaker's communicative intention. But, in principle, the code is not a necessary prerequisite for communication. Consider (20):

(20) A: Is John very badly injured?

B   *pretends to have collapsed*

A realises that B is merely pretending and starts making guesses about why B is behaving in that particular fashion. He could be trying to communicate that *John is sick*, that *John has lost consciousness*, that *John is in a coma*, or that *John is exaggerating as he usually does when he is not feeling quite well*, etc. All these hypotheses crucially depend on A's realisation that B is behaving ostensively. Suppose A assumes that B is really feeling unwell and has actually collapsed. A will form some assumptions about B's condition: *B is very ill, I should call an ambulance, B must have sunstroke*, etc. But once A realises that B is actually trying to communicate by exhibiting these particular symptoms, A will be led to interpret B's behaviour as related to A's question, and will form hypotheses consistent with this assumption. The game of charades is illustrative in this connection. Ostensive stimuli based on imitation are very vague, so vague that it may be very difficult, sometimes impossible, to work out what is being communicated. This is why in the game of charades good players are usually those who have established some code-like conventions which make the task of guessing easier. For example, if there is a convention like: *one finger means one word*, it is easy to work out what the player intends to communicate by raising one finger. What is more, if the task is, say, guessing titles of films, the raised finger will be first decoded as meaning *one word*, and this information will be completed into some fully propositional representation like: *The title of the film has one word*. Natural language is a code, and although it does not fully encode the content of the communicated information, it provides a lot of very useful clues about the speaker's communicative intention. Thus, in (19), B uses a simple utterance and informs the hearer about the cause of John's injuries, as well as about their seriousness. The natural

34

language code only boosts the chances of successful communication but it does not guarantee success, and is not a prerequisite for communication. In principle, human communication is possible without coding, and, just as in the game of charades communication is helped by, but not dependent on, code-like conventions, verbal communication is eased by, but is not in principle dependent on, the natural language code.

In the previous section utterance interpretation was characterised as a process which has two stages. The first stage is the decoding of the utterance. The output of decoding is the *logical form* of the utterance, a less than fully propositional conceptual representation. The second stage involves two steps. First, the logical form of the utterance is further enriched and completed to the level of a fully fledged proposition. The second step involves the contextualisation of this proposition, its integration with the hearer's general or encyclopaedic knowledge, i.e. the derivation of contextual effects, such as the implicated premise and the implicated conclusion in (19). This is summarily represented in Figure 2.

phonetic/phonological

form

linguistic semantics   decoding

logical form

pragmatics   inference

propositional form (explicature)

real semantics

state of affairs in the world

Fig. 2

35
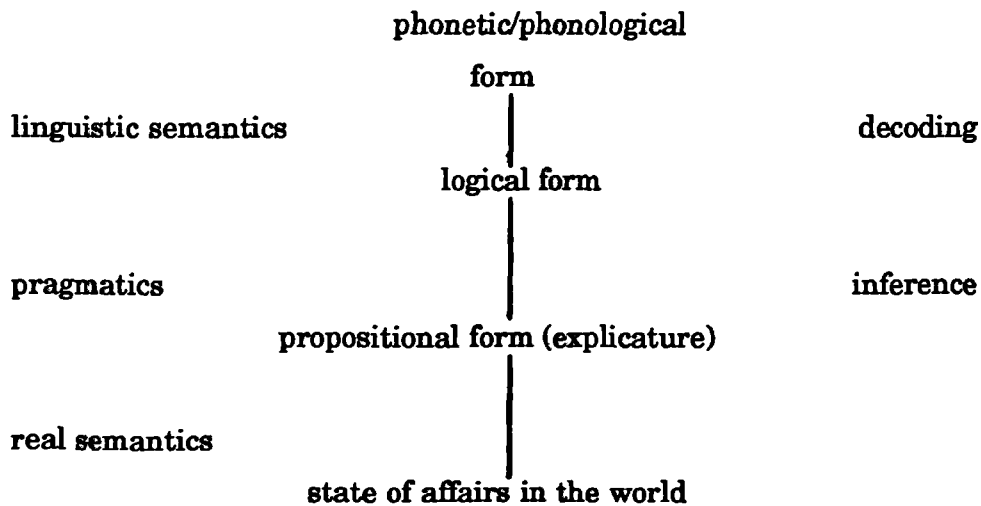
Three relations are distinguished here: (a) the relation between an utterance and its linguistically encoded logical form; (b) the relation between the logical form and the fully propositional form; (c) the relation between the propositional form and the state of affairs described by that utterance. In relevance theory terms, the relation (a) is the domain of linguistic semantics, the relation (b) is the domain of pragmatics, and (c) the domain of real semantics (cf. Wilson and Sperber (1988:134)). The distinction between two kinds of semantics has far reaching consequences. Let me illustrate briefly some of the consequences of S&W's account for an analysis of the expression of time in natural language and temporal interpretation in verbal communication.

The range of tense and aspect choices made by speakers of natural languages under quite normal circumstances of everyday usage has led some authors to take the view that the grammar imposes on language users the making of a range of temporal distinctions which are redundant, which are, strictly speaking, not part of the speaker's intended meaning of his utterance. Thus, Whorf (1952) claims that English is unnecessarily more time-bound than Hopi, for example. Quine (1960) is also critical:

> *Our ordinary language shows a tiresome bias in its treatment of time. Relations of date are exalted grammatically as relations of position, weight, and color are not. This bias is of itself an inelegance, or breach of theoretical simplicity. Moreover, the form it takes - that of requiring that every verb form show a tense - is peculiarly productive of needless complications, since it demands lip service to time even when time is farthest from our thoughts.*
>
> (Quine (1960:170))

36

There are two interesting readings of the passage above. On the first one, Quine is claiming that, when it comes to temporal distinctions, human languages in general are encumbered with semantic redundancies. On the second understanding, the criticism is aimed only at some languages, and Quine is more or less reiterating Whorf's (1952) remark that English grammaticalises (unnecessarily) many temporal distinctions in comparison with languages like Hopi, for example. As far as I can see, Quine's intended interpretation is the first one. However, whichever reading one attributes to Quine, the view expressed in the passage above seems to be untenable. The temporal information encoded by tense and aspect markers is rather vague and less specific than the conceptual content of the proposition expressed by the utterance. Some constructions like the present perfect progressive (e.g. *Peter has been eating the jam*) provide considerable evidence about the temporal interpretation of the utterance, but they actually fall short of being fully specific. Is the event described by the utterance still going on at the time of communication (as in *Peter's been eating the jam all morning and obviously doesn't intend to stop*, as opposed to *Peter's been eating the jam again, the pot's empty*)? Is the event of short or long duration? Did it take place in the relatively proximate or in the relatively distant past? The linguistic meaning of the present perfect progressive construction does not answer any of these questions. Hence, Quine's and Whorf's claims appear to be dead wrong. Let me consider just one more example which illustrates the temporal underspecification of the utterance at the level of linguistic meaning.

(21)   She gave him her key and he opened the door.

(Carston (1988:161))

The utterance of the sentence (21) may be taken to express a thought like (22):

(22) She$_1$ gave him$_2$ [her$_1$ key]$_3$ at t and he$_2$ opened the door at $t + n$ using [the key]$_3$

The meaning expressed by the utterance (21), represented in (22), cannot plausibly be taken to be determined by its linguistic meaning. Who gave which key to whom is pragmatically (i.e. inferentially) established. Depending on the context, the sentence (21) may be used to convey the idea: *Mary gave Peter the key ...* or *Jane gave John the key ...* and so on, but not: *Peter gave Mary the key ...* or *John gave Jane the key ....* These latter interpretations are precluded by the meaning of the personal pronoun *she*, which requires that its referent be female. Carston (1988:161) considers briefly the similarity between the interpretation of personal pronouns and tense forms. Three observations seem particularly important in this connection.

First, just as the linguistic meaning of pronouns does not fully determine their referents, the temporal information encoded by tense forms does not encode reference to fixed moments in time. Therefore, the t and the $t+n$ in (22) are pragmatically established. The past tense forms *gave* and *opened* explicitly indicate that past time events are talked about. At which times in the past the events occured, is determined inferentially.

Second, the linguistic meaning of the tense forms in (22) are best considered to be even less specific than the meanings of personal pronouns, as illustrated by examples like (23).

(23) I didn't turn off the stove.

(taken from Carston (1988:161))

While the personal pronouns *she* and *he* refer to some particular individuals, the utterance (23) is not necessarily taken to mean that there is some specific moment of time in the past at which the speaker did not turn off the stove. In Chapter four I argue that the progressive aspect of English and the perfective aspect of Serbo-Croat encode specific reference to particular instances of events, and are in this respect similar to personal pronouns. Consider (24), for example:

(24)   I wasn't turning off the stove.

Unlike (23), (24) would normally be understood as referring to some particular moment, at which the speaker claims not to have been engaged in the activity of turning off the stove. My characterisation of the meaning of the progressive makes it possible to give a reasoned explanation for the implicature normally associated with (24), roughly, *The speaker was doing something else at the particular time referred to by the utterance*, as well as the absence or lesser salience of this implicature when the simple is used, as in (23).

Third, as Carston (1988:162) points out, it seems that the linguistic meaning of a tense form is very much like the meaning of indefinite pronouns. It is sometimes pragmatically narrowed down to refer to particular moments or intervals, and sometimes not. Thus the utterance *Someone has eaten the cake* may be taken either to mean that some specific individual has eaten the cake, or simply as indefinite. Rather than encoding very specific information about the temporal location of the event, tense and aspect forms provide fairly rough guidelines on the basis of which the hearer may derive the optimally relevant temporal interpretation of the utterance. While tense forms encode (some) information about temporal interpretation, aspectual categories provide evidence about the intended temporal interpretation

39

without encoding reference to the temporal location of the state of affairs described by the utterance.

Chapter Two

TWO APPROACHES TO ASPECT

The following account is confined to a consideration of the main characteristics of two long-standing traditions in analysing verbal aspect. The first is usually associated with the study of Slavonic languages and is normally called the perfective-imperfective distinction. The second is the classification of verbs according to the situation types they denote. It was originally developed within the realm of philosophy (by authors like Ryle (1949), Kenny (1963), Vendler (1967), Mourelatos (1981)), and was taken over by those specifically concerned with the study of language (Dowty (1979), Lyons (1977), C.S. Smith (1983; 1986), and others). My purpose here is to examine some examples of aspectual phenomena in order to highlight and explain the common sense intuitions behind the two approaches, and to indicate some relevant problems.

2.1 PERFECTIVITY AND IMPERFECTIVITY

The perfective-imperfective distinction and the classification of verbs according to the situation types they denote have a crucial point in common. As a rule, both are characterised in terms of the notion of time. Perfectivity is defined either as involving absence of duration or (de)limited duration (in terms such as *wholeness* or *completeness* (traditional grammarians), *presence of temporal contour* (Hockett (1958)), *boundedness* (Allen (1964)), *discreteness* (Morris (1984)). Definitions of imperfectivity fall into two groups. According to some

41

authors, the imperfective is to be defined as the unmarked member of
the distinction, it is to be characterised as unspecified with respect to
the defining feature of the perfective.[5] Others find purely negative
definitions of the imperfective aspect inadequate. Thus, Comrie
(1976:24) proposes 'explicit reference to the internal temporal structure
of a situation, viewing the situation from within' as the defining
meaning of imperfectivity. Consider the Serbo-Croat and English
examples below.

(1)   a.   Jovan ide u školu.

        b.   John is going to school.

        c.   John goes to school.

(2)   Jovan je djak.

        John is a pupil.

Process verbs in the so-called habitual use, exemplified by (1a) as
translated in (1c), and state verbs like *be* in (2) do not meet Comrie's
definition, since they are not understood as making reference to
anything one would want to call internal temporal structure of the
situation. Comrie's solution for this problem is to assume that
imperfectivity is 'subdivided into a number of distinct categories, and
yet others where there is some category that corresponds to part only
of the meaning of imperfectivity' (pp. 24-5), while maintaining the claim
that 'these various subdivisions do in fact join together to form a single
unified concept' (p. 26). Thus, the imperfective is said to be typically
subdivided into habitual and continuous, and the latter is further
subdivided into non-progressive and progressive (with the subdivisions
varying across languages). But, unless this, arguably, unified concept
in which such intuitively disparate notions cluster together is further
specified and the nature of the connections that obtain between the

notions making up that concept are explicated, this solution amounts to no more than a convenient stipulation. To the best of my knowledge, no such account exists.

Definitions of perfectivity in terms of boundedness, completeness and the like, seem to capture something crucial about the meaning of perfective verbs in a rather straightforward way. In contrast to this is the view that perfective verbs describe situations as punctual, i.e. as lacking duration altogether, (an idea originally due to the neo-grammarians Delbrück and Brugmann and taken over by quite a few authors including Saussure). Such definitions are to be dismissed on the grounds of examples like (3):

(3)   Preplivali su reku za deset minuta.
       They swam across the river in ten minutes.

The verb *preplivati* ('swim across') is perfective, and yet, the utterance will probably not be taken to mean that the swimming across the river took place ten minutes after some point in time, as one would expect, if the perfective is correctly defined in terms of lack of duration. What (3) says, is that the swimming across the river took ten minutes. This definition of perfectivity seems too narrow, rather than completely wrong, because it does cover some perfective verbs such as *stići* ('arrive'):

(4)   Stigli su za deset minuta.
       They arrived in ten minutes.

(4) wouldn't normally be taken to mean that the arriving lasted ten minutes, but that the arrival occurred ten minutes after some point in

time. This is presumably due to the lack of duration associated with situations described by verbs like *arrive, blink, die,* etc.

So, the characterisations of the imperfective aspect crucially rest on (a) the notions of lack of completion, and duration, and, (b), for some verbs (and uses), on reference to the internal structure of the situation. The perfective aspect apparently invariably involves (a) completion, i.e. (de)limited duration, and, (b) only with some verbs, lack of duration. The classification of verbs according to the situation types they denote, which I now turn to, apparently does better justice to the intuitions behind the definitions of the perfective and imperfective aspects.

2.2 SITUATION TYPES

As has been said already, the notion of time has a central place in the definitions of situation types. According to the classification four types of situations are usually distinguished: states, processes (also called activities), accomplishments and achievements. In Vendler's (1967:97-8) own words: 'the use of a verb may [also] suggest the particular way in which that verb presupposes and involves the notion of time.' Although Vendler admits that other factors are involved as well, he claims that '...one feels that the time element remains crucial', and that situation types are to be defined in terms of '... the time schemata presupposed by various verbs, ...'. These time schemata are generally assumed in the literature to be universal and differently realised in individual languages.

44

2.2.1   States and state verbs

States are characteristically defined as situations which do not change in time, which are stable and therefore do not indicate, either explicitly or implicitly, the beginning or the end of the situation. Each of the verbs *know, believe, love* etc. in the examples in (5) conveys the idea that the predicate which it is part of (*know mathematics, believe in ghosts, love cakes*) is true of the subject referent, without suggesting that the situation takes place in time, being consequently conceived as transient.

(5)   a.   Jane knows mathematics.

b.   Mary believes in ghosts.

c.   John loves cakes.

Verbs which are used to denote states are usually referred to as *verbs of state* or *statives*. I will call them *state verbs*, as I find this term both reasonably short and sufficiently clear.

States differ from the other three situation types in that they do not involve change. Processes, accomplishments and achievements all make reference to change, but differ with respect to endpoints and duration. Furthermore, processes and accomplishments differ from achievements with regard to complexity of change (Comrie's internal structure of the situation).

2.2.2   Processes and process verbs

Processes are situations made up of subevents, successive phases which constitute their internal structure. To say that a situation is

45

perceived as consisting of successive phases is to say that it is also construed as lasting for a certain period of time. The idea of change is intrinsically linked to the idea of time. If a situation is construed as involving a series of phases (i.e. changes which are not simultaneous), it will be conceptually represented as involving time. This is why process verbs are taken to denote transient situations. These verbs are felt to involve beginnings (initial stages of processes) and endings (final stages of processes), although they do not denote complete events.

(6)   a.   Jane worked hard for hours yesterday.

        b.   Mary ploughed in the field all morning.

        c.   John ran until he got tired.

The sentences in (6) are taken to refer to the situations of *working*, *ploughing* and *running* as terminated. What they say is that the subject referent was engaged in the activity described by the verb at some time in the past and that that activity came to an end. But in none of the examples in (6) is there a suggestion that the situation described involves some definite endpoint to be reached. It should be noted, however, that a change crucially involves a beginning and an end. A process verb can be said to denote a state of affairs which involves continuous change, and which, therefore, relates two states of affairs: one in which the change has not yet occurred, and another one, in which the change is fully actualised, and in which the effects of the change can be observed. So, although process verbs do not denote the initial and final stages of the real world events which they are used to describe, it would be a mistake to assume that assumptions about these situations' having endpoints do not bear on utterance interpretation. The 'non-complete' process verbs differ from accomplishment VPs which denote delimited situations.

2.2.3 Accomplishments and accomplishment VPs

Accomplishments are situations which have an outcome, a result, and which are conceived as involving complex change, and as taking place over a period of time. In English, they are usually expressed by verb phrases which include a noun phrase with a singular count noun.

The contrast between process verbs and accomplishment VPs is illustrated by the slight difficulty in providing an interpretation for (7) below.

(7)   (?)John ran a mile until he got tired.

(7) is acceptable on the interpretation that the subject referent kept running distances of one mile until he got tired, but the utterance cannot be understood as conveying the idea that John started running a mile and stopped before having covered the whole distance. It is not possible for the speaker to assert without contradicting himself that the subject did cover a certain distance and that he didn't do it. But no such contradiction arises in (6c), where no idea of end result or outcome is expressed.

The second distinctive property of accomplishment VPs is that they denote situations conceptualised as taking time to take place.

(8)   John ran a mile in five minutes.

The adverbial in (8) indicates the time it took John to run a mile. In particular, it is important to observe that five minutes is not necessarily the interval of time within which the event took place, but the exact duration of the event. (A reading on which 'John's running of a mile'

47

took less than five minutes is also available.) In this respect accomplishments differ from achievements.

2.2.4 Achievements and achievement verbs

Achievements are situations which are like accomplishments except that they take place over such a short time that they are conceptualised as momentary, or punctual. The contrast between (8) and (9) is illustrative in this connection.

(9) John recognised Mary in five minutes.

What (9) says is that *five minutes after some point in time John recognised Mary.* In particular, (9) does not say that *the event of recognising lasted five minutes.* Only in (9), but not on the intended interpretation of (8), can the adverbial *in five minutes* be parapharased as *after five minutes.*

A caveat seems in order here. The classification of verbs according to the situation types that they denote apparently crucially rests on assumptions about the metaphysical status of states of affairs in the world. It should be clear, however, that the aspectual categories are determined by the conceptual content of verbal predicates, which do not necessarily accurately reflect the way the world is made. It could be that there is no strict demarcation line between state and process or complex and single change. Such knowledge would still not undermine the classification which takes into account only the way humans actually conceptualise the world. In what follows I will talk only about state verbs, process verbs, achievement verbs and accomplishment VPs (as opposed to states, processes, achievements and accomplishments)

48

precisely in order to make it clear that I am talking about concepts without making any claims about metaphysics.[6]

How does all this relate to the perfective-imperfective distinction of Serbo-Croat? How much correspondence is there between the treatment of aspectual distinctions in terms of the perfective-imperfective opposition and situation types?

2.3 THE PERFECTIVE-IMPERFECTIVE DISTINCTION AND SITUATION TYPES

What has been said so far suggests that the overlap is complete. Definitions of imperfectivity, which insist on the lack of endpoints (i.e. boundedness, temporal contour, or whatever is assumed to be the defining feature of the perfective), encompass state verbs and process verbs, while those which take internal temporal structure as the defining feature encompass process verbs, but not state verbs. Both accomplishment and achievement predicates are subsumed under the label perfective, if perfectivity is defined by the presence of endpoints (or by other near synonyms), but only achievement predicates meet those definitions which take the lack of duration as its essential feature. So, it may seem that the difference between the two approaches is purely terminological, and that the situation type analyses have the advantage of being more explicit in distinguishing four categories where the other tradition finds only two. However, it has been emphasised time out of number in studies on aspect in Slavonic languages that perfectivity and imperfectivity are terms used to describe phenomena peculiar to these languages. But, if two classifications of aspectual categories, one of which is arguably language particular while the other one is putatively universal, are to be defined

in terms of the same notions, the language specific character of the former classification remains unaccounted for. In other words, the definitions of the perfective and imperfective aspects fail to capture the difference between the perfective and imperfective verbs of Slavonic languages on the one hand, and the state verbs, and event predicates (i.e. processes, accomplishments and achievements) in languages such as English or French, on the other. The mistaken assumption underlying so many writings on aspect in Slavonic languages is sometimes illustrated by the following passage from Saussure's *Cours* ... which, apparently, lends support to it:

> *Les langues slaves distinguent régulièrement deux aspects du verbe: le perfectif représente l'action dans sa totalité comme un point en dehors de tout devenir; l'imperfectif la montre en train de se faire et sur la ligne du temps. Ces catégories font difficulté pour un français parce que sa langue les ignore: si elles étaient prédéterminées, il n'en serait pas ainsi.*
>
> (pp. 161-2)

The lack of the perfective-imperfective distinction in a given language has often been taken as indicative of the lack of the lexical meaning characterising one or the other member of the distinction. What has been said so far shows quite clearly that this view is not warranted. Whether Saussure himself subscribed to it or not is an issue of no great interest. The observation to be made here is that it is not necessary to interpret the above passage as expressing only this untenable position, because Saussure speaks about the perfective and imperfective aspects as an example of *valeur* as instantiated in the grammar, i.e. as an illustration of how languages differ in the ways their grammars shape the functional identity of certain linguistic entities (in this case verbs) such that the latter are not functionally equivalent to the corresponding entities of other languages (see Chapter one, p. 17). But this claim does

not entail that there is anything peculiar to the lexical meaning of perfective and imperfective verbs, as opposed to those of the so-called non-aspectual languages. What distinguishes the aspectually marked verbs of Slavonic languages from mere assignment to a situation type are the ways in which the perfective and the imperfective constrain utterance interpretation. Let me clarify and exemplify this point.

2.3.1 Valeur

How do languages shape the functional identity of linguistic entities? What exactly is meant by *valeur*? I believe that the term *valeur* was intended by Saussure to cover all there is to be said about entities of a language which pertains to the position of one entity in the system in relation to other entities in that language, rather than to their intrinsic conceptual content. The following points seem particularly important in this connection. First, the term *valeur* is used to capture something crucial about the meaning of linguistic entities. Second, as part of word meaning *valeur* does not coincide with the conceptual content of an entity. *Valeur* is psychological, in contrast to *signe* which is a purely abstract term. I take this to be expressed in the following passage from one of Saussure's followers (A. Burger, 1969).

> *Par valeur, au contraire* [i.e. as opposed to *signe*]
> *Saussure entend une entité linguistique 'concrète' (au sens saussurien de "ressenti par la conscience des sujets parlants"; Gödel, op cit. p.257 sous 'concret'); ainsi CFS, 15, page 26: "La véritable nature de ces unités c'est d'être des valeurs. Ce système d'unités qu<'>est (qui est) un système de signes est un système de valeurs.*
> (Burger (1969:233))

Whatever the exact relation between *valeur* and *signe* may be, it seems fairly clear that by thinking of *valeur* as 'concrete' in the sense of 'recognised by the mind' (which I think accurately translates *ressenti par la conscience*) Saussure could only have intended to say that *valeur* is psychologically represented, although people do not have direct conscious access to it. However, our verbal behaviour provides evidence for *valeur*. For example, the use of the word *cheap*, in English is constrained in some way by the availability of the word *inexpensive*. And, although the Serbo-Croat equivalent of *cheap*, *jeftin*, is used in that language in the sense of *inexpensive*, it doesn't seem plausible to assume that *jeftin* actually denotes a more inclusive concept which encompasses the meanings of both *cheap* and *inexpensive*. What is more, *cheap*, as well as *jeftin* for that matter, sometimes conveys the idea of *low quality*, while *inexpensive* does not, as illustrated by the different implications normally associated with expressions like: *a cheap film* and *an inexpensive film*. But the difference between the two words which is of interest here is a truth conditional one, the fact that something may be inexpensive without literally being cheap. Native speakers of Serbo-Croat find it reasonably easy to grasp the conceptual difference between *cheap* and *inexpensive*, and express it readily in utterances like: *It's not cheap, but it's not expensive, either.* However, in everyday usage *jeftin* does the job, as it were, of both *cheap* and *inexpensive*. Now, the question is: How do people monitor the relations between linguistic entities which determine their *valeur*? Saussure's view of *valeur* as 'recognised by the mind', if my understanding of it is correct, concerns the representation of the relation between one linguistic entity relative to others such that this position constrains the range of (conceptualised) meanings (i.e. Saussure's *significations*) that that entity can be used to express. It is the fact that we (somehow or other) monitor these relations between words that may make *cheap* inappropriate for use in the sense of *inexpensive*, in certain contexts at

least. When asked whether his new colour TV set is cheap, an English speaker may well answer that it is not cheap, although it is inexpensive, conveying the idea that his new TV did cost a substantial amount of money by his own standards, but is low priced in comparison with other TVs. The use of *jeftin* in Serbo-Croat to cover the meaning of *inexpensive* is to be seen as related to the absence in Serbo-Croat of a word which would translate *inexpensive*, in contrast to *cheap*. This example illustrates the *valeur* of a linguistic entity as determined purely by the co-presence (or lack of it) of other lexical items of the same rank as the entity in question (in this example the word meaning *inexpensive*). Speakers of Serbo-Croat have the concept conveyed by the English word *inexpensive* illustrated here, but lack a word which would express it, and must resort to a more complex expression in order to do so. It is, of course, possible to use the two words *cheap* and *inexpensive* indiscriminately. My point is that there is a lexical as well as a conceptual choice in English, whereas speakers of Serbo-Croat conceptualise the difference, but normally use one and the same word, rather than resorting to a more precise, but also more complex expression when they mean *inexpensive*. In relevance theory terms, speakers of Serbo-Croat use the word *jeftin* when they actually mean inexpensive, because it is normally the optimally relevant choice. In most readily conceivable circumstances, the use of a more complex explicit expression would not give rise to any relevant contextual effects, but would require a greater expenditure of processing effort. Hence, the speaker would normally opt for the more economical one word expression leaving it up to the hearer to work out his intended meaning. In other words, it is up to the hearer inferentially to arrive at the relevant conceptual representation: How cheap is the item talked about? By what standard is it cheap? For example, is it cheap by comparison with the speaker's finances, or relative to the cost of other similar items on the market?

The notion of *valeur* is apparently also intended to cover an invariant, context independent part of the semantics of linguistic entities, which does not correspond to the conceptual content conveyed by the utterances in which they occur. In order to exemplify the notion of *valeur* Saussure used the famous chess metaphor.

> *D'abord un état du jeu correspond bien à un état de la langue. La valeur respective des pièces dépend de leur position sur l'échiquier, de même que dans la langue chaque terme a sa valeur par son opposition avec tous les autres termes.*
>
> *En second lieu, le système n'est jamais que momentané: il varie d'une position à l'autre. Il est vrai que les valeurs dépendent aussi et surtout d'une convention immuable, la règle du jeu, qui existe avant le début de la partie et persiste après chaque coup. Cette règle admise une fois pour toutes existe aussi en matière de langue; ce sont les principes constants de la sémiologie.*
>
> (pp. 125-126)

Essentially the passage above depicts *valeur* as having two facets. On the one hand, *valeur* is seen as variable, on the other hand, it is seen as constant. The first is readily and plausibly taken to be the context determined side of *valeur*. The status of the second one seems more problematic. Saussure's followers have (sensibly, I believe) taken this constant aspect of *valeur* to indicate whatever is constant about the language system, including the context independent contribution that linguistic entities make by virtue of their meaning, to expressions in which they occur, but their accounts are not an integral part of a theory of the way in which conceptual content is represented and used. Thus, problems arise regarding the status of the invariant part of word meaning which, arguably, pertains to *valeur*, as opposed to the one

which pertains to *signification*. This is well illustrated by A. Burger's (1969) analysis of the suffix -ę- in French.

Burger observes that four tense forms, *imparfait*, *conditionnel présent*, *plus-que-parfait*, and *conditionnel imparfait* may be used to locate the event in the past, to denote a hypothesised event, and, finally, to refer to a thought preceding the time of communication. In order to identify the (constant) *valeur* of the suffix -ę-, i.e. its invariant contribution to the meaning of the expression in which it occurs, Burger considers the possible answers to the question: *Quel temps fait-il ce matin?* (*What is the weather like this morning?*) and points out that tense forms fall into two distinct groups depending on whether they are acceptable in answering the question or not. The four mentioned above are ruled out. The acceptable ones are summarily rendered in Table 1.

il neige it is snowing	the event is taking place at the time of communication
il a neigé it has snowed/been snowing	the event has terminated but the speaker can still see the snow on the ground
il neigera it will snow	the event can be anticipated on the basis of evidence available
il aura neigé it would have snowed/been snowing	the evidence available points to the possibility of there having occurred an event of snowing in the past

Table 1

According to Burger the unacceptability of *il neigeait, il avait neigé, il neigerait* and *il aurait neigé*, in answering a question about the state of affairs which the communicators regard as actual at the time of communication, is evidence for positing two classes of forms, one

having the *valeur actuel*, the other *inactuel*. (I will call them *actual* and *non-actual*.) Here is Burger's conclusion of the analysis:

> *La valeur du suffixe '-ę-' est "l'inactuel"; il indique que l'événement signifié par le radical verbal est en dehors de l'actualité du parleur au moment de la parole. De là découlent les diverses significations de l'imparfait [(1)]. Il se combine soit avec le radical de l'auxiliaire, qui indique l'accompli', [(2)], soit avec le suffixe '-r-' qui indique le "pronostiqué" [(3)], soit avec tous les deux [(4)]; de là les significations du plus-que-parfait et des deux conditionnels. Il ressort de là que le système du verbe français n'est pas construit sur l'idée logique ou psychologique de temps. Les diverses notions temporelles que les syntagmes verbaux sont aptes à indiquer relèvent des significations et non des valeurs.*
>
> (pp. 242-3)

Two important points follow quite clearly from the conclusion of Burger's article: (a) *valeur* is in fact part of the encoded meaning of an entity; (b) *valeur* is not to be identified with the conceptual content of a given linguistic entity at the level of the mental representation expressed by the utterance in which the entity in question is used, although it stands in an intrinsic relation of some sort with the conceptualised information which the entities in question (for example, the temporal and modal interpretations of the four tense forms of the non-actual in French) are used to express.

So, the notion of *valeur* seems incoherent at best. On the one hand, *valeur* appears to be a function of the context. That is *valeur* as the position of the entity determined by the presence and salience of other entities in the system. On the other hand, *valeur* is a function of an apparently non-conceptual meaning encoded by natural language entities (words and morphemes), and their combinations. The meaning in question is apparently non-conceptual because Burger claims that

56

the temporal notions pertain to *significations* and not to *valeur*. This was illustrated by Burger's treatment of tense forms in French, what I have called *valeur* determined by the absolute position of the entity in the system. No matter what combinations it enters into, the suffix -ę- makes a constant contribution to the meaning (Saussure's *signification*) of the whole expression, although it is not part of it. Structuralist analyses in general have resulted in conclusions similar to Burger's. Thus, Twaddell (1960:20) claims that 'English grammar is not organised into a time system'. But, what does all this say about Saussure's passage on aspect in Slavonic? In what sense are the aspectual distinctions, perfective-imperfective of Slavonic and the simple-progressive of English, examples of *valeur* as instantiated in the grammar? To some extent, the answer is obvious. Saussure talks about Slavonic aspect as an instance of the grammaticalisation of *valeur*. So, it must be the invariant contribution that aspectually marked verbs make to utterance interpretation which is meant by *valeur* in connection with aspect. The tension between *valeur* and *signification* cannot be resolved so long as one looks at the natural language as a code which fully determines the contents of the thoughts communicated by the expressions in that code. The structuralist approach is rigorous enough to disclose the discrepancy between the linguistically encoded meaning of linguistic entities and the meaning they receive in use. However, the lack of a theoretically plausible explanation of verbal communication has had some serious consequences. On the one hand, people like Burger and Twaddell were pushed by their structuralist framework into a reductionist view of the meaning encoded by the language. Burger's way out lies with Saussure's distinction between *valeur* and *signification*, whereby encoded in the language are (a) the meaning which determines the position of a linguistic entity relative to others, and (b) the meaning which somehow or other affects the conceptual representation expressed

by the sentence in which a given entity is used. People like Twaddell seem happy to acknowledge that the linguistically encoded meaning of a given linguistic entity (by virtue of which the entity in question makes a contribution to sentence meaning and utterance meaning) is far less specific than the meaning actually expressed by the utterance of a sentence in which the item in question is used. But then, Twaddell like so many stucturalists has nothing to say about the apparent discrepancy between sentence meaning and utterance meaning which follows from their analyses. On the other hand, the lack of a plausible pragmatic theory, and, probably, assumptions about literalness and truth, underlying the commonsense view of language use, meant that the core meanings posited for categories like tense had to be very vague. These meanings had to be compatible with all the instances of the item in use. Even examples like *The train leaves at five* had to be taken as conclusive evidence against the view that English has a present tense. So, how does relevance theory look at the issues at stake here?

Relevance theory views human communication as an essentially inferential process whose chances of success and comparative efficiency are made possible by the principle of relevance. The inferential communication process is boosted by the partial reliance of verbal communication on the natural language code. The theory builds on the realisation that natural language expressions characteristically severely underdetermine the content of the information communicated by the sentence (Chapter one, section 1.4). The underspecification of temporal reference by the linguistic meaning of the verb form is illustrative in this connection. S&W (1986:189) look at utterances with the present perfect: *I have had breakfast* and *I have been to Tibet*.
The information concerning temporal specification recoverable from the decoding of the linguistic meaning of these utterances is the same:

58

roughly speaking, *The speaker has had breakfast at some time in the past*, and *The speaker has been to Tibet at some time in the past*, respectively. But both utterances are normally taken to have very different temporal interpretations. The former is understood as locating the event at some relatively proximate time in the past, the latter as merely stating that the speaker did visit Tibet at some time in the past. The difference in the meanings of the two utterances follows from the principle of relevance. In every readily conceivable context the utterance *I have had breakfast* has adequate contextual effects only if understood as intended to convey the idea that the speaker has had breakfast comparatively recently. By contrast, the utterance *I have been to Tibet* may be optimally relevant when construed without any specific assumptions about the lapse between the time of communication and the time of the speaker's visit to Tibet. It is the assumption that the speaker is conforming to the principle of relevance which leads the hearer pragmatically to enrich the logical form of the first utterance, the output of linguistic decoding, to the level of a proposition like: *The speaker has had breakfast today*, or *The speaker has had breakfast very recently*. The hearer faces the task of constructing hypotheses about the information that a rational communicator conforming to the principle of relevance may have intended to communicate by the utterance. Only some more specific proposition will do in this case, because the information that *the speaker had breakfast at some time in his life or other* will normally fail to yield sufficient contextual effects to be optimally relevant. Rather than fully determining the propositional content of the utterance, the natural language code provides evidence on the basis of which the hearer arrives at the speaker's intended interpretation. S&W argue that a natural language expression may provide twofold evidence about the speaker's communicative intention. On the one hand, it encodes part of the information, part of the conceptual (i.e. truth conditional)

content of the proposition expressed by the utterance. On the other hand, it may also encode procedural (i.e. computational) information, instructions about the interpretation of the natural language expression in context. For example, the personal pronoun *I* helps the hearer access a conceptual representation of the intended referent by virtue of encoding something like *speaker*. One might assume that *speaker* is actually part of the proposition expressed by the utterance, that it is not procedurally, but conceptually represented. Wilson and Sperber (1990:107) argue against this view. They point out that an utterance like *I do not exist* expresses a proposition which is necessarily false only on the assumption that the personal pronoun *I* denotes the concept *speaker*, but not on the view that the meaning of *I* merely encodes procedural information about the relevant conceptual representation of the speaker referent. Thus, on the first view, the utterance *I do not exist* expresses the proposition *The speaker of the utterance does not exist*, which is necessarily false. On the procedural characterisation of the meaning of *I*, the utterance *I do not exist* (when uttered by John Brown, for example) expresses the proposition *John Brown does not exist*, which is false at the time of communication, although it is not necessarily false: one can conceive of possible worlds in which the speaker referent of the utterance does not exist. On Wilson and Sperber's account, this insight, originally due to Kaplan (1989), is a strong argument in favour of characterising the meaning of the personal pronoun *I* as procedural. In relevance theory terms, entities which encode procedural information, which constrains the conceptual (i.e. truth conditional) content of the proposition expressed by the utterance, are called *constraints on explicit content*.

Other words like *so* and *after all*, discussed in detail by Blakemore (1987;1988), present constraints of a different sort. Consider (10):

(10)   a. John's just bought a new car. So he hasn't lost all his
          money.

       b. John's just bought a new car. After all, he hasn't lost
          all his money.

The utterances (10a) and (10b) are truth conditionally equivalent. The difference in the relation between the utterances in (10a) and those in (10b) is due to the processing instructions encoded by *so* and *after all*. *So* introduces a conclusion, thereby instructing the hearer to access a context which includes the relevant premise(s). *After all* introduces a premise, thereby instructing the hearer to access a context which includes the relevant conclusion(s). As a result, *John's just bought a new car* is treated as evidence in (10a) and as something like (partial) consequence in (10b). Discourse connectives such as *so* and *after all* do not contribute to the conceptual (i.e. truth conditional) contents of the utterances in which they appear, but reduce the processing effort required for the contextualisation. In relevance theory terms, discourse connectives are said to encode *constraints on implicatures*. It seems to me that these relevance theoretic distinctions explain the intuitions underlying the Saussurean notion of *valeur*.

The notion of *valeur* in connection with examples of lexical choice, like *cheap/inexpensive* of English as opposed to *jeftin* of Serbo-Croat, can be explained in terms of the way in which considerations of processing effort are involved in determining the use of a given linguistic entity. Also, relevance theory considers words (or phrases for that matter) as labels for concepts, but does not stipulate that the linguistically encoded meaning of a given entity fully determines the conceptual content which that entity is intended to communicate on every occasion.

61

If Burger's idea about the *actual/non-actual* distinction (in what one would standardly call the linguistic expression of *tense* in French) is roughly correct, the category of tense should possibly be analysed in terms of linguistically encoded constraints on explicit content. This would explain how the constant contribution of a category to the interpretation of the utterance (*valeur*), is not part of the conceptual (i.e. truth conditional) content of the mental representation which that utterance purports to represent (*signification*).

The remarks on underdeterminacy with regard to the categories of tense and aspect in Chapter one suggest two possible ways of analysing these categories within the framework of relevance theory: as constraints on explicit content or as conceptually encoded. The evidence presented so far is sufficient strongly to suggest that the categories of aspect and tense are not to be analysed in terms of constraints on implicatures, because they do constrain the conceptual content of the proposition expressed by the utterance. Whether aspectual categories encode procedural constraints on explicit content ultimately depends on arguments like the one given for the personal pronoun *I*. Thus, the perfect of English may seem to encode a contraint on explicit content. Consider the utterances in (11) and (11'):

(11)   a. John scored a goal.

        b. John has scored a goal.

            (Smith (1981:159))

(11')   a. *John scored a goal, but he hasn't scored a goal.

        b. *John has scored a goal, but he didn't score a goal.

On the basis of examples like (11) and (11'), Smith (1981) argues that the simple past and the present perfect forms are truth conditionally equivalent. Were this not so (11'a) and (11'b) would, presumably, not (necessarily) be contradictory. So, the present perfect would appear to encode a constraint on implicatures, rather than a constraint on explicit content. But, once the consequences of the underdeterminacy thesis are fully appreciated, once it has been demonstrated that pragmatics plays a part in establishing the truth conditional content of the proposition expressed by the utterance, this conclusion no longer seems to be warranted. The most that tests like (11') can show is that there is no difference between the conceptual meanings of the simple past and the present perfect. In other words, it would seem that (11') lends fairly strong support for the conclusion that (11a) and (11b) are equivalent at the level of logical form. On the assumption that this is actually the case, one could easily explain the intuition that (11a) is more likely to be taken as locating the event in the more distant past than (11b) in terms of a constraint on explicit content encoded by the present perfect, but not by the simple past. Hence, the possibility that the present perfect actually encodes a constraint on explicit content would seem to be quite plausible.

However, I have serious doubts about this argument, more specifically, about the premise that the logical forms of (11a) and (11b) are actually identical. Let's assume that the simple past tense encodes a concept like *past*, without actually specifying relative to what moment in time the event is located in the past. Then, an utterance like (11a) will be interpreted as locating the event in the past relative to the time of speech, because the time of speech is the most *accessible* time. The present perfect would probably differ from the simple past tense in this respect, because it makes explicit reference to the present.

I believe that the present perfect indicates by virtue of its linguistic meaning that the state of affairs described by the utterance obtains before the time indicated by morphological tense. Consider again the examples with the present perfect given in Chapter one ((14b) and (14c), repeated as (12a) and (12b)):

(12)   a.   John has lived in London (but now he lives in New York).

         b.   John has lived in London (for three years now).

The present tense in these examples indicates that *present* is the time at which the truth conditions for the proposition are met. The perfect indicates that the truth conditions for the state of affairs described by the utterance are also satisfied at some time (or other) which precedes the time indicated by tense. How does this work for (12a) and (12b)? Well, (12a) describes a state of affairs which no longer obtains in the *present*. That much is made clear by the context, as shown by the continuation in brackets. So, the hearer pragmatically establishes that the utterance is intended to express a past tense proposition, while the linguistically encoded present tense indicates that the past tense proposition is relevant when its truth is evaluated at speech time. Were this not so, the speaker would have used the simple past tense form as in: *John lived in London.* In (12a), the use of the present perfect is pragmatically justified because it spares the hearer the processing effort that he might otherwise invest in accessing some assumptions about a past time context against which he would process the utterance for contextual effects. By explicitly indicating that the truth conditions for the proposition are met at *present*, the speaker invites the hearer to derive an interpretation on which explicit reference to present time in talking about a past time event is optimally relevant. How could this be? One possibility is that the proposition

about the past time state of affairs is not to be processed against a context which includes many assumptions about the past. Other plausible hypotheses could be that there are at present some relevant consequences of the state of affairs in the past, or that a rather recent past event is talked about, and the like. The interpretation of (12b) is somewhat different. In (12a) the hearer inferentially arrives at a past tense proposition embedded under a present tense, so that the proposition has complex tense, as it were. In contrast to (12a), (12b) is enriched into a present tense proposition. The contribution of the perfect construction in this case is that the proposition expressed by the utterance entails that the truth conditions for the state of affairs obtaining at present are also satisfied at some time in the past: *I have lived in London* entails *I lived in London*, although the proposition expressed by the utterance with the present perfect (on the intended interpretation of (12b)) is not a past tense one. Let me now go back to my main argument. If I am right in claiming that the contributions of the present perfect and the simple past to utterance meaning are different at the level of logical form, then the view that the present perfect encodes a (procedural) constraint on explicit content is not tenable, after all.

Generally speaking, positing a procedural constraint on utterance interpretation will crucially depend on arguments like the ones for the personal pronoun *I* and the (present) perfect construction. It is not clear to me that there are any convincing arguments for the view that the meanings of aspectual categories are procedurally rather than conceptually represented. I therefore assume that the aspectual distinctions of English and Serbo-Croat are conceptually represented. The idea that problems pertaining to aspect (like those with tense) are related to the discrepancy between the meaning encoded in the language and the conceptual contents conveyed by the putative

65

aspectual categories in use, is exemplified in the remainder of this Chapter. In Chapter four an analysis of the progressive and the perfective will be given; the invariant contribution of these aspectual categories to utterance meaning will be spelled out in some detail.

2.3.2 The aspectual categories of English and Serbo-Croat compared

In certain uses imperfective verbs of Serbo-Croat correspond to the simple form of achievement verbs of English. Consider the following examples.

(13)   a.   John blinks.

        b.   Jovan trepće [imperf.].

        c.   (?)Jovan trepne [perf.].

(14)   a.   Mary coughs.

        b.   Meri kašlje [imperf.].

        c.   (?)Meri kihne [perf.].

The utterances (13a) and (14a) are normally understood as saying something about the kind of persons John and Mary are. (13b) and (14b) are similar in this respect, but also have a progressive-like interpretation readily available. They are not descriptions of individual instances of *blinking* and *coughing* (cf. Goldsmith and Woisetschlaeger (1982)). By contrast, (13c) and (14c), the Serbo-Croat translations of (13a) and (14a) with perfective verbs, are interpreted as referring to individual occurrences of a *blink* and of a *cough*, respectively. This is reflected in the utterances' being felt to be elliptical. Both (13c) and (14c) direct, i.e. constrain, utterance

interpretation in so far as they call for further contextual information concerning the occasions on which the events took place. Questions like *When?*, *Why?* and *What happened next?* immediately come to one's mind upon hearing (13c) or (14c) out of (the appropriate) context.

Process verbs of English in the simple past tense are sometimes ambiguous between an activity reading and an accomplishment reading. The same is true of imperfective verbs of Slavonic languages. The similarity between the meanings of accomplishment VPs and perfective aspect, makes it reasonable to expect that, when the accomplishment reading is the intended one, the perfective verb will be used in the Serbo-Croat translation of the sentence in English. But this prediction is not fully borne out.[7]

(15) a. Did John read/Has John read *War and Peace?*
           (from Comrie (1976:113)

      b. Da li je Jovan čitao [imperf.] *Rat i mir?*

      c. Da li je Jovan pročitao [perf.] *Rat i mir?*

The sentence (15c) unambiguously translates the question (15a) as asking about *John's having read the whole book*, and yet (15b), which allows for both a completive (perfective-like) and a non-completive (imperfective-like) interpretation, will be the preferred translation if the speaker is believed to be interested merely in the fact of *John's having read the novel*, without any additional overtones (cf. Comrie, 1976:113). The translation (15c) with the perfective will not be appropriate in this case, because it suggests the relevance of other information concerning the event, such as the time by which the subject was supposed to finish reading the book. It may also be taken to indicate that a specific copy of *War and Peace* is being talked about, or that there are some reasons why completing the reading of the novel is particularly important. In

other words, the perfective places further constraints on the context against which the utterance is interpreted.

The examples (13) to (15) show that the imperfective normally occurs in some uses where most definitions of aspectual categories suggest that perfective aspect should be appropriate. The reverse situation arises as well.

(16) a. They ran when the tram stopped.

b. Trčali su [imperf.] kada se tramvaj zaustavio.

c. Potrčali su [perf.] kada se tramvaj zaustavio.

The sentence in (16b), the Serbo-Croat translation of (16a) with the imperfective verb, has two possible interpretations:

(i) the tram stopped first, and then running began;

(ii) the tram stopped while running was in progress.

(16a) with a process verb and (16c), its translation with the perfective aspect, allow only for the first interpretation. The translation with the perfective inchoative in (16c) is the more appropriate of the two, because the imperfective verb in (16b) may invite the undesirable interpretation (ii). So, although both process verbs and imperfective aspect are characterised in terms of the lack of reference to endpoints, only the former occur in linguistic contexts in which they necessarily have an inceptive, perfective-like interpretation. As the above example shows, the inceptive interpretation is available for imperfective verbs, but it is not the only possible one. In this respect imperfective verbs of Serbo-Croat are like English state verbs.

68

The similarity between the interpretations of imperfective verbs of Serbo-Croat and state verbs of English is illustrated by examples like (17):

(17)   Macbeth believed in ghosts when he saw Banquo.

Unlike (16a), (17) has two interpretations: one on which *Macbeth already believed in ghosts when he saw Banquo*, and another one, according to which *Macbeth began to believe in ghosts upon seeing Banquo*. This is not the only interesting similarity between imperfective verbs and state verbs. Consider (18), for example:

(18)   a.   Charles believed in ghosts when he was a child, and he still believes in them.

      b.   Mary lived in London last year, and she may still live there.

      c.   (*)(?/!)John ran for several hours this morning, and he may still be running.

      d.   Jovan je jutros trčao nekoliko sati, i možda još uvek trči.

Although (18c) is (possibly) unacceptable, there seems to be nothing wrong with its translation into Serbo-Croat in (18d). Since (18a) and (18b) with stative verbs, are also acceptable, it seems obvious that the interpretation of imperfective verbs is very similar to the interpretation of English state verbs. But why do process verbs of English in the simple form receive a perfective-like interpretation in examples such as (16a)? Why is (18c) understood as a contradiction? I now propose briefly to consider one answer to these questions.

2.3.3 Viewpoint aspect

C. S. Smith (1983; 1986) takes the view that situation types (states, processes, accomplishments and achievements) are universal conceptual generalisations about real world situations. They are aspectual categories differently realised across languages, which focus on their different properties. The aspectual distinctions of particular languages are subsumed under the term *viewpoint aspect*, instantiated by categories such as the perfective-imperfective distinction of Slavonic languages and by the simple-progressive distinction of English. C. S. Smith's explanation for the problem raised by sentences like (16a) and (18c) is based on her characterisation of the simple and the progressive:

> In the perspective of simple aspect, an event is presented as a whole. The focus includes both initial and final endpoints; internal structure is ignored. This interpretation of the meaning of simple aspect is essentially the traditional notion of perfectivity; but I do not use that term here, because the account of simple aspect that I will propose in §3 departs somewhat from the traditional. Progressive aspect presents an interior perspective, from which the endpoints of an event are ignored. Thus the progressive indicates a moment or interval that is neither initial nor final.
>
> (C. S. Smith, 1983:482)

Further on, in §3, it is claimed that 'the invariant contribution of (the simple) viewpoint aspect is the perspective of a situation as a whole', and that 'this perspective is understood differently according to situation'. Thus, 'in stative sentences, a state is taken to obtain with no indication or implication about endpoints' (p.492), as exemplified by 'Susan knew the answer'. So, (the simple) viewpoint aspect is malleable, as it were, while situation aspect remains fixed. Since process verbs, arguably, imply endpoints and the simple aspect represents the situation as a whole, (16a) and (18c) are easily

70

explained. When the simple is used in talking about individual occurrences of processes, the completive interpretation arises in the interaction of the meaning of process and the meaning of the simple aspect. The simple aspect does not impose a completive interpretation on state verbs, presumably, because state verbs do not make explicit reference to endpoints, and because the meaning of the situation type takes precedence over the meaning of viewpoint aspect. Viewpoint aspect can be overridden by situation aspect. However, there is no reasoned account of what determines the precedence of the latter over the former.

It will have become apparent from what has been said so far that, on this view, the simple aspect is actually significantly different from the perfective aspect in the traditional sense of the term, since the meaning of completion in the perfective cannot be overridden by situation type meaning. Perfective verbs derived from imperfective state verbs really invariably describe situations as delimited: *znati* ('know') is an imperfective stative, *saznati* ('learn', or more precisely, 'to change from the state of not knowing into the state of knowing') is perfective, and, like all perfective verbs, it describes the change in its entirety, i.e. as a whole. The difference between the simple and the perfective was exemplified by the sentences in (13) and (14), and many more illustrations could be given to confirm the conclusion that whatever the meaning of the simple form may be, it is crucially different from the meaning of the perfective, contrary to C. S. Smith's assertion. Furthermore, there is very little evidence from English to support her view of the meaning of the simple. In fact, the only convincing examples of the completive meaning of process verbs in the simple aspect involve utterances where more than one event is talked about:

(19) a. They ran for the shelter when they heard the alarm.

b. In the afternoon, when he goes to school, John will meet his friends.

In (19a) the completive meaning is reflected in the lack of the interpretation on which running is simultaneous with hearing the alarm. In (19b) the situation in the *when*-clause also describes a complete event. However, both the simple and the progressive in (20a) and (20b) are appropriately translated by the imperfective, as in (20c).

(20) a. John washed his car from four to six this afternoon.

b. John was washing his car from four to six this afternoon.

c. Jovan je prao [imperf.] kola od četiri do šest ovog poslepodneva.

The translation with the perfective verb *oprati* would not be acceptable, unless the sentence was taken to mean that the washing of the car took place within a subpart of the interval: *from four to six.*

(21) (*)(?)Jovan je oprao [perf.] kola od četiri do šest ovog poslepodneva.

That perfective verbs may be somewhat difficult to interpret with *from ... to* adverbials in sentences such as (21) is not really surprising. The adverbial of duration suggests an interpretation on which the event of washing the car completely lasted throughout an interval of time. But, a situation viewed as a whole can be spoken about as occurring

between two extreme points of an interval of time only on the assumption that it takes place (possibly more than once) within some sub-interval(s) of the interval of time indicated by the adverbial. John could have started washing the car at four, and finished at six, but what he was doing between four and six was *wash the car*, not *wash the car completely*. Of course, John may have been washing the car again and again. In this case, a continuation of (21) such as *pet puta* 'five times' would make the intended interpretation clear, and the utterance would be perfectly acceptable.

(22)   Od četiri do šest Jovan je popravio kola, oprao ih i vratio se kući.

        From four to six, John repaired the car, washed it, and returned home.

Sentence (22) is perfectly acceptable, as the linguistic context provides enough clues to make it clear that the intended interpretation is the one on which all the events described by perfective verbs are understood as taking place within the time span indicated by the adverbial. But, if (21) is difficult to interpret because the immediately accessible context would normally suggest an interpretation which amounts to a logically impossible assertion (that a situation represented as a whole is true throughout an interval of time, while its endpoints coincide with the endpoints of the interval indicated by the adverbial), then the view that the simple aspect describes the situation as a whole cannot be correct. If this were a tenable position, (20a) would be just as odd as (21).

An alternative to explaining the meaning of completion associated with (certain uses of) the simple viewpoint aspect is to

73

propose a pragmatic analysis, i.e. to claim that the perfective character of the simple is due to contextual factors, that it stems from interpretation, not from the meaning of the simple form per se. As my treatment of the simple is crucially based on this assumption, a few remarks are made here, in order to dispel some initial doubts as to the feasibility of the pragmatic approach, raised by an obvious potential difficulty, illustrated in (18c) above, and repeated in (23):

(23)   (*)(?/!)John ran for several hours this morning, and he may still be running.

The sentence in (23) is arguably unacceptable because it expresses a contradiction. The proposition in the first clause refers to the situation of running as completed, and the proposition in the second is the downright denial of the first. It would appear that, if the pragmatic treatment of the meaning of completion were correct, (23) ought to be acceptable in some suitably convoluted context (given the criterion of cancellability of pragmatically derived meaning.) If it were not possible to devise a context in which the utterance would not be taken to express a contradiction, it would seem that any attempt to deal with the meaning of completion in examples like (23) in pragmatic terms must be doomed. However, such contexts exist, as illustrated in (24), and both the unacceptability of (23) and the problem it poses for an analysis of the simple which does not invoke completion (i.e. endpoints) are only apparent. The objection based on the putative unacceptability of sentences such as (23) loses its force.

(24)   a.   John ran for several hours this morning, and, for all I know, he may still be running.

       b.   Lily strolled along the beach, and she may still be strolling there.

Whether the simple past tense form of process verbs like *run* is taken
to denote a complete (delimited) event or an incomplete one is clearly
a matter of interpretation, not of linguistically encoded meaning. I
return to the issue in more detail later. The main points made here
are: (a) that the meaning of the simple aspect cannot be characterised
in terms of completion and that the equation of the meaning of the
simple with the meaning of the perfective is, consequently, not justified;
(b) that a pragmatic explanation for the meaning of completion found
in certain utterances with the simple aspect is possible, at least in
principle.

I hope that this brief consideration of verbal aspect has shown
two things. First, that the characterisations of aspectual categories
within the two approaches examined are based on much the same
intuitions about the meanings definitional of the members of aspectual
distinctions. Second, and more important, there seems to be a good
case for claiming that the semantics and pragmatics of the binary
aspectual distinctions, like the perfective-imperfective contrast in
Slavonic languages and the simple-progressive opposition of English,
cannot be exhaustively defined in terms of the features of meaning
usually invoked in the 'definitions'. The examples examined reveal the
presence of residuary meanings which escape existing definitions and
are reflected in the interaction of the verbs, belonging to one or another
aspectual category, with the context in the process of utterance
interpretation. Let me conclude this section by giving an outline of the
general picture of aspectual distinctions as presented so far.

2.4   CONCLUDING REMARKS

Putting it in the most general terms, the problems of verbal
aspect, as outlined above concern the characterisation of (a) certain

universal conceptual contrasts (situation type aspect), (b) the language
specific devices for expressing (some of) these contrasts (perfective-
imperfective, simple-progressive), and (c) the relation between the two.
The picture of aspectual categories sketched out so far, crucially draws
on several key words: change, time (more specifically, duration), and
delimitedness. Following are featural specifications of verbs (including
phrasal VP predicates), according to the situation type they denote
(Table 2), as well as of the perfective-imperfective and the simple-
progressive distinctions of Serbo-Croat and English (Table 3).

	state verbs	process verbs	accomplishment VPs	achievement verbs
change (i) complex (ii) single	0	+	+ (i)	+ (ii)
duration	+	+	+	-
delimited	-	(-)	(+)	+

Table 2

	perfective	imperfective	simple	progressive
change (i) complex (ii) single	+	0	0	+ (i)
duration	0	+	0	+
delimited	+	0	0	-

Table 3

76

What is the significance of the five 'O' slots in the figures above? Why are two marks in (Table 2) enclosed in brackets? The 'O' slots are to indicate that some aspectual categories may be indeterminate with respect to the presence of a particular feature. Thus, neither the imperfective nor the simple encode presence or lack of delimitedness. Similarly, both the imperfective and the simple are readily used to denote stative situations as well as dynamic ones, and are, therefore, unspecified with respect to the feature *change*. The bracketed '-' sign is to indicate that process verbs may be used to denote complete, i.e. delimited, changes of state, contrary to what is usually assumed, while the '+' marking accomplishment predicates as denoting delimited events is enclosed in brackets, because quite a few accomplishment VPs may be used in talking about non-delimited events, a fact the significance of which is sometimes overlooked. What about state verbs? Should they be defined as those which never denote dynamic situations (*own*, *contain*)? If so, how is the aspectual character of those verbs which may be used both as state verbs and as process verbs to be defined (*live*, *stand*, etc.)? These and other related questions are addressed in the following chapters.

Chapter Three

SUBJECTIVITY, ASPECT AND RELEVANCE

Aspectual categories are, it is often argued, indicative of the speaker's perspective, or point of view, on the state of affairs described by the utterance and this meaning is not part of the truth conditional content of the utterance. There are at least two potentially interesting versions of this position. On the first one, the expression of the speaker's point of view is determined by the interaction of the linguistic meaning of a given aspectual category with the context, and the point of view expressed is to be pragmatically explained. On the second approach, the point of view conveyed by a particular aspectual category is part of its linguistic meaning and subjectivity is to be regarded as pertaining to linguistic competence. This second position I will refer to as *the subjectivity thesis*. In Chapter four I will pursue the first of these approaches. This chapter considers subjectivity as a category in general and as a facet of aspect semantics in particular.

Subjectivity is a term used in connection with the linguistic expression of the way the speaker (or other subject of consciousness) is involved in or looking at the situation in the world described by the utterance. There are a number of reasons for considering subjectivity in connection with aspect. First, it has been claimed that various aspectual categories are expressive of subjectivity, so that these categories do not merely denote the conceptual distinctions which make a contribution to the truth conditional contents of the utterances in which they are used. Second, a number of authors have emphasised the significance of the expression of subjectivity in language. My examination of the notion is based on the works of Lyons (1982) and

78

Banfield (1982). The first account epitomises a tradition which Lyons traces back to Benveniste (1958) and which lays emphasis on the linguistic expression of subjectivity. Lyons (1982) discusses a number of phenomena relating to aspectual choice in the spirit of this tradition. The second analysis is the most formalised, and probably the most explicit, account of subjectivity in relation to aspect. Third, many treatments of aspect endorse some version of the subjectivity thesis. This is evidenced by C.S. Smith's (1983; 1986) notion of *viewpoint aspect* (expressive of the *the speaker's perspective* on the situation), Whitaker's (1983) account of the progressive in terms of *experientiality*, Kuno and Kaburaki's (1977) notion of *empathy*, the widespread characterisations of certain aspectual categories (cf. Comrie (1976)) in terms of *focusing* on a particular stage of the event, etc. Consequently, my assessment of some explicit proposals concerning subjectivity and its linguistic expression will have much bearing on those analyses of aspect which more or less implicitly rely on some version of the subjectivity thesis. The conclusion that subjectivity is not a well defined term will carry over to *viewpoint, experientiality, empathy, focus* and the like. The reanalysis of the arguably subjective elements of language should also make these other terms redundant.

My examination of the consequences of the treatment of aspect in terms of subjectivity will show that even if there were a good case for claiming that subjectivity is grammaticalised in language, the notion fails to provide a plausible account of the uses of the arguably subjective aspectual categories. I argue that Banfield's and Lyons' analyses do not stand up to scrutiny, and that much of the evidence they put forward in support of subjectivity receives a natural explanation within the framework of relevance theory.

3.1   EVIDENCE FOR SUBJECTIVITY

Sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 are summary reviews of Banfield's and Lyons' analyses. I look at Banfield's evidence and arguments first.

3.1.1. Overview of Banfield's analysis

3.1.1.1   Syntactic evidence for subjectivity

The distribution and interpretation of (a) exclamatory expressions (*Yes,...., Oh,....* etc.), (b) parentheticals (..., *he thought,* ...., *John realised*), (c) forms of direct address (*Sir,...*), (d) addressee oriented adverbials (*between you and me*), (e) quoted clauses, and some other phenomena as well, provide the basis for Banfield's view that subjectivity is grammaticalised in language. Syntactically, all the elements listed in (a) to (e), characteristically occur in independent clauses, and cannot appear in embedded ones. Semantically, they are interpreted with reference to the speaker or to some third person subject of consciousness, depending on whether they are used in discourse or narration.

So, the expression of subjectivity is evidenced and explained syntactically in so far as there is a class of non-embeddable elements in the language. The existence of these elements provides the justification for the introduction of the E (EXPRESSION) node which arguably explains the ungrammaticality of (1) and the possible difficulty in interpreting (2).[5]

(1)   *John said that yes he would be late.

(2)   John said that he would arrive at five, yes.

80

Banfield's syntactic evidence is important here primarily in that it identifies a class of non-embeddable elements. Since aspectual categories do not fall into this class, the syntactic arguments for subjectivity, however good or bad they may be, do not properly apply to them either. Aspectual categories fall into the class of, as Banfield calls them, *embeddable subjective elements*, to be considered presently.

3.1.1.2   Embeddable subjective expressions

The list of embeddable subjective expressions includes: (a) expressive lexical items 'whose full interpretation entails a reference to the speaker...' (*that idiot of a doctor, a devil of an organiser, poor, damn*);   (b) deictics (deictic adverbs, tense, first and second person pronouns, which are arguably referred for interpretation to the main E, rather than to S, when they are used in indirect speech: **Bill said to me₁ that I₁ was stupid*). All the items listed in (a) and (b) are considered to be instances of the grammaticalisation of subjectivity on the grounds that they non-truth conditionally encode reference to the speaker's attitude towards the proposition expressed by the utterance (Banfield (1982:57)). Their interpretation is explained in terms of two principles:

> *1E/1I*: For every expression (E), there is a unique referent of *I* (the SPEAKER), to whom all expressive elements are attributed, and a unique referent of *you* (the ADDRESSEE/HEARER)

> *1E/1* PRESENT: For every expression (E), there is a unique referent of the present tense, which is cotemporal with NOW.

The second principle ensures that present time deictics in discourse are interpreted as cotemporal with the present tense, and

that all instances of the present tense are also cotemporal. Taken together, the two principles account for the assignment of the E's single point of view to the E's single speaker and moment of utterance.

Banfield also characterises the sentence of represented speech and thought in terms of subjectivity. She points out that there are two competing views regarding the expression of point of view in narrative fiction:

> *We have in fact two radically different conceptions of the presentation of point of view in language and literature. In one, all language is seen as paradigmatically spoken, and all other uses are derivative from the spoken language. Hence, in all these derivative uses of language, a speaker appears whose presence gives language its characteristic structure. In the other, point of view becomes a concept which can be independent of the speaker's role in communication. Subjectivity is not dependent on the communicative act, even if it is shown through language. And if it is not subordinated to the communicative function, then language can contain speakerless sentences.*
>
> (Banfield (1982:69-70))

Banfield then points out a number of characteristics shared by the subjective expressions of discourse and the sentence of represented speech and thought: non-embeddability and free use of parentheticals. I will briefly illustrate these points here.

The sentence of represented speech and thought is never introduced by a complementiser, (3a), exclamatives occur freely, (3b), as well as topicalised constituents, (3c):

(3) a. *That he was unhappy, John said.

   b. Oh how extraordinarily nice workmen were, she thought.

             (Mansfield, 'The Garden Party')

   c. Absurd, she was - very absurd.

               (Woolf, Mrs Dalloway)

              (Banfield (1982:71-73))

Parentheticals are freely used in the sentence of represented speech and thought.[9] The main difference between subjectivity in direct and indirect speech, on the one hand, and represented speech and thought, on the other, arguably, lies with the fact that in represented speech and thought, expressivity may be attributed to the referent of a third person pronoun. There are, however, a number of other differences between the sentence of discourse and the sentence of represented speech and thought, because of which, the analysis of the sentence of represented speech and thought requires a reformulation of the principles which, arguably, govern utterance interpretation. The central reason for modifying the general principle 1E/1I is the observation that in the sentence of represented speech and thought the expression of subjectivity is not attributed to the speaker. Thus, the principle *1E/1* SPEAKER is replaced by *1E/1* SELF, and two further constraints:

  a. 1E/1 SELF. For every node E there is at most one referent, called the 'subject of consciousness' or SELF, to whom all expressive elements are attributed. That is, all realisations of SELF in an E are coreferential.

  b. Priority of SPEAKER. If there is an *I*, *I* is coreferential with the SELF. In the absence of an *I*, a third person pronoun may be interpreted as SELF.

83

c.   If E is related anaphorically to the complement of
        a consciousness verb, its SELF is coreferential
        with the subject or indirect object of this verb.
                                        (Banfield (1982:93))

The above constraints are construed as 'interpretive principles which formalise processes which speakers or readers apply' to the sentences in question. Having completed this admittedly sketchy summary of Banfield's formalisation of subjectivity in relation to embeddable subjective elements, I turn to her account of subjectivity in relation to (the progressive) aspect.

3.1.1.3   The progressive: simultaneity and subjectivity

According to Banfield, the distinction between two kinds or levels of consciousness is grammaticalised in language:

> ... in language is already contained - as part of what
> language knows - the very distinction between reflection,
> Descartes' Cogito, the I am thinking, where the subject
> knows that he knows, and the other conscious states
> which underlie it and may never be reflected upon but are
> the minimal required to be conscious as opposed to
> unconscious.
>   Banfield (1982:210)

Lyons (1982:104) takes the same view, when he observes that Descartes' *Cogito ergo sum* should be translated, not as *I think, therefore I am*, but as *I am thinking, therefore I am*, and that 'however we judge the success or failure of Descartes' attempt to found all knowledge on the indubitability of self-consciousness, we must realise that his application of the *Cogito* rests upon the thinking subject's awareness of himself in the act of thinking.' The temptation to use the simple present is said to arise from the lack of continuous forms in

84

Latin and French, and from a misinterpretation of the meaning of *Cogito* as habitual or generic.

Banfield observes that the English past progressive, like the *imparfait* of French, exhibits an affinity for use in the sentence of represented thought. This is illustrated by the examples (4) and (5):

(4)   a.   Emma looked out the window.

          b.   A few drops of rain fell

                            were falling.

(5)   a.   When Emma looked out the window, a few drops of rain fell.

          b.   When Emma looked out the window, a few drops of rain were falling.

The sequence in (4a) and (4b) is adequately paraphrased by (5b) with the progressive, not by (5a) with the simple. Banfield explains this in terms of a semantic feature which she calls *simultaneity* and which is associated with the *-ing* participle. This feature is obviously assumed to be linked with subjectivity in some way. Simultaneity is a two place relation. Something is simultaneous with something else. The idea is that the progressive is subjective because it encodes simultaneity with the moment of consciousness (NOW). The deictic *now* which, in Banfield's terms, indicates the time of consciousness, is compatible only with the progressive, and not with the simple past, because, arguably, only the former has the feature *simultaneity*.

(6)   a.   A few drops of rain were now falling.

          b.   ?A few drops of rain now fell.

Banfield assumes that the presence of the feature *simultaneity* requires a temporal antecedent. The only appropriate referent which is automatically associated with an expression (E), and which does not need to be lexically inserted, is NOW. Therefore, the possibility of using the present progressive in isolation, (i.e. without explicit adverbial temporal specifiers) in discourse and the relative difficulty of using the past progressive in the same way are explained. In discourse, the antecedent NOW is automatically assigned in the present, but not in the past tense. Banfield then argues that the progressive and the *imparfait* of 'represented speech and thought will differ from the same tenses when used in discourse, because they refer to the NOW of the E node and hence may appear without any explicit time adverb' (Banfield (1982:107)). I will examine the consequences of Banfield's approach for an account of the uses of tense and aspect in some detail shortly, and will propose an alternative to her analysis of the progressive in Chapter four. The point I hope to have made here is that on Banfield's view the progressive (and the *imparfait*) is (are) related to subjectivity via *simultaneity*. I now turn to Lyons' analysis.

3.1.2 Lyons' account of subjectivity

Lyons (1982) takes the view that the role of subjectivity in natural language must be recognised in linguistics, even if it cannot be fully explained. He points out that 'the speaker's expression of himself in his utterance' cannot be 'reduced to the assertion of a set of propositions, without loss or distortion in terms of a neutral metalanguage with an objective, or transcendent, point of reference.' According to Lyons, the role of subjectivity has been ignored in modern linguistics and philosophy of language due to the fallacy that 'language is essentially, if not solely, an instrument for the expression of

propositional thought' (Lyons (1982:103-4)). He points out that utterances are standardly assumed to convey descriptive, i.e. truth conditional, representations of states of affairs in the world, and proceeds to argue against this position.[10]

Lyons' (1982:105) view (he refers to it as *locutionary subjectivism*) rests on two claims:

(i) The self-expression of the speaker in his utterance cannot be reduced to the assertion of a set of propositions.

(ii) In both semantics and pragmatics of natural language two components should be distinguished: (a) a subjective component (the self-expression of the locutionary agent), and (b) an objective component (a set of communicable propositions)

(Lyons (1982:105))

3.1.2.1   Non-paraphrasability as evidence for subjectivity

The notion of subjectivity, arguably, makes it possible to account for the semantic contrasts between sentences like those in (7), for the quotative in French, in (8), and the choice of aspectual categories in discourse and narration in general.

(7) a. I remembered locking the door
     b. I remembered myself locking the door
     c. I remembered that I had locked the door

In what sense are (7a) and (7b) expressive of subjectivity? (7a) is readily taken to convey something beyond the proposition expressed by

(7c). Moreover, this extra element of meaning cannot be paraphrased by a set of propositions, such as: *The speaker remembers taking out his key and inserting it into the lock*, *The speaker remembers putting his hand on the door handle and checking whether the door is locked*, *The speaker has a mental representation of himself in the act of locking the door*, etc. None of these propositions are either necessary or sufficient to capture the meaning that the speaker may rationally have intended to communicate by the utterance. The last one (*The speaker has a mental representation of himself in the act of locking the door*) is, I assume, necessarily part of the interpretation of (7b), but it could still be argued on purely intuitive grounds that it does not exhaustively paraphrase the speaker's intended interpretation of the utterance. Again, the extra element of meaning could not adequately be rendered by a list of propositions about the speaker's past realisation of himself in the act of locking the door. On Lyons' account, non-paraphrasability is a prime indication of non-propositionality, i.e. subjectivity. Other expressions are considered subjective on somewhat different grounds.

3.1.2.2 The quotative of French and subjectivity

Lyons addresses the following questions: What is the literal meaning of (8), with the so-called quotative use of the present conditional form of the verb? What does the term *literal meaning* mean with respect to utterances such as (8), which are not clearly ambiguous between a metaphorical and a non-metaphorical interpretation?

(8)   Le premier ministre serait malade.

Two points are made in this connection. First, (8) is truth conditionally equivalent to (9):

(9)   Le premier ministre est malade.

Second, the English translations of (8) which seem roughly adequate (given in (10)), actually differ truth conditionally from both (8) and (9):

(10)   a.   The Prime Minister is thought/believed to be ill.

        b.   The Prime Minister is reported to be ill.

        c.   We are given to understand that the Prime Minister is ill.

Basically, (8) illustrates the same problem as (7), but the issue of literalness seems to be involved in addition. Subjectivity in connection with aspect is again somewhat different.

Lyons (1982) observes that the past progressive does not preclude future time adverbials and that the progressive in general allows double temporal specification:

(11)   John was coming tomorrow.

(12)   Yesterday John was coming tomorrow.

He argues that utterances like (11) can have two quite different interpretations with respect to the reference time indicated by adverbials such as *tomorrow*, and that one of them does not necessarily involve the experiential mode of description (though it may be held to do so in particular contexts), whereas the other interpretation does. Lyons further observes that in utterances like (12) 'we do not need to

invoke any notion of experientiality or of subjective projection into the consciousness of another (though there might be other reasons in the context, for so doing)' (Lyons (1982:120)). I will come back to these examples later. Suffice it to point out here that the simple aspect also allows for double temporal specification, as shown in (13) and (14):

(13) a. */?John arrived tomorrow.

  b. ?Yesterday John arrived tomorrow.

(14) According to the original plan John arrived tomorrow.

The acceptability of the utterances in (13) and (14) is determined by the accessibility of the interpretation on which they are construed, as representations of plans made in the past, rather than being descriptions of states of affairs in the past (see Smith (1990:105) for a consideration of examples like (13) and (14)). The progressive, for reasons to be discussed later (section 3.3.3.5), makes the relevant interpretation more accessible and is, therefore, more appropriate for this use.

3.1.2.3 *Aspectual choice, modes of discourse and subjectivity*

Aspectual categories seem to differ from subjective modality in that they play a part at the level of the propositional content of the utterance, by virtue of encoding information about the temporal contour of the situation (I used the terms *completion* and *delimitedness*; cf. Chapters one and two) described by the utterance. Lyons further points out that there are restrictions on the combination of tense and aspect categories:

restrictions in the language system itself and restrictions,
statistical if not absolute, upon the use that is made of the
system by speakers.   It is my contention that these
restrictions are far from random or accidental: they can
be explained by invoking the distinction between a more
or less subjective mode of description, or point of view,
and associating the choice of one or the other with what
is normal for different kinds of discourse.

(Lyons (1982:115))

Lyons then proposes an explanation for the interaction between tense and aspect by postulating a distinction between what he calls the *experiential* and the *historical* modes of discourse:

The term [used here], 'historical', is intended to suggest
the narration of events, ordered in terms of successivity
and presented dispassionately with the minimum of
subjective involvement; and this mode of description
clearly relates to the static, non-deictic, objective
conception of time. The term 'experiential', on the other
hand, is suggestive of the kind of description that might
be given by someone who is personally involved in what
he is describing; and this mode is no less clearly related
to the dynamic, deictic, subjective conception of time.

(Lyons (1977:688))

Furthermore, Lyons assumes that 'the historical mode is the norm from which the experiential mode constitutes a deviation' (Lyons (1977;689))[6]. In his view the distinction between the descriptive and the historical modes of discourse provides a straightforward explanation for the following regularities regarding the use of aspectual categories:

(i)   The preference of the progressive for talking about processes taking place at the time of communication.

(ii)   The preference of the simple for describing states.

91

(iii)   The observation that in narration, where events
        are listed in order of occurrence, the aspect
        appropriate for the historical mode of description
        is the preferred choice.

Essentially, the explanation goes along the following lines. Processes taking place at the time of communication are readily and characteristically represented on the basis of experience. Hence, the progressive is the natural choice for describing situations of this type when they are simultaneous with speech time. States are not characteristically thought of as represented on the basis of experience. In addition to this, they do not involve change. Hence, the simple is the appropriate form for talking about states, regardless of whether they obtain in the past or in the present. The third point merely states the fact that in narration the speaker or writer characteristically relates the events factually, rather than in terms of his own, or someone else's, experiential involvement in these events. This is a rough summary, but it is, I hope, sufficiently representative of Lyons' position to allow for a consideration of the accounts of tense and aspect choice in terms of subjectivity. The following section looks at the implications of Banfield's and Lyons' ideas for an analysis of aspectual choice in English and Serbo-Croat.

3.2   THE USES OF TENSE-ASPECT FORMS

Four notions play a central role in Banfield's (1982:112-67) analysis of the uses of tense and aspect categories:

(i)   SELF (the subject of consciousness, and the
        source of subjectivity);
(ii)   NOW (the moment of the act of consciousness);
(iii)   SPEAKER;
(iv)   PRESENT (the time of communication).

All four notions are assumed to be part of UG, and the relations between them are constrained by four requirements:

(a) any appearance of the SPEAKER is at once an appearance of the SELF;

(b) for every expression there is one SELF;

(c) if reference is made to the SPEAKER (the personal pronoun I), the SPEAKER is coreferential with the SELF;

(d) if there is a NOW and if there is a PRESENT they coincide.

The uses of tense forms in discourse and narration, exemplified in (15) below, are characterised in terms of the framework sketched out above.

(15) a. I'm reading a paper.

Čitam članak.

b. Black passes the ball to Fernandez, ... Fernandez shoots!

Black dodaje [imperf.] loptu Fernandezu, ... Fernandez šutira [imperf.]

c. Elle vit la lune [aorist].

She saw the moon.

Ona vide mesec.

d. How my heart was beating now as he came toward me!

Kako mi je sada lupalo [imperf.] srce, dok mi se približavao!

The progressive in (15a) is the present tense of discourse, where the time of communication overlaps with the moment of the act of consciousness (NOW), so that it is defined as 'PRESENT=NOW'. The sentence in (15b) is an example of the historical present. In this case, there is a time of communication, but it is not associated with an act of consciousness, as stated in the definition 'PRESENT without NOW'. In narrative fiction, there is no time of communication (since, arguably, there is no communicator at all) and with some tenses, like the aorist of French (but not the aorist of Serbo-Croat, which may be used subjectively), there is no SELF and no act of consciousness. Therefore, the aorist of French (passé simple), the simple past of narrative in English, and the aorist of Serbo-Croat, when used in narration, as in (15c), fall under the formula 'no Present or NOW'. In expressions of represented thought, the so-called free indirect style, there is no time of communication, but there is an act of consciousness, explicitly referred to in (15d) by the adverbial now. (If the time of communication may be involved at all in examples like (15d), it is only in case the speaker is retelling the events as if reading aloud from a book, in utterances like Suddenly, it was getting dark, which are understood as recollections of the speaker's past experience of the situation, and the act of speaking is unrelated to the time of communication.) The epic preterite imparfait, the past simple and the past progressive in expressions of represented thought are defined as 'NOW without PRESENT'.

If subjectivity is really grammaticalised in the progressive, then it seems reasonable to expect that Banfield's framework could explain (or could at least provide the basis for an explanation of) the more pronounced overtones of the experiential meaning of past and future time progressives. It should also provide an explanation for what is known as semantic markedness (cf. Lyons 1977:688-9) in connection

94

with aspect. It is usually considered that in Slavonic languages perfective verbs are (not only morphologically, but also semantically) marked. One problem with Lyons' explanations in terms of the historical and the experiential modes of discourse is that the notions of *experiential* and *historical* modes are left rather too vague. Banfield's framework apparently provides for a more specific characterisation of the two modes. The historical mode would correspond to the historical present (PRESENT without NOW) and narrative (no PRESENT or NOW) uses of tense forms, whereas the experiential mode would include the present tense of discourse (PRESENT=NOW) and the expressions of represented thought (NOW without PRESENT). Markedness would, then, be explained in terms of the appropriateness of a category in a particular mode of discourse. The relation between Lyons' historical and experiential modes of discourse and Banfield's formalism are summarily represented below.

historical mode	PRESENT without NOW	the historical present of sports commentaries, directions and stage directions
	no PRESENT or NOW	narrative
experiential mode	PRESENT = NOW	the present tense of discourse
	NOW without PRESENT	past tense of represented thought

That the progressive and the imperfective of Slavonic languages should be unmarked in the present tense of discourse, would, then, follow from the definition PRESENT = NOW. In discourse, there is a SPEAKER, there is a PRESENT and there is a NOW. Since PRESENT and NOW must coincide, and SELF is tied to the SPEAKER, the imperfective and the progressive in the present tense are felt to be appropriate in the

95

present tense of discourse. Both describe situations as simultaneous with NOW, but the progressive, in which subjectivity arguably appears grammaticalised, necessarily represents the situation as simultaneous with the moment of the act of consciousness (NOW), while the imperfective may, but needn't be expressive of subjectivity. This is apparently also reflected in the ambiguity of the imperfective aspect in Serbo-Croat, in utterances like: *Jovan ide u školu* ('John goes/is going to school'). On the one hand, this utterance can be interpreted as a description of an instance of the subject's going to school simultaneous with the time of communication and the moment of the act of consciousness, as the translation with the progressive shows. On the other hand, the utterance may be taken as habitual, i.e. as not making reference to an individual occurrence of the situation or NOW, as in the translation with the simple (see the discussion of the examples (1) and (2) in Chapter two). The progressive would be marked in past and future tense expressions, because it describes the situation as associated with a NOW in the past or in the future and, therefore, violates the requirements that SPEAKER and SELF, and PRESENT and NOW must coincide. The simple form, arguably, makes reference to the event, the progressive to an experience of the event by the SELF. It should be noted, however, that the violation of a presumably grammaticalised relation between Banfield's universals would result here in more or less pronounced stylistic overtones, rather than unacceptability. Lyons avoids this problem by looking at markedness as being both semantically and pragmatically determined, but he does not propose an explicit account of the relation between the semantics (i.e. linguistic meaning of a given category) and interpretation in context. Clearly, if the subjectivity thesis is to be maintained, more evidence and more detailed argumentation are badly needed. Let me look at some seemingly corroborative evidence first.

(16)   a.   He sat there for hours doing nothing.

        b.   He was sitting there for hours doing nothing.

An important difference between (16a) and (16b) would be that the latter represents the situation as observed by a SELF (perhaps the author or narrator), whereas the former utterance would not necessarily at least) be so interpreted. That the second requirement (i.e. the *1SPEAKER/1SELF* requirement) would be violated seems rather obvious. It is claimed that (16b) makes reference to a moment of the act of consciousness in the past, which cannot possibly be construed as simultaneous with the time of communication, i.e. with PRESENT. Then, the first requirement is violated in so far as the SPEAKER, the subject of consciousness by definition, must be located at PRESENT, while the past progressive locates both SELF and NOW in the past. As has already been said, the SPEAKER may be understood as relating his own past experience. One would have to assume that, in this case, the SELF is coreferential with the SPEAKER purely accidentally, as it were. This is apparent in sentences of represented thought, as in: *Suddenly, it was getting dark. She would be late for the six o'clock train,* where the third person subject of the second utterance is most likely to be understood as the subject of consciousness for the progressive in the first.

The marked character of perfective verbs in the present tense could also be accounted for in terms of Banfield's approach. I assume that the perfective would be defined as lacking PRESENT (cf. the examples (13c) and (14c), Chapter two). Since the present tense of discourse and the historical present require the PRESENT by definition, perfective verbs would either be excluded from, or marked in, these two uses. The perfective present would be ruled out as the present tense of discourse. A state of affairs (I take it that events are

97

states of affairs characterised by change) which is conceived as completed cannot be at the same time construed as extending over the PRESENT. However, the perfective present may be used with adverbials of frequency, in the habitual, when the state of affairs is represented as obtaining at a number of sub-intervals within the PRESENT.

(17) a. Dodju [perf.] nam u posetu.

They come to us on a visit.

b. Ponekad nam dodju [perf.] u posetu.

They sometimes come to us on a visit.

c. Dolaze [imperf.] nam u posetu.

They come/are coming to us on a visit.

d. Redovno nam dolaze [imperf.] u posetu.

They regularly come to us on a visit.

The perfective present in (17a) is marked in so far as the sentence would be felt to be somewhat incomplete on the interpretation in the most likely immediately accessible contexts, although the most salient reading is the one explicitly indicated by the adverbial *ponekad* ('sometimes') in (17b). (17c) with the imperfective present is readily interpreted as habitual, in the sense unambiguously expressed by (17d), or as conveying a futurate meaning. The latter interpretation may be slightly more prominent, due to the singular noun *poseta* ('visit'), which may suggest that a single visit is being talked about. The other sense in which (17a) is marked concerns the implicature that, on a habitual reading, the utterance is normally, though not necessarily, taken to indicate the comparatively low frequency of events. On the interpretation of an utterance like (17a) in the most likely immediately accessible context, the adverbial *ponekad* ('sometimes') is felt to be more appropriate than *redovno* ('regularly') with the perfective present.

In the past tense, the perfective is standardly assumed to be the unmarked, and the imperfective the marked member of the distinction (cf. Lyons (1982)). However, unlike the past progressive, the imperfective in the past tense is not always felt to be marked. The subjective character of the imperfective is context dependent. The lexical meaning of the verb seems to play a particularly important role here.

(18)   a.   Išao [imperf.] je na poštu i slao [imperf.] pismo.
              He went to the post office and posted/was posting a letter.

        b.   Išao [imperf.] je na poštu i poslao [perf.] pismo.
              He went to the post office and sent a letter.

Only the imperfective *slao* ('was sending') in (18a) is felt to be marked. The verb in the main clause, *išao* ('went', 'was going') is also imperfective, but it is unmarked and is understood as merely stating the fact that the event occurred. Perhaps a better translation would be *He has been to the post office*.[11]

The above observations on markedness bring to light certain similarities and differences between the simple and the progressive aspects of English on the one hand, and the perfective-imperfective distinction of Slavonic languages, on the other. The progressive would seem to be subjective regardless of the context, i.e. to be an instance of the grammaticalisation of subjectivity. The imperfective, apparently, may, but needn't, be subjective, depending on the context. The perfective and the simple would have in common the lack of reference to SELF and NOW as part of their semantics, but would differ in that the perfective represents the situation as a whole, while the simple does not. These conclusions seeming to receive some support from the use

99

of the simple of English and the imperfective of Serbo-Croat in sports commentaries, as in (15b), repeated here in (19):

(19)　Black passes the ball to Fernandez, ... Fernandez shoots.

　　　　Black dodaje loptu Fernandezu, ... Fernandez šutira.

The progressive would be excluded from this use, because it involves SELF and NOW, while the historical present of sports commentaries makes no reference to the subject of consciousness. The perfective in the Serbo-Croat translation would be ruled out, because the historical present is defined as 'PRESENT without NOW', and the perfective lacks both. By contrast, the imperfective includes PRESENT, but does not necessarily involve NOW, and would, therefore, be the appropriate form. But why would this treatment of semantic markedness be taken to confirm the view of subjectivity as grammaticalised in language? Only the progressive seems to be consistently associated with the expression of subjectivity. The imperfective would seem to be subjective in some uses. The perfective present, apparently adequately defined as 'no PRESENT or NOW', may appear to be a strictly non-subjective form, used as a narrative tense. But this is actually not the case. This form, somewhat unusual in narrative prose (cf. Stevanović, (1969:563)), is now found in the spoken language, when past events are felt to be evoked and not merely reported.

(20)　Idem ja pre neki dan ulicom prema Kalemegdanu i baš
　　　　onde na uglu kod Narodne biblioteke *sretnem* jednog svog
　　　　druga sa studija, *pozdravim* se sa njim, ...
　　　　The other day, I'm walking in the street toward
　　　　Kalemegdan and right there at the corner near the
　　　　National Library I *meet* a friend from my student days,
　　　　we *say hello* to each other, ...

　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　(Stevanović (1969:564))

100

The italicised perfective verbs in (20) may be interpreted as subjective, although, of course, the vividness of the perfective in narration would not be conclusive evidence for assuming that the perfective aspect is subjective. The aorist of French (*passé simple*) is also associated with vividness, but, it is, arguably, not subjective, since it does not take deictics relating the event to the situation of communication or to the time of consciousness (**Ils partirent hier* ('They left yesterday'); *A Jules Verne, trop pondéré, je préférai maintenant les extravagances de Paul d'Ivoi* ('To Jules Verne, too sensible, I preferred now the extravangances of Paul d'Ivoi') (Banfield (1982:149))). However, judging purely intuitively, the speaker in (20) is not merely recalling that the events took place, but also his realisation of the events as they occurred. So, it would seem that both aspects of Serbo-Croat may be used subjectively, but that neither is consistently associated with the expression of subjectivity or lack of it. Hence, the conclusion that they do not grammaticalise reference to the SELF seems inescapable. Moreover, the evidence against the view that the progressive could be an instance of the grammaticalisation of subjectivity is also compelling, as I shall now show.

While the subjective character of the progressive may seem intuitively plausible in expressions with animate subjects, the presence of a subject of consciousness remains unclear in those cases where the subject is inanimate. Consider (21):

(21)   a.   Is the phone working?

        b.   Does the phone work?

        c.   I think the phone isn't working. At least, that's what they told me. I haven't tried to use it myself.

Of course, (21a) cannot be plausibly understood as asking about the phone's awareness of itself in the act of working. It would, perhaps, make sense to assume that (21a) does indeed make reference to the subject of consciousness, but that the referent is to be sought outside the expression itself. Who would be the subject of consciousness referent in (21)? Probably, the speaker. What would be the role of the reference to the subject of consciousness in the interpretation of this utterance? Well, it could be argued that (21a) contrasts with (21b), in that only the former would normally be understood as asking about the addressee's personal experience about the phone's working, while the latter would be concerned only with the addressee's factual knowledge. But, this will not do since the progressive may be used even if the speaker's personal (i.e. experiential) involvement in the situation is explicitly denied, as in (21c). Moreover, the progressive is readily used in linguistic contexts which apparently preclude the presence of the subject of consciousness, in the complement of raising verbs and in impersonal passives.

(22)   a.   John seems to be working.

         b.   It is believed that John is working.

Not only are these progressives acceptable, but the progressives of verbs which are normally used exclusively in the simple aspect, become more acceptable in the complement of *seem*, as Sag (1973:88) observes:

(23)   a.   *Irma's knowing a lot about contraception.

         b.   ?Irma seems to be knowing a lot about contraception.

One might still want to maintain that reference to the subject of consciousness is (weakly) conveyed by the verb *seem* (cf. 'John seems to

102

me to be working very hard these days'), but this would indicate at most that the progressive has a certain affinity for use in talking about events as being witnessed.

Obviously, the cost of maintaining Banfield's view of the progressive as a subjective expression is extremely high. The treatment of other aspectual categories, namely the perfective and the imperfective, clearly indicates that the overtones pertaining to the grammatical expression of subjectivity may be determined by the interaction of the linguistic meanings of aspectual categories with the context, and that the categories in question do not grammaticalise reference to the subject of consciousness. I hope to have shown that Banfield's approach fails in a number of respects. It does not provide an explanation for the difference between the grammaticalisation of subjectivity and cases of pragmatically determined subjective interpretation. Once the notion of grammaticalisation of subjectivity is extended to include embeddable subjective elements, the criteria for assigning particular items to the range of subjective constructions remain mainly notional (cf. the observations about the perfective and the aorist of Serbo-Croat in section 3.2) and the account of subjectivity becomes open to objections standardly raised against traditional grammars. Virtually any category can be considered expressive of subjectivity in some contexts. Intuitions about the interpretation of sentences in use seems inevitably to lead to grouping together as subjective possibly disparate phenomena.

Furthermore, even if the formalism made it possible systematically to relate verb forms with particular uses it would still have to explain how the non-standard choices are exploited in literary style, for example. Lyons' distinction between two modes of discourse seems at least equally problematic in this respect. It may seem

plausible to assume that part of the process of interpretation involves assigning the utterance to one of the two modes of discourse, but any attempt to make sense of this view meets with great difficulties. How would the hearer know which of the modes is in operation, as it were, in any given utterance? Assuming that tense-aspect selection provides the vital clues in this respect, how are the non-standard choices identified and interpreted? It seems that the hearer needs to establish independently of the text of the utterance which mode is being used, and then interpret the tense and aspect choices, accordingly, as standard, or as deviating from the standard. It seems to me that the account proposed by Lyons cannot deal with the contrasts as commonly encountered as those between: *It was raining* where the progressive is normally marked, and *It was raining when John arrived*, where the same form is normally unmarked. I cannot think of a plausible explanation of examples like these in terms of (the grammaticalisation of) the experiential or historical modes, which would be remotely convincing. I now look at Banfield's and Lyons' arguments for subjectivity in the context of relevance theory.

3.3 SUBJECTIVITY AND RELEVANCE

In section 3.2 I started by taking Banfield's framework for granted and showed that it does not make it possible to explain the choice of tense and aspect categories and the related phenomenon of semantic markedness in terms of the grammaticalisation of subjectivity. In this section I will suggest that a plausible analysis of a number of *subjective* expressions needn't invoke either the distinction between the two modes of discourse or the notion of subjectivity. In Chapter four, I will propose an alternative and more explanatory account. In the

104

remainder of this chapter I look at a number of fallacies underlying Banfield's and Lyons' analyses in the light of relevance theory.

3.3.1 Absence of SPEAKER

Banfield's account of the sentences of represented speech and thought crucially relies on the assumption that they grammaticalise absence of reference to the speaker. As a result, the sentences of represented speech and thought are interpreted as expressing the consciousness of persons other than the speaker. It is the grammaticalisation of the Absence of SPEAKER that prevents such sentences from being used in spoken communication. Two rather obvious objections to Banfield's position impose themselves. First, it is simply not true that the sentences in question are actually unspeakable. Not only are these sentences speakable, but they are quite ordinarily spoken. Second, it is not clear which element or elements in the sentence of represented speech and thought grammaticalise Absence of SPEAKER. Consider (24):

(24) It was getting dark. Now they would be late for the last train.

The second utterance in (24) is most likely to be interpreted as representing a thought entertained by some third person subject of consciousness, and not by the speaker. If this is due to Absence of SPEAKER being grammaticalised in this utterance one would want to be able to identify the elements which grammaticalise this principle. The most plausible such elements are the deictic *now* and the past tense form *would*. But neither of these taken in isolation can be said to indicate that the utterance represents a thought entertained by a

105

subject of consciousness other than the speaker. And, taken together, these two elements are more plausibly seen as providing evidence about the speaker's intended interpretation of his utterance, than as grammaticalising Absence of SPEAKER. On the one hand, the deictic *now* points to the present. On the other hand, the past tense form *would* indicates that the state of affairs of *their being late for the last train* is to be understood as a prediction in the past. The most manifest interpretation of the deictic *now* in this case will be the one on which it is not the speaker's present which is referred to, but the time of some third person subject's past anticipation of the event of being late for the last train. It is unnecessary to assume that either of the elements in question grammaticalises Absence of SPEAKER. Moreover, the very assumption that neither *now* nor *would* grammaticalise this principle provides the basis for a natural pragmatic explanation of the speaker's intended interpretation of the utterance in question. These elements provide evidence for the interpretation of the utterance. Thus, the expression of represented speech and thought is more difficult in those languages which do not allow for the clues available in English. Examples like (24) are somewhat difficult to translate into Serbo-Croat, which, unlike English, does not have a future in the past expression equivalent to *would* + *inf.*. Possibly the best solution would be to translate the first sentence in (24) by using the past tense, and to use the periphrastic future (corresponding to *will* + *inf.*) in the second: *Smrkavalo se. Sada će zakasniti na poslednji voz* ('It was getting dark. Now they will be late for the last train'). By virtue of being confined to the use of the deictic periphrastic futurate construction in Serbo-Croat, the speaker/author does not have a valuable means of indicating as clearly as it would be possible in English that he does not (personally) subscribe to the truth of the thought expressed by his utterance. The intended interpretation on which the utterance is to be taken as

representing a thought entertained by some third person subject is therefore more difficult to arrive at.

I hope to have indicated the way in which a pragmatic account makes it possible to dispense with stipulatory principles like Absence of SPEAKER. In order to show in more detail what such an account would be like, it will be necessary to introduce two distinction made in relevance theory between *descriptive* and *interpretive* uses of utterances. Let me look first at Lyons' criticism of what he calls the descriptive fallacy.

3.3.2 'The descriptive fallacy'

In his criticism of what he calls the descriptive fallacy Lyons (1982) refers to a number of approaches to the study of language which 'pay no attention to the non-propositional and non-assertive components of language or play down their importance'. I will argue that Lyons is right in dismissing the strictly descriptivist view of language, but that his criticism is not radical enough. Rather than dismissing the position which he criticises, Lyons takes the view that it is merely not comprehensive enough. His requirement for distinguishing between an objective (truth conditional) and a subjective (non-truth conditional) component in language assumes (some version of) the Gricean maxim of truthfulness (with the concomitant view of literalness as the norm in utterance interpretation). Along with most theoretically minded approaches to the study of language, Lyons assumes that language is principally used descriptively, that (as a rule) natural language utterances faithfully (i.e. literally) represent speakers' thoughts which are descriptive (i.e. truth conditional) representations of situations in the world. In other words, as rule, the speaker is assumed to subscribe

to the truth of the proposition expressed by his utterance. Lyons observes that the descriptivist view is not warranted. On the one hand, many utterances cannot adequately be paraphrased in terms of a set of propositions. On the other hand, it is difficult to establish (the import of) the literal meaning of utterances which are not clearly ambiguous between a literal and a metaphorical (i.e. non-truth conditional) interpretation (see section 3.1.2, this chapter). The non-paraphraseable (more or less) literally used expressions as well as those to which the term literalness arguably does not apply are then to be explained in terms of the linguistically encoded or pragmatically induced subjective meaning, which combines in some way with the objective (in other words, descriptive or truth conditional) meaning. Lyons and Banfield are, I think, in agreement about the inadequacy of the descriptivist approach, but have diverging views on the interaction between the descriptive and the subjective facets of utterance meaning. While Lyons looks at this relation as a continuum with strictly descriptive meaning at one end (e.g. *I remembered that I had switched off the light*) and entirely subjective meaning at the other (e.g. *I remembered switching off the light*), Banfield distinguishes three relatively discrete situations: descriptive utterances, subjective utterances expressing reflective consciousness, and subjective utterances expressing non-reflective consciousness. Let me briefly look at Banfield's distinction between these two levels of consciousness.

Banfield takes over the notions of reflective and non-reflective consciousness from Kuroda (1976), and proposes an epistemological justification for this dichotomy based on Russell's and Sartre's ideas. Roughly speaking, non-reflective consciousness implies mere awareness of the subject of consciousness sufficient to influence behaviour, whereas reflective consciousness involves the subject's knowledge that he knows. Of course, every sentence expressive of the speaker's

consciousness is an expression of reflective consciousness on this view, because it is necessarily an instance of knowing that one knows. The positive distinguishing features of the expression of reflective consciousness are exclamatives (as the contrast between: *He would be late* and *Yes, he would be late* illustrates), questions in free indirect style (*How could I do such a stupid thing?*), and parentheticals (*How could I do such a stupid thing, John thought*). The only positive linguistic feature of the expression of non-reflective consciousness is, arguably, the possibility of using a proper noun in referring to a non-reflectively conscious self. Thus, in a sentence like *John would be late, and all his friends would have left before he arrived* the subject referent John can be construed only as a non-reflective subject of consciousness. The corresponding sentence (on my account, *utterance*) of reflective consciousness would have to have the pronoun *he* as subject. How is this to be explained?

In the expression of reflective consciousness the linguistic form of the utterance is taken closely to resemble the thought entertained by the reflecting self. It so happens that people do not normally form individuating representations of themselves which include information about their name, unless some form of self-address, i.e. self-communication, is taking place. In the expression of non-reflective consciousness, the linguistic form of the utterance can only be taken vaguely to resemble the mental representation entertained by the subject of consciousness. So there is no reason why the name of the subject of consciousness should not be mentioned in the utterance. Also, the propositional form of the utterance of non-reflective consciousness is easily interpreted as representing a thought which the speaker believes to be true, not only a thought attributed to the third person self. If there are sufficiently relevant contextual effects to be obtained from interpreting the utterance as expressing a thought of the

109

speaker, as well as a thought of some third person self, the hearer is free to access both interpretations and derive these effects. Some contextual effects may follow from entertaining both interpretations. Thus, a sentence like: *John was late and would arrive after his friends have left*, may easily (and plausibly) be interpreted both as representing a thought that the speaker endorses as a true description of a state of affairs, but it may also be interpreted as a representation of a thought that went through John's mind. And there may be relevant effects to be accessed from each interpretation. On the first one, the speaker is taken to assume that *(probably) John will be or was late*. The second interpretation gives rise to expectations about other related thoughts that may have occurred to John, and may also be taken as an explanation of these other thoughts (depending on some continuation of the text, such as: *He knew he'd better hurry*, where the realisation that he would be late is taken as the reason for John's hurrying). I now turn to the relevance theoretic distinction between descriptive and interpretive uses of utterances.

3.3.3 Descriptive and interpretive use

In relevance theory terms, an utterance is used descriptively in case its propositional form (roughly, the equivalent of Lyons' literal meaning) is an interpretation of a thought of the speaker's which is a truth-conditional (i.e. descriptive) representation of a (desirable or actual) state of affairs. S&W (1986; 1988) point out that some version of descriptive use is standardly assumed to be the most important in natural language, and that all departures from it are in some sense taken to be marginal. Along with the proponents of the subjectivity

110

thesis, S&W reject the descriptivist stance, but unlike the advocates of subjectivity, they develop a theoretically motivated account of those utterances which clearly defy a treatment in terms of descriptive use. They capitalise on the observation that utterances may be used to represent thoughts which are representations of other (relevant or attributed) thoughts, in which case they are said to be used interpretively. The notion of interpretive use makes it possible for S&W to give a unified explanation for a number of phenomena including free indirect style, echoic utterances (exclamatives and irony), evidentials, and others as well.

3.3.3.1   Free indirect style

In free indirect style the speaker does not regard the thought represented by the propositional form of the utterance as true, but as attributed to some other individual who does.

(25)   John was getting nervous. (By now,) The train
       was an hour late. (Surely,) Mary would not wait. She
       would have left before he arrived.

In (25), only the first sentence may yield an adequate range of contextual effects when understood as used descriptively, i.e. as representing a thought which the speaker entertains as a true description of a state of affairs. In the immediately accessible context the second utterance is relevant in so far as it can be taken as an explanation for John's nervousness, in which case it needs to be construed as representing a thought attributed to John, not as a thought which the speaker regards as a description of a state of affairs. Similarly, the last two utterances are relevant if construed as

consequences of the train's being late. They too may be optimally relevant when understood as representing thoughts attributed to John, since they are manifestly the kinds of thoughts that are normally assumed to be going through the mind of a nervous passenger. The adverbials *now* and *surely* in brackets make the intended interpretive reading more manifest.

The accounts of free indirect style in terms of subjectivity build on the observation that it constitutes a departure from truth-conditionality, in the sense that in the expression of represented speech and thought the speaker/author does not subscribe to the truth of the proposition (i.e. thought) which the utterance purports to represent. Banfield apparently takes this as a justification for assuming that the sentences in question are *speakerless* or *unspeakable*. The notion of subjectivity is then introduced as a non-truth conditional kind of meaning in addition to the standard truth-conditional one.

Both Lyons and Banfield reject the strong descriptivist view, but they take some version of the maxim of truthfulness for granted, and posit subjectivity as a reasonable alternative. By contrast, relevance theory rejects the maxim of truthfulness and recognises the importance of interpretive use. This makes it possible to account in a straightforward way for a number of *subjective* expressions without assuming that these expressions are incompatible with the attribution of the utterance to the speaker/author. In free indirect style the speaker merely attributes the thought to some third person subject, while in echoic utterances the speaker expresses his attitude towards the attributed thought. Ironical utterances echo thoughts from which the speaker distances himself with ridicule or scorn. Exclamatives are utterances which express surprise or another related attitude on the part of the speaker towards some relevant thought (cf. S&W (1986),

112

Wilson and Sperber (W&S hereafter) (1988), Clark (1991)). This may be indicated by non-linguistic devices such as intonation, (26a), or by the use of exclamative interjections such as *Oh!*, *Ah!* and *Aha!*, (26b), for example.

(26) a. It's (absolutely) wonderful!

b. Oh! It's (absolutely) wonderful!

Exclamative interjections, assumed to be subjective elements, are plausibly analysed as indicating interpretive use, more specifically as determining higher level explicatures (cf. W&S (1990)).

3.3.3.2 *Exclamative interjections and higher-level explicatures*

The exclamative interjections like *oh* in (27), *ah* in (28) and *aha* in (29) are, according to Banfield, prime examples of subjective expressions. They do not make a contribution to the propositional content of the utterance, but are indicative of the speaker's attitude towards the proposition expressed.

(27) Oh! You're cheating.

(28) Ah! You're cheating.

(29) Aha! You're cheating.

Like a whole class of other subjective items exclamative interjections are syntactically identified as not occurring in indirect speech:

(30)   John said that *oh/ah/aha you were cheating.

The semantic motivation for treating exclamative interjections as subjective expressions can be summarily stated in three points (according to Banfield (1982)):

(i)   Exclamative interjections are markers of the speaker's attitude but they fall short of being specific with respect to the attitude that they express; hence they are non-propositional, in that their meaning is not fully truth conditional;

(ii)   The attitude conveyed by exclamative interjections is not part of the propositional content of the utterance (when they are part of a larger sentence); hence, exclamative interjections do not contribute to the truth conditions of the proposition expressed by the utterance;

(iii)   Point (ii) rests on the presumption that every utterance of a sentence communicates one and only one proposition (i.e. that it has only one explicature).

I will take these points in turn, starting from the last one first. In recent work W&S (1990) challenge the view in (iii). They look at examples like (31):

(31)   Peter: Can you help?

       Mary (sadly): I can't.

                 (W&S (1990:98))

Obviously, the logical form of Mary's utterance in (31) does not express a fully fledged proposition. However, it provides sufficient evidence for Peter to be able inferentially to enrich this logical form to the level of a proposition which Mary may rationally have intended to communicate. Which proposition would this be?

114

(32)   a.   Mary can't help Peter to find a job.

        b.   Mary says she can't help Peter to find a job.

        c.   Mary believes she can't help Peter to find a job.

        d.   Mary regrets she can't help Peter to find a job.

                            (W&S (1990:98))

The proposition (32a) can plausibly be derived by enriching the logical form of Mary's utterance in (31). In relevance theory terms it would be called an explicature (a development of the logical form of the utterance). W&S (1990) make the following two points which are particularly important. First, an utterance characteristically has more than one explicature. Secondly, once the hearer has enriched and completed the logical form of the utterance to the level of a determinate proposition, he may embed it under a higher level description: a speech act description (32b), or a propositional attitude description (32c) and (32d). The propositions (32b) to (32d) are called higher-level explicatures. They are also developments of the logical form of the utterance and are also plausibly regarded as intended to be communicated by the utterance. Hence, higher level explicatures are to be regarded as linguistically communicated. Certain adverbials are characteristically used to determine higher level explicatures. Consider (33):

(33)   a.   Frankly, I can't help you.

        b.   Mary said frankly to Peter that she couldn't help him.

                            (W&S (1990:105))

W&S point out that the adverbial *frankly* in (33a) and (33b) encodes exactly the same conceptual information. However, in (33a) the conceptual information encoded by the adverbial is incorporated into a

higher-level explicature, some elements of which are not encoded but inferred. In (33b), the adverbial contributes directly to the truth-conditions of the proposition expressed by the utterance. But, although the information conveyed by the *frankly* in (33a) is not part of the truth conditional content of the proposition expressed by the utterance, the speaker who utters (33a) can be accused of insincerity, or untruthfulness:

(34)   Mary: Frankly, I can't help you.
       John: You know very well that you can.

So far, I have shown that the assumption (iii) is not justified, because an utterance may plausibly be taken to linguistically communicate more than one proposition. I have also given some evidence for clarifying the import of the assumption (ii).

Let me assume that exclamative interjections determine higher level explicatures, like the adverbial *frankly* in (33a). Moreover, I take it that, when they are part of more complex expressions, exclamative interjections always determine higher-level explicatures. Just as in (34) Mary can be accused of insincerity, so can the speaker A of (35):

(35)   A: Oh! He is cheating again.
       B: Come on, you are not really surprised. You knew all the time that he was cheating.

Exclamative interjections do not contribute to the propositional content of the utterance. What could possibly be the conceptual content of *oh* or *ah*? Although these words seem devoid of conceptual content, it seems plausible to assume that they in some way help the hearer to establish the propositional content of higher-level explicatures. So, the

116

assumption (ii) cannot be taken as evidence that these interjections are to be regarded as subjective expressions on the grounds that they do not contribute to truth conditions. What about assumption (i)?

Exclamative interjections differ from other hedging expressions like *I suppose* or *certainly*, because, by virtue of their linguistic meaning they make extremely vague reference to the propositional attitude of the speaker. It may be the case that *oh, ah, aha* and similar words encode very little conceptual information or that they do not encode conceptual information at all, but very vague guidelines, in other words, they encode instructions for the hearer inferentially to arrive at the attitude under which the proposition is embedded at the level of higher-level explicature (see Blakemore (1987)). They provide clues for the hearer to construct fully propositional higher level explicatures. It seems quite plausible to assume that one and the same exclamative interjection, say *ah*, may determine two higher-level explicatures: *The speaker is surprised that...* and *The speaker is resigned because...* etc. So, exclamative interjections do not provide evidence for positing a class of subjective elements (where *subjective* is to be taken to mean expressive of the speaker's direct, i.e. non-propositional, involvement in the situation described by the utterance). The subjectivity view of exclamative interjections amounts to the point that the linguistically encoded meaning of natural language expressions severely underdetermines their propositional content, plus a little extra (which has just been shown to be unnecessary): that some natural language entities grammaticalise, in addition to conceptual or procedural meaning, a kind of non-truth conditional meaning which one could call subjective (or, perhaps, *affective* or *expressive*).

3.3.3.3   Subjectivity, evidentiality and literalness

The adverbial *suddenly*, and the adjectives *damned* and *poor*, arguably, also grammaticalise subjectivity.   Unlike exclamative interjections they are embeddable.

(36)   Mary said that John had *suddenly* dropped the glass.

(37)   John said [that] that *poor* devil of a worker interested him.

(38)   Mary said [that] that *damned* John was a real nuisance.

(Banfield (1982))

The adverbial *suddenly*, and the adjectives *poor* and *damned* contribute to the truth conditional content of the propositions expressed by the utterances in which they appear, since they occur freely in indirect speech, where the propositional content of the utterance (and not the actual words of the speaker) is reported.   So why are these words considered to be subjective? Consider *suddenly* first.

There is a clear sense that in addition to representing a situation in the world truth-conditionally, (39a) also strongly suggests that somebody, possibly the speaker (author), witnessed the event and is relating his personal experience.   In this respect (39a) contrasts with (39b), which is readily understood as non-experiential.

(39)   a.   He was laughing. Suddenly, he burst into tears.
        b.   He was laughing. A few seconds later he burst into tears.

118

The intuition that *suddenly* is subjective in so far as the utterance conveys somebody's realisation that it was getting dark, rather than a description of a state of affairs, seems particularly strong in utterances like (40).

(40)   Suddenly, it was getting dark.

However, the progressive in (40) is also claimed to grammaticalise subjectivity, so that it is not obvious whether experiential overtones are here due to the use of the adverbial, the progressive, or whether they are jointly determined by both. Let me look at (39) first. Roughly speaking, the second utterance in (39a) expresses a proposition like: *Unexpectedly John started crying,* or *Contrary to what one would normally expect, John started crying.* The experiential subjective overtone, i.e. the intuition that the thought is attributed to someone, could then be explained on the assumption that *suddenly* encodes the information that the utterance is used interpretively, not descriptively. In other words, utterances with the adverbial *suddenly* are necessarily interpreted as making reference to the event as being talked about on the basis of perception. But why and in exactly which way is (40) more subjective than (39a)? Consider (41) as a paraphrase of (40):

(41)   Someone/The speaker suddenly realised: 'It is getting dark'.

By virtue of its lexical meaning *suddenly* makes reference to an event of mental perception. Hence the feeling of contradiction in **John suddenly came in unobserved.* The intended interpretation of (40) involving the mental event of *realising* at the level of the higher level explicature is inferentially derived. On the one hand, *suddenly* encodes reference to the event of observation. On the other hand, *suddenly* is

semantically incompatible with the event denoted by the progressive. Also, by virtue of its lexicalised meaning *suddenly* modifies momentary events (i.e. achievements). Hence the incompatibility between *suddenly* and the progressive which involves non-delimitedness. The hearer looks for an interpretation on which the conflict between the meanings of the adverbial and the progressive is resolved, and derives (41) (in which *suddenly* modifies an event of mental perception) as a plausible understanding of (40).

In both (39a) and (40) the adverbial *suddenly* indicates that the propositions in question (*He burst into tears* and *It was getting dark* in (39a) and (40) respectively) are embedded under higher level representations such as *suddenly* _____ and *the subject suddenly realised* _____ as representations of thoughts attributed either to the speaker (on some past occasion) or to someone else. The main difference between (39a) and (40) would then be that in the former the adverbial modifies the event of the proposition *X burst into tears*, whereas in the latter it modifies the event of the realisation of *It's getting dark*. (39a) is about *someone's quick and unexpected awareness of X's crying*, while (40) is about *someone's quick and unexpected awareness of that person's realisation of its getting dark*. Hence the idea of self-consciousness in (40). It is rather interesting that the clause containing the adverbial *suddenly* cannot be embedded under a verb of mental perception. Thus *(*)John realised/saw/perceived that it suddenly got dark* is not plausible on the reading that the adverbial modifies the proposition of the embedded clause (except, perhaps, in case of a habitual or iterative interpretation on which John realised that on a number of occasions the event of getting dark is perceived as sudden - as a continuation like *these days* would suggest - or in case there are appropriate contextual clues indicating that the subject of realising is not the observer who witnesses the event as sudden.) Verbs

120

like *realise*, *see*, and *perceive* involve the *consciousness* of the subject, while suddenness indicates change from not being conscious to being conscious. So, an utterance like **John realised that it suddenly got dark* is contradictory because it seems to involve *John's being conscious of his becoming conscious of its having got dark*. In other words, the utterance suggests that at the time of his realisation that it has got dark, John is already aware that it has got dark. In (40), there is no contradiction precisely because the utterance is interpreted as meaning something like (41), where *John became conscious of his realisation that it was getting dark*. I now turn to the quotative of French, as a marker of interpretive use.

Lyons (1982) claims that the French quotative illustrated by (42) is not clearly ambiguous between a literal and a metaphorical interpretation, and questions the significance of the term *literal meaning* in relation to such utterances, without suggesting a conclusive answer.

(42)   Le président serait malade.

Essentially, Lyons points out that the French quotative is subjective and that this is why its meaning cannot be exhaustively and adequately paraphrased in English. I would like to propose a different explanation. Lyons makes two assumptions, only one of which is true. Let me tentatively assume that the propositional form of the utterance is actually adequately stated as: *Le président est malade* (*The president is ill*). On the literal interpretation of (42), its propositional form would be taken as identical to a thought of the speaker's, namely: *Le président est malade*. Now, the observation which seems correct is that the literal understanding of (42) is in some sense irrelevant. Had the speaker intended the utterance to be relevant by virtue of being a

descriptive (i.e. truth-conditional) representation of a state of affairs, he should have used the indicative present rather than the quotative. By using the quotative, which is formally the conditional present, the speaker is talking about a state of affairs in the actual world as being merely possible. Questions: *Why would the speaker have used the quotative expression in preference to the indicative one? In particular, why would the speaker have done so in a context which includes the assumption that information about the present (i.e. actual) state of the president's health is highly relevant?* Answer: *Because he intends his utterance to be interpreted as expressing, not a thought of his own, but a thought entertained as a belief by others (journalists, people in high circles etc.), i.e. as an attributed thought.* Once the hearer forms this hypothesis, further assumptions about the lack of the speaker's commitment to the truth of the proposition, such as *The president is probably ill*, and the like, are derived as implicatures.

In relevance theory terms, the French quotative would be characterised as indicating (attributive) interpretive use: the propositional form of the utterance is an interpretation of a thought of the speaker's which is itself an interpretation of a thought attributed to other people (and not descriptively: the speaker's thought is not a description, i.e. a truth conditional representation, of a state of affairs).

It seems unclear that, as Lyons claims, (42) should be ambiguous between a literal and a metaphorical interpretation. In relevance theory, literalness is defined in terms of identity between the propositional form of the utterance and the speaker's thought which that utterance purports to represent. An utterance is said to be used loosely or metaphorically when its propositional form merely resembles to a greater or lesser degree (i.e. shares a greater or lesser number of contextual implications with) the thought or thoughts of the speaker

which it is intended to represent. (For a detailed relevance theoretic analysis of loose use and metaphor see S&W (1986; 1985/1986)). Although the utterance (42) really seems to be similar to metaphor in being non-paraphraseable by a set of propositions while intuitively communicating the propositions in that set, it does not seem to be metaphorically used, because the truth of the propositional form of the utterance: *Le président est malade* (*The president is ill*) is not in contention when the corresponding utterance with the quotative is used. Thus, compare: **Le président serait malade, mais peut-être il n'est pas malade* (**The president is / would be ill, but perhaps he is not ill*), with the clearly metaphorical *Peter is a pig, although he is not an animal.* The former is felt to be somewhat contradictory on the quotative interpretation, while the latter is not. The point is that the quotative interpretation is crucially dependent on the contextual assumption that information about the actual state of the president's health is relevant. Were it not for this contextual assumption, the utterance would probably be interpreted as the consequent of an elliptical conditional. Hence, the contradiction. By contrast, the metaphorical interpretation crucially depends on the realisation that the speaker could not rationally have intended to communicate the proposition expressed by the utterance. Hence, the contradiction does not arise in metaphorically used utterances whose propositional form is manifestly false.

I hope to have shown in the preceding sections that relevance theory, which does not rely on some version of the maxim of truthfulness in its account of commmunication, and provides an explanation for both truth conditional and non-truth conditional aspects of utterance interpretation, makes it possible successfully to explain a number of phenomena without invoking the notion of subjectivity.[12]

3.3.3.4 *Loose Use*

The interpretation of embeddable evaluative adjectives and phrases like *a devil of a...* is to be explained not only in terms of interpretive use, but also in terms of loose use. Consider an example.

(43) Ce *pauvre* diable d'ouvrier, perdu sur les routes, l'intéressait.

This *poor* devil of a worker, wandering and on the road, interested him.

(Zola, *Germinal*)

(Banfield (1982:202)

In relevance theory terms the propositional form of the utterance represents a thought which it resembles to some degree (i.e. with which it shares certain logical properties). In utterances like (43) the propositional form of the utterance is not to be construed as being identical with a thought which the speaker could have intended to communicate. The worker, obviously, is not a devil (as indicated by the expression *a devil of a...*), and needn't actually be poor to be referred to as such. Upon accessing the propositional form of the utterance all the hearer or reader needs to do is to construct hypotheses about which thought(s) the speaker may plausibly have intended to communicate by his utterance and arrives at a range of implicatures. *(This) lonely ghastly-looking worker wandering on the road...*, *(This) shabby-looking wretched man walking aimlessly,...* etc. The literal interpretation will not even be considered. But, why is (43) easily understood as representing a thought attributed to some fictional third person subject?

The deictic *this* points to the time of communication. However, neither the communicator's nor the addressee's present is plausibly

124

taken as the situation pointed at by the deictic. The deictic *this* is interpreted as referring to a relevant spatio-temporal context other than the situation of communication - some occasion on which a third person subject of consciousness entertains some thought like: *This poor devil of a worker interests me.* Therefore, the absence of the deictic makes the attributive understanding less manifest.

      (44)   *Un* pauvre diable d'ouvrier,...

              A poor devil of a worker,...

The utterance (44) is readily understood as being used loosely, as a less than literal interpretation of the communicator's thoughts. Also, once the expression *poor devil* is taken to be used loosely, rather than literally, the assumptions about who regards the worker as a *poor devil* become more relevant. In many easily conceivable contexts the reading on which the utterance expresses a metaphorical attributed thought will be more relevant than one on which the thought is attributed to the communicator.

So what is the import of the treatment of these examples in relevance theory terms? Relevance theory does not stipulate the primacy of descriptive use over interpretive use, nor of literalness over loose use. In other words, the theory does not rely on any version of the maxim of truthfulness. As a consequence of this the *subjective* phenomena explained in terms of interpretive use and loose use are not to be seen as exceptional either. I now turn to some examples of the progressive as a subjective construction.

3.3.3.5 The progressive - loose use and interpretive use

When is the progressive used descriptively and when interpretively? Why does the choice of the progressive in preference to the simple sometimes invite a reading on which the utterance is used interpretively, rather than descriptively? Let me address these questions in turn. Consider the following examples:

(45) a. The London train arrives at five.

b. The London train is arriving at five.

Both (45a) and (45b) are apparently contradictory. An event (the arrival of the London train) is simultaneously located in the present and in the future. The hearer may try to make sense of utterances like these in two ways. (a) the hearer may assume that they are used descriptively and loosely. The logical form of the utterance locates one and the same event of the train's arrival simultaneously in the present and in the future. Question: *What could the speaker have intended to communicate by this somewhat contradictory utterance?* Answer(s): *There are present indications that the train will actually arrive at five,* and the like. Also, the hearer may further enrich the logical form of the utterance and derive a non-contradictory propositional form: *The London train usually/characteristically/often arrives at five.* Alternatively, (b) the hearer may assume that the utterances are used interpretively, that they are not intended as (loose or literal) descriptions of individual instances of the event of the train's arrival, but interpretively, as representations of plans or schedules. So how is the hearer to arrive at the optimally relevant interpretation? Consider (46):

126

(46)   a.   The train arrives.

b.   The train is arriving.

The simple present in utterances like (46a) is not normally used in talking about individual instances of events at the time of communication. The utterance (46a) would normally be felt to be incomplete, and its completion would involve making some hypothesis about a specific time other than the present at which the train's arrival is due, according to some plan or schedule. In this case, the utterance is taken to be used interpretively, as a representation of a plan or schedule. Alternatively, the interpretation on which the usual/characteristic time of the train's arrival is talked about may be more relevant, in which case the utterance is taken to be used descriptively. In both cases, the hearer choses the first interpretation tested and found to be consistent with the principle of relevance. The most manifest interpretation of (46b) would be quite different in most readily conceivable immediately accessible contexts. The most manifest interpretation of (46b) is normally the one on which the utterance is a description of an ongoing event of the train's arriving at the station. It is, therefore, normally the first to be tested, and, if found to be consistent with the principle of relevance, it is accepted by the hearer as the speaker's intended interpretation. However, when an adverbial such as *five o'clock* is used, as in (45b) an interpretation like the one given for (46b) is not highly manifest. In making hypotheses about what the speaker could have intended to communicate by the utterance (45b) the hearer will, therefore, first make hypotheses about there being present indications that on this particular occasion the train will arrive at five: *The speaker has evidence that the train will arrive at five*. There are present indications that the train will arrive at five. In the normal course of events the train will arrive at five, and the like. Utterances like (46b) are readily used in describing ongoing events. It is therefore

127

reasonable to assume that in interpreting (45b), the descriptive interpretation is normally the most manifest one, and the first to be tried out for relevance. There is a difference between the characteristic interpretations of (45b) and (46b). In readily conceivable immediately accessible contexts the first interpretation for (45b) likely to be tested and found to be consistent with the principle of relevance is a loose one, whereas (46b) receives a more or less literal interpretation. What about (45a) and (46a)?

In utterances like (46a) the simple present is not used in describing individual occurrences of events taking place at the time of communication, but in the so-called *habitual meaning*. Thus, the somewhat incomplete utterance (46a) is easier to contextualise when a continuation which makes the habitual understanding more manifest is added:

(47) The London train arrives on time.

The utterance (47) would normally be taken to mean something like: *The London train characteristically/usually/often arrives on time.* This enriched propositional form is construed as an interpretation of a thought of the speaker's which may be either (a) a description of a state of affairs or (b) an interpretation of other relevant thoughts. On the understanding in (b) the speaker's thought is a generalisation based on past time occurrences of the train's arrival, or on the British Rail advertisements, or on commuters' reports etc. Whether (47) is to be understood as used descriptively, as in (a), or interpretively, as in (b), is determined by considerations of relevance. Like all utterances which may be used descriptively, (45a) also allows for an interpretive understanding. Utterances like (45a) differ from many others in so far as the most manifest reading is the one on which they are used interpretively, and it is not difficult to see why. On the one hand, (45a)

does not make reference to an ongoing event. On the other hand, it is a matter of common knowledge that times of trains' arivals are given in schedules and time-tables. So, it seems quite obvious why (45a) is readily understood as an interpretation of a schedule, rather than being a description of what actually goes on in the world. My point here is that utterances like (45a) should not be regarded as grammaticalising interpretive use. Rather, their interpretive understanding is determined through the interpretation of utterance in context. Consider the following situation: *Mary is not at home*. Peter wants to know when she will be back. Jane gives the answer in (48):

(48) Mary comes back at eleven. She'll be here by three in the morning.

If the utterance *Mary comes back at eleven* were to be understood as used descriptively, the continuation *She'll be here by three in the morning* would contradict the speaker's belief in the first utterance (that *Mary normally comes back home at eleven*, or that *she will be back at eleven*), and the contradiction fails to yield any interesting contextual effects. But when the first utterance is understood as an interpretation of a plan made by Mary, her promise that she would be back by eleven etc., the second utterance will be understood as contradicting, not a belief of the speaker's, but a belief attributed to Mary, i.e. Mary's original plan or promise. Hence, the implicatures: *Mary is the sort of person who doesn't keep her word, it is impossible to tell when Mary will be back, Mary often changes her plans, Mary is always late*, etc. The contrast between (49a) and (49b) is also of interest here:

(49)   a.   The London train arrives at five, but it will probably be here at ten past five.

          b.   ?The London train is arriving at five, but it will probably be here at ten past five.

The utterances (49a) and (49b) contrast in two major respects. First, (49a) is much easier to interpret than (49b). Second, (49b) is felt to be somewhat ironical, whereas (49a) is not (or less manifestly so). Only in (49a), but not in (49b), is the interpretive understanding of the first conjunct highly manifest. As a result, in processing (49a) for relevance the hearer will not be led to consider at all the utterance as expressing a contradiction. But the first conjunct in (49b) is normally taken to be used descriptively, and the continuation in the second conjunct contradicts the proposition expressed by the first. So, how is the contradiction to be resolved? The hearer will assume that the speaker has used the first conjunct ironically, that he distances himself with ridicule and scorn from all those who entertain the belief expressed by the first conjunct of (49b). But why is the ironical reading less manifest in (49a) than in (49b)? Well, the first conjunct in (49a) is taken to be an interpretation of a schedule. A ten minutes' departure from a schedule can hardly be said to be indicative of gross incompetence. The first conjunct of (49b), however, is taken to be an interpretation about the arrival time on the occasion of a particular journey, while the train is already on its way: *By saying explicitly that the train will actually arrive ten minutes after the announced time, the speaker is indicating that he distances himself with ridicule and scorn from the officially announced time of the train's arrival.* For some speakers the ironical interpretation is just too difficult to access, and they find the utterance (49b) unacceptable.

130

So far I have discussed examples in which the simple form is more readily understood as being used interpretively. But there are contexts in which the interpretive reading is more manifest for the progressive than for the simple. These are the examples of the so-called subjective use of the progressive (Lyons (1982)), illustrated by (11) and (12) (repeated as (50a) and (50b)):

(50) a.   John was coming tomorrow.

      b.   Yesterday John was coming tomorrow.

Both (50a) and (50b) would normally be understood as interpretations of plans made in the past, in other words, as interpretations of desirable (i.e. relevant) thoughts or attributed thoughts. This distinction between desirable, i.e. relevant, and attributed thoughts captures the difference between two readings of these utterances pointed out by Lyons (1982:120). On one reading the speaker is projecting himself, as it were, into the consciousness of some other subject of consciousness, while on the other reading the speaker is not felt to be doing so. When the utterances in (50) are taken to be interpretations of plans, they are, I think, used interpretively, but not attributively. They are interpretations of relevant thoughts, but not of thoughts attributed either to particular individuals or people in general, and the speaker is not felt to be projecting himself into the consciousness of other people. But, when these utterances are taken to represent the thoughts (or the words) attributed to other people the speaker is felt to be projecting himself into the consciousness of these other individuals. So, why is the progressive readily understood as used interpretively in these examples? Why are the corresponding utterances with the simple difficult to contextualise? Consider (51):

(51) a.   ?Mary lectured next Friday.

       b.   ?Yesterday Mary lectured next Friday.

I assume that by virtue of its linguistic meaning the progressive makes reference to a *non-complete event which instantiates the property denoted by the predicate.* I also assume that the simple form is semantically unmarked (i.e. unspecified) both with regard to completion and instantiation. So, why are the utterances with the progressive in (52) readily understood as used interpretively, while the ones in (51) are difficult to process?

(52) a.   Mary was lecturing next Friday.

       b.   Yesterday, Mary was lecturing next Friday.

On my characterisation of the semantics of the progressive, this form explicitly points to an ongoing event in the past thereby making more manifest the assumptions about the spatio-temporal context in which that event took place. By using the progressive the speaker makes more accessible the reading on which the future time proposition, roughly *Mary lecture on Friday,* is entertained at some specific time in the past as a plan. The simple is semantically vague by comparison with the progressive. The interpretation of the utterances in (51) requires a greater expenditure of processing effort than (52), because it gives fewer explicit clues about the speaker's intended interpretation of the utterance. Considerations of explicitness and processing effort also provide the basis for an explanation of the examples in (7), repeated in (53):

(53) a.   I remembered locking the door.

       b.   I remembered myself locking the door.

       c.   I remembered that I had locked the door.

In all the examples in (53) the complement of the verb *remember* is a proposition. However, the three complement clauses (53a), (53b) and (53c) do not give the same amount of explicit information about their propositional content. Thus, in (53b), by using the reflexive accusative *myself*, the speaker explicitly refers to himself as directly affected by the event of the main verb, although reference assignment is the same when the less explicit utterance (53a) is used. The extra amount of processing effort required for decoding (53b) is offset because the use of the reflexive is taken to indicate that the speaker has a recollection of himself in the act of locking the door, as opposed to remembering merely that the event of his locking the door took place. While the temporal interpretation of the complement clauses in (53a) and (53b) is entirely dependent on the verb of the matrix clause, the past perfect in (53c) explicitly indicates that the remembering subject represents the remembered event as located in the past relative to the moment of remembering. Hence, the intuition that in (53c) the remembering subject does not (necessarily) represent to himself his direct, perceptual, experience of the situation of locking the door.

Chapter Four

PRAGMATICS AND VIEWPOINT ASPECT

Two approaches to aspect were introduced in Chapter two: one which is mainly concerned with language particular aspectual categories, and another one, which focuses on the universal conceptual contrasts pertaining to aspect. Following C.S. Smith (1983) I refer to the first of these as *viewpoint aspect*. This term applies to aspectual categories like the progressive and the simple of English and the perfective and the imperfective of Serbo-Croat (and Slavonic languages in general). Some issues relating to *situation type* aspect are discussed in Chapter five. This chapter considers a number of problems pertaining to aspectual choice and the interpretation of the progressive-simple contrast of English and the perfective-imperfective distinction of Serbo-Croat. The characterisation of the contribution that the progressive and the simple make by virtue of their linguistic meanings to utterance interpretation is examined. I argue that the linguistic meaning of the progressive is adequately characterised in terms of the feature [- complete] as well as in terms of *reference to an event instantiating the property denoted by the verbal predicate*. The analysis of some overtones typically associated with a number of uses of the progressive is given, and a solution to the problem of markedness of the past/future progressive is proposed. The linguistic meaning of the simple (in relation to the progressive) is examined, and an account of the interpretation of the simple aspect is put forward. I argue that my treatment of the progressive naturally extends to the *be going to + inf.* construction and that it is preferable to Haegeman's (1989) analysis which does not look at this periphrastic future form as an instance of the progressive. An account of the overtones associated with the *be going to + inf.* construction are given as further evidence in support

134

of my characterisation of the meaning of the progressive. I then proceed to consider the perfective aspect of Serbo-Croat and argue that it differs from the progressive of English with respect to the feature of *completion* but shares with the semantics of the progressive *reference to an instantiation of the property*. I take the view that the imperfective aspect has the feature [- complete] in common with the progressive, but does not make *reference to an event instantiating the property*. Both aspectual categories of Serbo-Croat differ from the simple aspect of English which is semantically unmarked, i.e. unspecified, with regard to *completion* and *reference to instantiation*. The consequences of the analysis for an explanation of aspectual choice in English and Serbo-Croat are also examined.

4.1   THE PROGRESSIVE

The issues to be considered in this section are summed up in the following questions: How is the linguistic meaning of the English progressive to be characterised? How are the overtones of meaning such as *reproof* in (1), *insincerity* in (2), and *temporariness* in (3), related to the linguistic meaning?[13]

(1)   Old Lily is always feeding the pigeons.

(2)   John is being polite.

(3)   John is living in Muswell Hill.

It is shown that an answer to these questions also makes it possible successfully to address a number of issues considered in the sections to follow: Why is the progressive often felt to be more appropriate than

the simple in the present, and less appropriate in the past tense? How exactly do the meanings of the progressive and of the simple contrast?

4.1.1 The meaning of the progressive

According to Goldsmith and Woisetschlaeger (1982) (G&W hereafter) the meaning of the progressive construction falls in two semantic domains. The first is aspectual. It deals with the ideas of *incompletion*, or *non-delimitedness*, usually associated with the progressive, and has no direct bearing on the problems to be considered in this section. The second domain arguably concerns the *metaphysical status* of the property denoted by the progressive predicate, and is defined as *phenomenal* (because it makes reference to events instantiating a property), and as related to the basic *evidential* meaning (because it refers to the evidence of the manifestations of the property denoted by the predicate). G&W draw a contrast between what they call the *phenomenal/structural* distinction and the *evidence/knowledge* distinction. The first they call the *core* semantic contrast, the second, the *basic* semantic distinction. As far as my understanding of their idea goes, the core phenomenal meaning is encoded in the progressive construction, while *evidence* as a member of the basic semantic distinction, is brought to bear on the interpretation in context of some utterances with the progressive. Admittedly, it is not clear in what sense both distinctions would be semantic if only one pertains to the linguistic meaning of the progressive. Since G&W's account is not at all sufficiently explicit in this respect it is not possible to say what exactly they have in mind. I assume that the aspectual meaning of the progressive is plausibly defined as [- complete] and that this feature is associated with the -*ing* suffix. This *aspectual* meaning, as G&W call it, is, in my opinion, independent of the *metaphysical* meaning of the

136

progressive construction. The *-ing* form of the verb retains its aspectual feature in those utterances in which it does not occur as part of the progressive. Thus, in an utterance like *All the candidates speaking two foreign languages are requested to fill in another form* the participle *speaking* has the value [- complete], but not, to use G&W's term, the *phenomenal* meaning expressed by the progressive. G&W argue that the progressive in (4a) describes the situation as a phenomenon, an ongoing event, as opposed to the simple in (4b), which describes it structurally, as it were, as a property applying to the subject irrespective of any actual events.

(4) a. John is walking to school.

   b. John walks to school.

The evidential meaning of the construction is illustrated by the contrast between (5a) and (5b). While (5a) can be used felicitously to describe the functioning of the engine on the basis of the speaker's knowledge, (5b) suggests that the account is based on *evidence* of the engine's actual functioning at the time of communication. More precisely, the progressive in (5b) highlights the relevance of *perceptible evidence* for the interpretation of the utterance. So, it would seem plausible to assume that the progressive, by its linguistic meaning, points to *perceptible evidence* of the situation described by the utterance.

(5) a. The engine doesn't smoke anymore.

   b. The engine isn't smoking anymore.

Although the progressive in (5b) and similar examples may seem strongly to support the intuitions behind the idea of *perceptible evidence* as part of the linguistic meaning of the *be + V-ing* predicate, I argue that this characterisation is not tenable (section 4.2). The analysis of

137

the examples in section 4.3 shows that G&W's opposition between the *phenomenal* and the *evidential* meaning is neither tenable nor necessary and that the *evidential meaning* needs to be pragmatically explained.

4.1.2. Properties and instantiations of properties

The account of the progressive to be proposed here crucially rests on the view that the linguistic meaning of the progressive is correctly defined in terms of reference to a particular event instantiating the property denoted by the predicate. I assume that all predicates describe properties: *feed the pigeons*, *be polite*, *live in Muswell Hill*, and *walk to school* are all properties. Some of these properties are more readily thought of and talked about as instantiated, i.e. as being actualised as events. The contribution of the progressive to the meaning of the predicate is that it points to *an event in the world instantiating the property*, and contrasts with the simple, which is unspecified in this respect.

The strong intuitions about *perceptible evidence* as being somehow intrinsically related to the meaning of the progressive stem from people's encyclopaedic knowledge about instantiations of properties, in other words, happenings or events: they take time to take place, they involve change and have endings and beginnings, and are characteristically represented on the basis of perception. Which of these features of meaning pertaining to encyclopaedic knowledge about events will be more salient (i.e. more manifest), will vary from utterance to utterance and from context to context. This accounts for the idea of perceptible evidence as being sometimes more and sometimes less prominent. But, can as vague a characterisation of the

linguistic meaning of the progressive as the one proposed here provide
the basis for a plausible analysis of the, presumably pragmatically
induced, overtones illustrated in (1), (2) and (3)? I propose to argue
that it can. Moreover, it is the only characterisation of the linguistic
meaning of the progressive which is both sufficiently general to account
for the range of uses and overtones of the construction, and at the same
time constrained enough to preclude those which do not actually occur.
Let me consider some possible proposals concerning the meaning of the
progressive.

4.2 SOME CHARACTERISATIONS OF THE MEANING OF THE PROGRESSIVE

In Chapter three I looked at the treatments of the progressive
in terms of subjectivity, and concluded that they had to be rejected. Not
only is subjectivity too vague a term to be useful, but (more
importantly in the context of this chapter) it also predicts too narrow
a range of uses for the progressive (cf. Chapter three). In this chapter
I argue that the notion of *point of view* is pragmatically explained. But,
first, let me briefly look at some other proposals.

It may seem plausible to take the view that the progressive, by
virtue of its meaning, indicates that the situation is talked about on the
basis of *perceptible evidence*. But, however easy it may be to find
examples which seemingly lend support to this proposal, it is equally
easy to find compelling ones which disconfirm it. One can certainly use
the progressive in talking about a situation and deny that one has
perceptible evidence of its occurrence, while asserting one's belief that
the situation being described is actually taking place, e.g. *I think my
kettle is boiling in the kitchen (although we can't hear anything in the*

139

living room). *I switched it on five minutes ago.* In this example my knowledge that my kettle takes about five minutes to boil is sufficient evidence for my belief that the kettle is actually boiling. The progressive is the appropriate form, although the context manifestly precludes the availability of perceptible evidence of the event (see also the examples (22) and (23) in Chapter three).

Another apparently plausible proposal is that the progressive indicates *limited extension of the situation in time* (cf. Leech (1970)). Leech also claims that the progressive indicates by virtue of its meaning the overtone of *persistence of the process* in utterances such as *The Earth is revolving on its axis*, and in statements of eternal truths in general. The apparent contradiction between the meanings of *limited extension in time* and *persistence of the process* could possibly be explained on the assumption that the hearer pragmatically decides what is the intended interpretation on a particular occasion, without assuming that the overtones are part of the linguistic meaning of the progressive. G&W point out that Leech's view poses a serious learnability problem since the language learner needs to assign two contradictory meanings to a single grammatical form along a single semantic dimension. In order to assess the import of G&W's criticism it is necessary to look at Leech's analysis more closely.

Leech (1970:149) introduces a semantic feature which he calls *situation* and which, arguably, captures the common distinctive meaning of the progressive in contrast to the simple aspect. The progressive form has the value [+ situ], the simple [- situ]. Leech further observes that the corollary overtones of the value [+ situ] are (a) *duration*, (b) *limited extension*, (c) *happening not necessarily complete*, and (d) *continuousness* (i.e. *ceaseless persistence of the process*). The plausibility of G&W's objection crucially depends on the

140

status of the overtones in question. Leech (1970:149) claims that the overtones (a), (b) and (c), taken together, distinguish the meaning [+ situ] from [- situ] (although they may but needn't be contrastive in every utterance in use). So, if the overtone (d) were to be characterised as not being properly part of the meaning [+ situ], it would be possible to explain this overtone pragmatically. One could assume that the progressive actually encodes *limited extension of the situation in time*, because this overtone is more or less systematically associated with the progressive (although it is more salient in some verbs than others and in some utterances than in others). But it is patently impossible to isolate a class of examples which would be expressive of the overtone of *persistence of the process over time*. Leech illustrates this overtone by the following examples: *The earth is turning on its axis*, *Death is getting nearer and nearer every day*, and *He is always making fun of me*. It seems to me that terms like *continuousness* and *persistence of the situation/event over time* are not accurate. The stylistic quality of these examples is, I think, closer to something like the *vividness of the speaker's personal (experiential) involvement in the situation described by the utterance*. Moreover, some utterances, such as *The earth is turning on its axis*, seem somewhat odd. This stylistic oddity could be explained as arising from the conflict between the meaning of *limited extension of the situation in time* associated with the progressive and the hearer's encyclopaedic knowledge about the state of affairs described by the utterance as being of virtually unlimited duration. The overtone of dynamicness inherent in all uses of the progressive would also be readily explained as derived from the basic meaning of limited extension in time, as would the comparative incompatibility of the progressive with state verbs. States are situations characteristically thought of as not involving beginnings and ends (cf. Chapter two, p. 38). Therefore, they would be incompatible with the progressive to a greater or lesser extent depending on the accessibility

141

of encyclopaedic assumptions about the compatibility of the situation described by a given verb with the idea of temporariness. Leech (1970:151) considers the overtone of *persistence over time* to be a separate meaning of the progressive sometimes 'strong enough to cancel out' the meaning of limited extension, and his account remains wide open to G&W's objection about learnability. Also, it is unclear how the feature [+ situation] can be defined in terms of the three overtones mentioned above. On Leech's view the meaning of the progressive is actually a generalisation from the overtones which are determined by the construction in use. Clearly, an account on which the overtones are either part of the semantics or are derived from some basic meaning, defined independent from the overtones themselves, is needed. Now, the meaning of *incompletion* which is associated with the *-ing* suffix accounts for Leech's overtone (c), and the overtone (a), *duration*, is in some sense contained in the overtone (b), *limited extension* (i.e. *limited duration*). So, why not take the view that the meaning of the progressive, in addition to *lack of completion*, involves *limited duration of the state of affairs described by the utterance*? Well, there are contexts in which one can readily use the progressive while explicitly denying that the state of affairs is being described as involving limited duration. Thus, both utterances, *Nelson's column now stands on Trafalgar Square and it is likely to stay there forever*, and *Nelson's column is now standing on Trafalgar Square and it is likely to stay there forever*, are acceptable. They convey slightly different overtones and one utterance may be preferred to the other, depending on the context. The utterance with the progressive seems to indicate that the speaker has actually seen the column. It would be particularly appropriate in a context which includes the assumption that the column had been removed for repair and has now been put back in its old place. The utterance with the simple would possibly be taken to mean that the monument has been moved to Trafalgar Square as its new properly

designated location (Cf. G&W (1982:84-5), examples (13) to (15)). Whatever the difference between these two utterances may be, the one with the progressive is not felt to be contradictory, as it should, if *limited extension in time* were the linguistic meaning of the progressive.

According to some other proposals, the progressive *focuses*, as it were, on the middle of the event, i.e. on a stage of the event which is neither initial nor final (cf. Comrie (1976), King (1983)). These characterisations of the semantics of the progressive would leave a number of uses of the form unexplained. The idea of *focus on the middle of the event* would make it possible to account for the overtone of temporariness as an implicature, but a number of interpretations of the progressive would be impossible to explain. Thus, in some utterances the progressive may be readily understood as indicating the time of the onset of the event. For example, an utterance like *I am feeding the cats at five,* may be interpreted as saying that *the speaker will be in the process of feeding the cats at five o'clock (and would have begun feeding them before that time),* or, alternatively, that *five o'clock is the time at which the speaker starts feeding the cats.* The latter interpretation would, I believe, be precluded by any definition according to which the progressive, by virtue of its linguistic meaning, focuses on some non-initial and non-final stage of the event. So, it seems that both the overtones of temporariness and focus on the middle of the situation are to be explained as pragmatically derived from the linguistic meaning of the progressive which still needs to be given. In the following sections I take the view that the contribution of the *-ing* participle to the meaning of the progressive is to be characterised by the feature [- complete], and I argue that the meaning of the progressive construction as a whole is to be characterised in terms of *reference to a*

particular event which instantiates the property denoted by the predicate.
I begin by looking at the examples (1) to (3).

4.3 RELEVANCE THEORY AND THE OVERTONES OF *MILD REPROOF*, *INSINCERITY* AND *TEMPORARINESS*

In sections 4.3.1 to 4.3.3 an analysis of a number of overtones is given, and it is argued that they arise as implicatures, which are determined by the interpretation of the progressive in context.

4.3.1 The overtone of *mild reproof*

Two elements seem to combine to give rise to the shade of meaning of mild reproof. The first one is the impression that the event is being talked about as experienced, the second is that utterances like (6a) and (7a) are examples of hyperbole.

(6) a.   Old Lily is always feeding the pigeons.
     b.   Old Lily always feeds the pigeons.

(7) a.   The baby is always crying.
     b.   The baby always cries.

By virtue of pointing indexically, as it were, to instantiations of properties, the progressive refers to something observable, possible to be represented on the basis of perception. Therefore, the speaker who uses (6a) or (7a) may be understood as talking about his personal experience, and this may be exploited by the hearer in making inferences about the speaker's intended meaning of the utterance. The contrast between (7a) and (7b) is of particular interest in this

144

connection. The propositional form of both utterances is something like: *An instance of the baby's crying extends over all times, including the time of communication*, but only the utterance in (7a) is really strongly felt as expressing the speaker's attitude towards the situation described by the utterance. The shades of meaning such as annoyance, nervousness, dissatisfaction, and the like, are more prominent in (7a) than in (7b). If the speaker intended merely to describe the characteristic behaviour of *Old Lily* and *the baby*, the utterances with the simple would be more relevant, since reference to individual instances of these activities would not have adequate contextual effects in the initial context. It is the assumption that the speaker of (6a) and (7a) is conforming to the presumption of optimal relevance which leads the addressee to include in the context some assumptions about the speaker's being related to the situations via experience. How does this experiential quality in the meaning of the progressive give rise to more specific impressions of reproof, disapproval and the like? The answer largely follows from the fact that (6a) and (7a) are examples of hyperbole.

In the light of his general knowledge about people and feeding animals or crying babies, the hearer needn't even consider these utterances as being used literally in order to realise that the speaker could not have intended them to be so used. In terms of relevance theory, these utterances are illustrations of loose use. The idea behind this term is that the proposition expressed by an utterance, while being an interpretation of a speaker's thought, is not necessarily a literal interpretation of that thought (see Chapter three, sections 3.3.3.4 and 3.3.3.5). Relevance theory does not regard loose use as a departure from the norm, but takes literalness and metaphor to be on the extreme opposite ends of a continuum. Hyperbole is a case in point. Neither (the) (6a) nor (7a), is adequately interpreted as expressing a literal

interpretation of the thought which it purports to represent, and each receives a *loose* interpretation, as it were, without the literal interpretation being even considered. The hearer accesses the propositional form of the utterance and makes hypotheses about the thoughts which a rational communicator conforming to the principle of relevance could have intended to communicate. This is how (6a) and (7a) come to convey the impressions of mild reproof, or disapproval. They arise as a result of the effort on the part of the hearer to maximise the relevance of contextual assumptions about the speaker's personal experience in the context of hyperbole. The impression of reproof consists of a number of weak implicatures that the hearer makes about the speaker's intended meaning of (6a) and (7a): *Old Lily spends more time feeding the pigeons than a sensible person would do, Pigeons are not nice birds, Pigeons know how to find food and needn't be fed by people, ...* , and: *The baby cries so much that the speaker can hardly bear it, The speaker disapproves of the baby's crying, The speaker is feeling apologetic about the noise made by the baby, ...* . The feeling that terms such as *reproof* or *disapproval* fail fully to capture the overtones associated with the progressives in (6a) and (7a) comes from the fact that these overtones are impressions, that they are made up of a range of assumptions which have simultaneously become more manifest, and, therefore, cannot be completely described in one single word. Which assumptions will be part of the impression crucially depends on the context against which the utterance is interpreted for relevance. For example, if no unpleasant noise is heard at the time of communication, (7a) is not likely to be interpreted as an apology. If the hearer is confident that the speaker is very fond of Lily, the overtone of reproof will, possibly, not arise at all. The crux of the matter is that by using a comparatively simple utterance the speaker invites the hearer to form a great number of hypotheses, and thus significantly alters their mutual cognitive environment in an economical way. The

overtones are entirely a function of the context brought to bear on the interpretation of the proposition expressed by the utterance. The account of the implication of insincerity in (2) illustrates the same point.

4.3.2   The overtone of *insincerity*

The predicates *be polite* and *love the fruit salad* denote properties which cannot be talked about in terms of their instances, because they are conceptualised as non-instantiable. The property *be polite* pertains to character, and *love* to emotional disposition. Hence, one would expect it to be somewhat difficult to talk about these properties in terms of their instantiations.

(8)   John is being polite.

(9)   Mary is loving the fruit salad.

The literal meaning of (8) and (9) is roughly paraphrased as: John is instantiating the property *be polite*, and Mary is instantiating the property *love fruit salad*. As these properties cannot be instantiated, the hearer can hardly fail to realise that (8) and (9) are not intended to be interpreted literally, and starts looking for assumptions about what the speaker might have intended to convey. This is how both sentences come to be interpreted as talking about behaviour. The resemblance between the ideas of *instance of a trait of character* in (8), and *instance of an emotion* in (9), and the concept of *behaviour* is very striking. Both (8) and (9) strongly suggest that by using the progressive the speaker is actually talking about behaviour. It may not be clear how either of the two utterances can ever be optimally relevant. On the one hand, if

147

the speaker is really talking about behaviour, it would seem more relevant to do so explicitly. On the other hand, if he is not, why use the progressive at all? The following examples show that the utterances (8) and (9) are not necessarily incompatible with the guarantee of optimal relevance. Consider the following scenario:

> Three people A, B and C are present at the same time in the same place. A says something to B, and B takes offence at what A has just said. C realises that A had intended to be kind to B, and that A's utterance can be interpreted as expressing genuine politeness. Therefore, C says to B:

(10)   A is being polite.

By using the progressive, C invites the hearer to form two hypotheses: (a) A meant to say something polite and (b) A is a polite person. This makes it possible for B to draw the relevant conclusion that A's utterance was an act of genuine politeness, a conclusion which could probably have been derived from *A is polite* or *A is behaving politely* alone, as well as from a conjunction of the two, but only at the expense of considerable processing effort.

Utterances like (8) are sometimes understood as implying insincerity on the part of the subject. This implicature will arise in case only the assumption that *John is polite* has contextual effects in some context accessible to the hearer, while the assumption that *John is behaving politely* does not give access to any contextual effects in the already existing context, or a context readily accessible to the hearer. The assumption that the speaker who uses (10) is conforming to the principle of relevance, leads to some contextual assumption, roughly, like (11):

148

(11)   By using the progressive and talking about A's behaviour
       as polite, in an immediate context in which the statement
       about A as a polite person would be more relevant, the
       speaker indicates that he is not committed to the truth of
       the statement *A is a polite person*.

This assumption, when included in the context, gives access to a number of more or less vague implicatures. A hearer who entertains the assumption in (11) may easily form various plausible hypotheses about the thoughts the speaker intended to convey: *John is insincere*, *John is desperate to make a good impression*, *John is making a great effort to conceal his real feelings, ...* Some other, more straightforward formulation, would fail to give rise to so wide a range of implicatures, and would, consequently, be less relevant. The speaker could use any or all of these implicatures as his actual utterance, and thereby explicitly convey what he means, but that would either involve the loss of other implicatures (and of the crucial element of indeterminacy and so shared responsibility for their derivation), or a great amount of processing effort necessary for the interpretation of an extremely long utterance. The example in (9), repeated here as (12), illustrates the same point.

(12)   Mary is loving the fruit salad.

Why is (12) so suggestive of Mary's behaviour as expressing the great and genuine pleasure she finds in eating a particular fruit salad? Because the first assumptions that come to mind about the situation in which (12) would be used are: *It Is mutually manifest to both the speaker and to the hearer that Mary does love fruit salad*, or, at least: *It is mutually manifest to the speaker and to the hearer that there is no reason to believe that Mary doesn't like fruit salad.* By phrasing the utterance in such a way that it draws attention to the subject's

149

behaviour, while directly predicating the property *love the fruit salad* the speaker strengthens the hearer's existing assumptions about Mary's love for fruit salad and also instructs him to maximise the relevance of the manifestations of Mary's actual behaviour, her loving the particular fruit salad which she happens to be eating. This is how implicatures like the following are derived: *Mary is completely absorbed in eating the fruit salad*, *Mary finds the speaker's salad particularly good*, *One should make fruit salad when one invites Mary*, *My fruit salad is particularly good this time, ...* .

Given a different setting, the import of (12) will also be different. For example, if it is mutually manifest to the speaker and to the hearer that Mary didn't like fruit salad on some previous occasion, (12) may again be more relevant than the corresponding utterance with the simple. It is the contrast between Mary's past and present behaviour that is relevant here. The simple present would, possibly misleadingly, suggest that the speaker has conclusive evidence that *Mary loves fruit salad*. By using the progressive he distances himself from that claim. The examples examined so far involve implicatures deriving from loose use. The overtone of *temporariness* differs in this respect from the first two.

4.3.3   The overtone of *temporariness*

The meaning of *temporariness* is particularly salient in examples like (3), repeated as (13a):

(13)   a.   John is living in Muswell Hill.

   b.   John lives in Muswell Hill.

150

Whether the speaker uses (13a) or (13b), the idea conveyed is that *John is a resident of Muswell Hill* at the time of communication. Other things being equal, the utterance with the simple form makes a stronger claim and should be more relevant. The meaning of the utterance with the progressive is roughly: *An event instantiating the property 'live in Muswell Hill' applies to John at the time of speech.* It contrasts with the meaning of the simple in (13b), which is something like: *The property 'live in Muswell Hill' applies to John at the time of speech.* Generally speaking, if there is no evidence to the contrary, the property *live in X* is taken as relatively stable, nearly synonymous with *be an inhabitant of X.* The use of the progressive in talking about such properties highlights the meaning of transience, available to the hearer as part of his encyclopaedic knowledge about events. The hearer forms hypotheses about why the speaker has chosen the progressive and stops at the conclusion which seems the most relevant to him, namely: *John is temporarily residing in Muswell Hill.* In other utterances, the temporariness associated with instantiations of properties is not exploited at all. Consider (14):

(14)   a.   The Earth is turning on its axis.

          b.   The Earth turns on its axis.

In the light of common knowledge that it is an event normally conceived as everlasting (in this case *the revolution of the Earth on its axis*) which is talked about, it would not make sense even to consider the implicature of limited duration as part of the intended meaning. If the speaker had the intention to convey the idea of temporariness, he would have had to do so explicitly, as the hearer cannot be expected to think about the event in (14a) as transient. Having no doubts as to the omnitemporal nature of the process, and assuming that the speaker shares his belief, the hearer will exploit the pragmatically derived

meaning of perceptible evidence in (14a). While (14b) with the simple is taken as a statement of fact, (14a) comes with some implications of the speaker's personal involvement in the situation, his perceptual experience of an everlasting situation. If Leech's intuition is to be trusted at all, we are dealing here with one pragmatic implication (experientiality) leading up to another (the ceaseless persistence of the process).

Another issue related to the experiential quality of the progressive, known as the problem of semantic markedness in the progressive (cf. Lyons (1977:688-9)), also receives a natural explanation within the framework of relevance theory.

4.4 MARKEDNESS

It is often observed that the progressive is semantically marked in the past tense and in the futurate *will* + *be* *V-ing* construction, and unmarked in the present tense (see Chapter three, sections 3.1.2.3 and 3.2). The following example is taken from Whitaker (1983):

(15) She'll be coming round the mountain,
    When she comes,
    She'll be wearing silk pyjamas,
    When she comes,
    She'll be riding six white horses,
    When she comes, ...

This song of marching troops is intuitively felt to convey something of eye-witness testimony of an event in the future. Some uses of the

152

progressive in the past tense illustrate the point equally well. Compare (16a) and (16b) with (16c) and (16d), respectively:

(16) a. It rained.
      b. It was raining.
      c. It rains.
      d. It is raining.

Both (16a) and (16b) are about one or several instances of rain in the past, whereas only (16d), but not (16c), is normally taken to describe an occurrence of rain at the time of communication. Two questions should be considered in this connection. Why is the utterance (16b) stylistically marked, while (16a) with the simple, is unmarked? Why does the past simple in (16a) readily receive the interpretation on which an instance of rain is talked about, while (16c) with the present simple form is normally understood as habitual? The term *habitual* was briefly discussed in Chapter three (pp. 126-130). I have suggested an account on which habitual statements fall into two groups: descriptively used habitual utterances, and interpretively used ones. In the first group of utterances the process of pragmatic enrichment of the logical form yields a propositional form which includes a concept like *often/usually/regularly*; in other words, the utterance is interpreted as a descriptive (i.e. truth conditional) representation which quantifies over individual occurrences of events. On this construal an utterance like *John walks to school* is taken to mean something like *John usually/often/regularly walks to school*. In contrast to this interpretation, utterances with the simple present of event verbs are often understood as being used interpretively, i.e. as generalisations based on whatever is taken to be adequate evidence for the speaker to make these generalisations. Generic utterances are a prime example of this kind of use. Thus, an utterance like *Dogs bark* would be

explained as an instance of interpretive use. This utterance is normally understood as a generalisation about the way the world is; in other words, it is an interpretation of other desirable (i.e. relevant) thoughts about the world. On an account along these lines many of the well-known problems relating to truth conditions of generic statements would not arise, precisely because generic utterances are not used descriptively: they are not interpretations of states of affairs in the world, but of other desirable (i.e. relevant) thoughts. I will not propose an analysis of generic utterances here. These few guidelines along which such an analysis could be developed are given in order to indicate how generics would relate to habitual utterances on such an account. It is my contention that just as *John walks to school* may be construed as being used descriptively, as in *John usually walks to school*, it may also be understood as a generalisation based on other relevant thoughts about John. It goes without saying that these other thoughts need not be thoughts about the individual occurrences of *John's walking to school*. They may be thoughts about *John's having had his bike stolen*, about *John's claim that he would not buy a new bike*, the speaker's knowledge that *John is a schoolboy*, etc. Of course, generic statements with properties which denote events will normally be taken as generalisations based on individual occurrences of events, but there is nothing in the explanation in terms of interpretive use which would stipulate what must be the basis for generalisation.

In this section I will show that explicit reference to the feature [- complete] is often more relevant in statements about the past than in those about the present. I will also try to demonstrate that the habitual interpretation is often more manifest, and, therefore, more relevant in simple sentences with the present tense than in those with the past tense. My main claim is that these two points taken together

provide the basis for a reasoned explanation for the problems raised in connection with the examples (15) and (16)

On the account of the meaning of the progressive suggested here, the difference between (16a) and (16b) is that (16a) is readily and characteristically understood as merely stating the fact that there was an instance of rain at some time in the past without making reference to an individual occurrence of rain by virtue of its linguistic meaning. (16b) is more explicit in this respect, because the progressive indicates by virtue of its linguistic meaning that a particular event instantiating the property denoted by the predicate is talked about. Now, the following assumptions central to relevance theory play a crucial role in explaining the markedness of the past progressive: (a) relevance is a positive function of contextual effects and a negative function of processing effort; (b) other things being equal, the more explicit an expression is, the more processing effort will be required for its interpretation (cf. S&W (1986:182)). By 'other things being equal' I mean, in this case, the accessibility of information in the already existing context of the hearer (i.e. information independent from the aspect of the verb) that a particular occurrence of rain is talked about. Let me illustrate this observation about explicitness by giving an example.

(17) a.   It is raining.
       b.   It is raining now.

In the immediately accessible context (17a) will usually be understood as describing an event ongoing at the time of communication. Hence, the information conveyed by the deictic *now, in (17b)*, would be redundant here. Therefore, the speaker who uses (17b) in preference to (17a) puts the hearer to the expense of more processing effort than

necessary for arriving at the proposition expressed by the utterance. The hearer maximising the relevance of the utterance looks for contextual effects which will offset the extra amount of effort required for processing (17b). This is how assumptions about a state of affairs in the past and/or the future characterised by absence of rain become more manifest in (17b). These implicatures may interact with the explicature(s) to give access to other implicatures, i.e. contextual effects, not derivable from the explicitly communicated information or from assumptions in the immediately accessible context alone. The contrast between (16a) and (16b) is explained in much the same way as the one between (17a) and (17b).

Characteristically, both (16a) and (16b) will be understood as making reference to an event of raining in the past (when interpreted in the most likely immediately accessible context). The progressive in (16b) indicates by its linguistic meaning (i) that a particular occurrence of rain is talked about, and (ii) that the state of affairs is described as non-complete (due to the aspectual meaning of the -ing participle). The simple form is, I assume, semantically unmarked both with respect to individuation and with respect to completion. Since the past tense of both forms is readily understood as being used with reference to an instance of rain in the past, the hearer maximising the relevance of the utterance with the progressive will seek to derive contextual effects which will offset the processing effort involved in interpreting the utterance with the more explicit progressive construction. The implicatures about the event in (16b) (*It was raining*), as being represented on the basis of perception arise as hypotheses the hearer makes in processing the utterance for relevance. These implicatures may be more or less difficult to construct, depending on the available clues. In terms of relevance theory, semantic markedness would be a function of the processing effort required for the derivation of

156

implicatures in the process of utterance interpretation. The greater the processing effort and the wider the range of implicatures, the more marked the utterance will be. Obviously, *pragmatic markedness* would be the appropriate term, instead of the more widely used term *semantic markedness* (see Chapter three, section 3.2). This account makes the following prediction. If there are contexts in which explicit reference to an individual occurrence of the event and/or incompletion is highly relevant, the overtones of markedness brought about by the use of the progressive in examples like (16b) should also be absent. This prediction is, I think, fully borne out. Consider the progressive in the main clause followed by a *'when*-clause'.

(18)   a.   John didn't remember to take his camera, when he went on holiday.

        b.   John was watching television when Mary was at the party.

        c.   John opened the door when the bell rang.

        d.   John was watching television, when Mary came in.

I take it that *when* indicates that the time of the state of affairs described by the clause it introduces is the evaluation time for the state of affairs described by the main clause. By evaluation time I mean the time at which the proposition expressed by the main clause is guaranteed to be true. There are four relevant temporal relations between the evaluation time and the event described by the sentence: (a) the event of the main clause immediately precedes the event of the *'when*-clause', as in (18a); (b) the events of the two clauses are simultaneous, as in (18b); (c) the event of the *'when*-clause' immediately precedes the event of the main clause, (18c) ; (d) the

events of the two clauses stand in a relation of temporal containment of some sort, (18d).

The use of the progressive in (18c) and (18d) saves the amount of processing effort which would be required for arriving at the intended interpretation of the temporal relation between the events in the two clauses if the simple were used. The overtones of the vividness of eye-witness testimony do not arise in this case precisely because the progressive is relevant enough by virtue of its aspectual meaning [-complete]. In (18b) and perhaps more strikingly in (18d) the hearer cannot not derive the speaker's intended interpretation of the temporal relation between the two events, unless the progressive is used. Consequently, the hearer needn't go beyond recovering the temporal interpretation of the conjoined clauses in arriving at what can plausibly be taken as the speaker's intended interpretation of his utterance, and, by the criterion of consistency with the principle of relevance, going beyond the first such interpretation would necessarily run against this principle. I now turn to the contrast between (16c) and (16d).

On the interpretation in the most likely immediately accessible context, both utterances (16c), (*It rains a lot*) and (16d) (*It is raining a lot*) are readily taken to express present tense propositions, i.e. they are taken to be descriptions of states of affairs simultaneous with the time of communication, and, therefore, as [- complete] by definition. So, the most relevant semantic difference between the simple and the progressive in utterances like (16c) and (16d) is that the latter makes explicit reference to a particular ongoing event instantiating the property denoted by the predicate, whereas the former does not. The speaker may well be talking about rain without referring to a particular instance of it, as in habitual utterances such as (16c). Therefore, explicit reference to an individual instance of rain expressed by (16d)

158

is highly relevant for arriving at the interpretation intended by the speaker. By using the progressive the hearer makes it sure that the first interpretation considered by the hearer should be the one on which a particular instance of raining is talked about. Thus, the first hypothesis about which proposition the speaker could have intended to communicate by his utterance can easily be the right one. If the speaker used (16c) with the simple, intending to communicate the idea that a specific occasion of rain is described by the utterance, he would fail to make his intended interpretation sufficiently manifest. In other words, a speaker who would use (16c) intending it to have the import of (16d) would inevitably fail to conform to the principle of relevance. But why is the habitual interpretation more manifest for the simple form in the present than in the past tense?

First, the habitual reading of an utterance about the present is characteristically highly relevant, regardless of whether an occurrence of the event denoted by the predicate is actually taking place. Let me make this point clearer by considering the following situation:

> Susan and Peter are on holiday in Spain. It has been raining non-stop for several days. Susan may use either (16'c) or (16'd) in talking about the weather:

(16')   c.   It rains a lot in Spain.

        d.   It is raining a lot in Spain.

In the situation sketched out above the assumption that it is actually raining heavily is mutually highly manifest to Peter and Susan. What could Susan have intended to communicate by using (16'c)? She would probably be taken to mean that the manifest climatic condition warrants a generalisation about the weather in Spain. This interpretation is relevant, because it gives access to implicatures like:

159

There has been enough rain to contradict the more widely held assumptions about the climate of Spain, We should go on holiday to some other place next year, One should not trust the advertisements for holidays, and a range of others. Of course, Susan may choose to make a statement about *its raining heavily* at the time of communication and use the utterance (16'd), thereby communicating a partly different set of assumptions. My point is that in this context the habitual interpretation is highly relevant and readily accessible. Since the use of the simple aspect, as in (16'c), will not give any clues to the hearer about the speaker's intended interpretation with regard to the habitual-particular contrast, the habitual interpretation will then be the only one consistent with the presumption of optimal relevance: had the speaker not intended the utterance to be interpreted as habitual (or generic) she could have used the progressive and saved the hearer some processing effort.

Consider another situation:

> Susan and Peter are back in London and are talking with Mary and John. Mary asks: *Did you have a good time in Spain?* Susan gives the answer:

(16')   a.   It rained a lot.

          b.   It was raining a lot.

By asking the question Mary makes it mutually manifest to her audience and to herself that information about the whole period of Susan and Peter's stay in Spain is relevant to her. In general, both (16'a) and (16'b) may be used to refer to one or more occurrences of rain in the past, but in this particular situation (16'a) is a more relevant answer than (16'b): only (16'a), but not (16'b), is readily interpreted as a generalisation about the past, and the speaker's question indicates

160

that a general answer would be relevant to her. The use of a 'when-clause' (in an utterance like *It was raining a lot when we were in Spain*) would probably not make the answer with the past progressive more acceptable in this case. On the one hand, the *-ing* form would explicitly indicate that the event is being described as non-complete. It may be difficult to derive contextual effects which would offset the extra processing effort involved in interpreting the explicitly [- complete] form of the verb. On the other hand, it may also be difficult to derive any relevant effects which would follow from using the progressive as a construction referring to a particular occurrence of rain, precisely because the speaker has already indicated that information about the holiday as a whole would be relevant to her. Some native speakers feel that the progressive would be taken to lay emphasis on the duration and intensity of the rain. In other words, they feel that the utterance (16'b) is somewhat hyperbolical: by using the progressive the speaker characterises the whole stay on holiday as a continuing instance of rain. But, in some contexts in which the habitual interpretation is less manifest the past progressive would be perfectly appropriate. For example if, when asked to describe their holiday in some detail, Susan starts talking about what she and Peter did on particular occasions. In this situation, Susan may say: *It was raining the day we went to Madrid...* . By using the progressive which points indexically, as it were, to a particular ongoing event of raining in the past, Susan makes more manifest to her audience a range of asssumptions about rain. In this way she invites the listeners to interpret the events she proceeds to describe in the context of these implicated assumptions. This, I think, explains the so-called *backgrounding* effect of the past progressive. Also, the use of the past progressive in those utterances in which particular occurrences of ongoing events in the past are talked about and in which the time of the event is relevant, receives a straightforward explanation.

161

(19) a. I was walking in the street when I met Arthur.

b. (?)I walked in the street when I met Arthur.

By using the progressive in (19a) the speaker makes more manifest the spatio-temporal context of the situation, and then elaborates on it by spelling out, as it were, one of the relevant assumptions about the occasion. The less explicit simple form in (19b) gives a sense of detachment between the two events, and is somewhat difficult to contextualise. The conjunction *when* explicitly temporally relates the two events; on the most salient interpretation of the utterance the event of the subordinate clause falls within the time span of the event of the main clause. By using the progressive in the main clause the speaker makes it easier for the hearer to anticipate the understanding on which an ongoing event in the past is described, and also to anticipate the continuation of the utterance. Consequently, in interpreting (19b) the hearer finds it more difficult to establish the relevant temporal relation between the events than he does in interpreting (19a), and expects the extra amount of processing effort to be offset by some effects. As these effects would be difficult to derive (in most readily conceivable contexts), the utterance is normally found to be somewhat odd. The the lack of explicit guidelines for interpretation in (19b) may make it too difficult for the hearer to decide what is the interpretation intended by the speaker. The use of *when* is crucial here. If events are merely mentioned in a sequence without explicit indications about their temporal connection, the utterance is perfectly easy to interpret:

(20) I walked along the street, I met Arthur, ...

Instead of laying emphasis on the temporal relation between the two events (like (19b) with *when*), (20) is readily interpreted as relating the events in the order in which they occurred, and creates expectations on

the part of the hearer about other events which took place. The question *What happened next?* immediately comes to mind upon hearing (20).

The key to an explanation of the simple aspect of event verbs in the present and in the past tense is the higher manifestness of the habitual reading in the present tense. Habitual utterances are adequately characterised as statements of general truths, i.e. statements which hold over considerable periods of time and are not easily likely to change. When the past tense form of the verb is used, the state of affairs which the utterance is about is more likely to be understood as terminated. Since individual events are more readily thought of as transient, the use of the past tense will make more accessible the understanding on which the utterance describes an individual event in the past. The present tense form does not suggest termination at all. Consequently, the habitual interpretation remains highly accessible. That the possibility of a habitual understanding of the simple past of event verbs is not precluded seems to be an advantage of, not a difficulty for, this account. The examples (16'a) and (16'b) clearly illustrate the point. As soon as there are some contextual indications to the effect that the habitual interpretation is relevant, the simple past receives the habitual understanding, and is more felicitous than the progressive.

I hope to have shown how, given a fairly simple characterisation of the linguistic meaning of the progressive and of the simple aspects, relevance theory provides a natural explanation for some facets of the meanings which these categories receive in use. I have given some evidence in support of the view that the progressive, by virtue of its linguistic meaning makes reference to a particular event instantiating the property denoted by the verbal predicate. In the light of the

distinction made in relevance theory between *conceptual* and *procedural* meaning, introduced in Chapter two (pp. 58-61), the question of whether the linguistic meaning of the progressive is conceptually or procedurally represeted.

4.5   THE PROGRESSIVE AND CONSTRAINTS ON RELEVANCE

The progressive, I have argued, constrains the explicit content of the utterance by virtue of its meaning. In other words, the use of the progressive is reflected in the truth conditional content of the proposition expressed by the utterance. Bearing in mind the distinction between representational (i.e. conceptual) meaning and procedural meaning, the question arises as to whether reference to instantiation of the property is represented at the level of the logical form of the utterance (i.e. whether it is conceptual) or whether it is encoded as a constraint on explicit content, and, therefore, non-conceptual. In this section I will show that my characterisation of the progressive as a form which constrains the explicit content of the utterance is supported by an analysis of the *be going to* + *inf.* construction. The issue of whether this constraining effect is to be explained in terms of a semantic constraint on explicit content will remain open. I argue against Haegeman's (1989) view that the *be going to* + *inf.* construction encodes a constraint on context selection. However, pending evidence to the contrary, I take the position that the meaning of instantiation is conceptually represented, and that the process of interpretation which leads to a more or less specific representation of the individual event being talked about is determined by considerations of relevance.

By way of introduction, let me consider yet another example which shows how the progressive constrains utterance interpretation:

(21)   The same sentence [*I am hot*] would be being used to
make a different statement, if uttered by someone else.

What is the contribution of the progressive *would be being used* to the
interpretation of (21) (adapted from Kempson (1975:36))? By virtue of
its meaning, the progressive acts as an indication to the hearer that
some relevant information about the event instantiating the property
is easily accessible from the context(and relevant). In reasoning about
possible states of affairs, the hearer may not be in a position to access
direct evidence of the event taking place. Nor will the progressive in
(21) give rise to the overtones standardly associated with some uses of
the construction. However, there is some information about *an instance
of using the same sentence* which may be highly relevant; namely, that
one and the same event which instantiates *someone else's uttering the
sentence* also instantiates *that person's using the sentence to make a
different statement*. Of course, this piece of relevant information is
inferable from the context independently from the progressive. The
author could have used the simple: *The same sentence would be used
to make a different statement, if uttered by someone else*. But the
progressive makes the intended interpretation more accessible, thus
reducing the amount of effort necessary for the interpretation. The
effort involved in processing the progressive is offset by the contextual
effects achieved, because the construction makes the derivation of the
co-referential relation, as it were, between *using* and *uttering* easier. In
this example, the use of the progressive is relevant, because it reduces
the processing effort required for arriving at the intended
interpretation. The construction with *be going to + inf.* clearly encodes
future time and is also associated with a number of readily identifiable
overtones. I argue that these overtones are best explained on the
assumption that the *be going to + inf.* construction is an instance of the

165

progressive. An alternative analysis put forward by Haegeman (1989), which does not take this into account, is shown to be untenable.

The much discussed overtones associated with the use of *be going to* + *inf.* (see Haegeman (1989) for references) seem to be consistently linked to the linguistic meaning of the construction, but the characterisation of the linguistic meaning itself has proved an obdurate problem.[14] Consider the following examples:

(22)   I am going to leave next week.

(23)   a.   They are going to get married.
         b.   She's going to have another baby.

Sometimes the more general impression of *future fulfilment of the present*, illustrated by most examples with *be going to* + *inf.* is narrowed down, as it were, to the overtones of *present intention*, as in (22) and (23a), and *present cause* (23b). In other uses, there is no apparent overtone at all. These overtones vary not only in strength, but also in the clarity with which they are expressed. Thus, it is not clear that the overtone of *present cause* in (23b) either accurately captures the hearer's intuitions about the meaning conveyed by the utterance, or that the idea of present intention, arguably associated with (23a), is precluded in (23b).

According to Haegeman's (1989) analysis, couched in relevance theory terms, the overtones are implicatures deriving from the interaction of the linguistic meaning of *be going to* + *inf.* with the context, in the process of utterance interpretation. Arguably, the construction indicates, by virtue of a linguistically encoded non-truth conditional semantic constraint, that the proposition expressed by the

utterance is to be processed against a context which includes some present tense propositions. The overtones arise as implicatures, i.e. as hypotheses about the state of affairs in the present which the speaker (conforming to the principle of relevance) may have intended to communicate by using the construction with *be going to + inf.*

This analysis allegedly receives support from the observation that *be going to + inf.* is readily used with expressions pointing to (the relevance of) present time, in contrast to the corresponding utterances with *will/shall*, which seem somewhat difficult to interpret.

(24) a. We are already going to have the kitchen redecorated.

b. ?We already will have the kitchen redecorated.

(25) a. I didn't realise that you are going to travel by boat.

b. ?I didn't realise that you will travel by boat.

(26) a. Did you know that Ann is going to get married?

b. ?Did you know that Ann will get married?

The appropriateness of the *be going to + inf.* construction in the examples above, is explained by the semantic compatibility between *be going to + inf.* and the contextual clues provided by the adverbial *already*, in (26), and the verbs *realise* and *know* in (25) and (26), respectively. The comparative difficulty in interpreting the (b) sentences in (24), (25) and (26) is, arguably, due to the meaning of *will/shall*, also characterised in terms of a semantic constraint on interpretation, in this case, one which indicates that future tense assumptions should be included in the context.

167

Conversely, in conditionals in which the protasis describes a state of affairs in the future (to the exclusion of the present), the use of *be going to + inf.* in the apodosis causes processing difficulties due to conflicting processing instructions in the two conjuncts.

(27)   a.   (*)(?)If you accept that job, you're never going to regret it.

           b.   We're going to find ourselves in difficulty if we carry on like this.

(28)   a.   (?)You're going to be fired if you ever go near his computer.

           b.   You'll be fired if you ever go near his computer.

           c.   You're going to be fired if you go on like this.

The sentences (27b) and (28c) are easier to interpret than (27a) and (28a), because in both examples the *'if*-clause' describes a state of affairs in the present, so that both the protasis and the apodosis are contextualised against a present time context. (28b) is also easily contextualised, as both clauses describe states of affairs in the future, without pointing to the relevance of present tense contextual assumptions. But (27a) and (28a) are difficult to contextualise: *be going to + inf.* in the apodosis, instructs the hearer to process the proposition against a present time context, although it describes a state of affairs contingent upon, and subsequent to, the future state of affairs described in the protasis.

In coordinated clauses, the use of *be going to + inf.* in both conjuncts precludes the implication of causal link between the future events, as the contrast between (29a) and (29b) illustrates.

(29) a.   He's not going to finish his Ph.D. and he's going to lose his job.

       b.   He won't finish his Ph.D. and he'll lose his job.

Bearing in mind the point made by Blakemore (1987) that a conjoined proposition is to be processed for contextual effects as a whole (in other words, that the conjuncts are not to be contextualised independently), Haegeman (1989) explains the lack of causal connection between the future events in the two clauses in (29a) as resulting from the instruction that both propositions should be processed against a present time context, so that the future tense proposition in the first conjunct does not serve as the background for the interpretation of the proposition expressed by the second. Hence, the tendency to understand the two propositions as merely listing events. By virtue of pointing to the relevance of a present time context *be going to* + *inf.* may be used to save the hearer processing effort that would be required for the contextualisation of the corresponding utterance with *will/shall.*

(30) a.   The rock is going to fall.

       b.   The rock will fall.

(31)   Finally, tonight, on the weather forecast for the South. The night is going to be rather cloudy, but most places will remain dry. The temperature will fall around forty near the coast, ... and the winds, they'll be south-east...

                   (from *Nationwide*, BBC, 20.02.1975)

The effect of the processing constraint in (30a) is to indicate that all the necessary conditions for the future occurrence of the event are met. By contrast, (30b) is felt to be incomplete: *will* points to the relevance of a

169

future time context, and the appropriate context is not, or, at least, may not be, easily accessible. At the beginning of the weather forecast in (31), *be going to + inf.* sets the context by embedding the account of the events in the remainder of the forecast in a set of assumptions about present indications.

On the basis of what has been said so far, the overtones of *present fulfilment of the future, present intention, present cause* and the like, could be explained as implicatures arising from the interaction of the linguistic meaning of *be going to + inf.* with the context in use. However, these implicatures are better explained on the assumption that the *be going to + inf.* construction is an instance of the progressive, than on Haegeman's view according to which it encodes a constraint on context selection. Consider (32a) and (32b):

(32) a. Mary's going to have another baby.
     b. Mary will have another baby.

In both (32a) and (32b) the speaker is asserting his commitment to the truth of the proposition *[future] Mary have another baby*, but only in (32a) is he indicating that the future tense proposition is relevant in the context of some present tense assumptions: *Mary intends to have another baby, Mary is pregnant again*, etc. However, it is to be noted that neither of these is plausibly construed as part of the explicature. An explicature like *There are present indications that Mary will have another baby* gives access to a number of implicatures which could be explicitly expressed only by some complex utterance that would be very difficult to process. But, in principle, either *Mary (probably) intends to have another baby* or *Mary is (probably) pregnant* could be part of the speaker's intended explicature. Suppose that the hearer interprets (32a) as: *Mary is pregnant again and she will have another baby*. The

170

possible implicature of (32a), *Mary intends to have another baby,,* would be weakened or lost, because the speaker would be explicitly highlighting the relevance of *Mary's pregnancy.* If the explicature was: *Mary intends to have another baby, and she will have another baby,* the implicature that *Mary may be pregnant* may be weakened, because emphasis would be on *Mary's intention.* But there is nothing in the theory that stipulates the point at which the hearer must stop enriching. So, how is the explicature *There are present indications that Mary will have another baby* arrived at, in the first place? The question is easily answered once it is realised that *be going to + inf.* is an instance of the progressive, and that the progressive points to some event in the world which instantiates (i.e. semantically interprets) the property denoted by the predicate. But, what would be the property denoted by *be going to?* I assume that *be going to* encodes a largely emptied concept, some loose idea of *going.* The use of the construction indicates that some event in the world which is the semantic interpretation of a loose concept of *going* is relevant. The exact content of the concept is determined by considerations of relevance. Once the hearer arrives at a representation which is specific enough to be optimally relevant (i.e. sufficiently specific to yield enough contextual effects for the processing effort required), he will stop enriching the logical form of the utterance. In (32a) some propositional form like *There are present indications that Mary will have another baby* will be specific enough to give rise to a range of thoughts which the communicator may have intended to communicate by using the *be going to + inf.* construction. Haegeman's (1989) account in terms of a constraint on context selection is far more problematic.

The view that *be going to* does not constrain the explicit content of the utterance makes it difficult to account for the examples in (24) (*We are already going to have the kitchen redecorated;* ?*We already will*

have the kitchen redecorated). Haegeman (1989:296) assumes that *'already* is a pragmatic adverb, that it relates the event to other events in the immediate context'. In other words, it is 'used as a means of organising the proposition with respect to its context, it can be argued that it has a discourse function: it imposes pragmatic constraints on processing'. But it should be noted in this connection that the construction with *will/shall* is not incompatible with the present time adverb *now.*

(33) a. John will give the talk now.

      b. John is going to give the talk now.

As (24a) is perfectly acceptable, while (24b) is really odd, the view that *already* has a purely pragmatic function seems unwarranted. If only pragmatic considerations were involved, (24b) should, in fact, be acceptable (though, possibly, difficult to interpret). Let me tentatively assume that the adverbial *already* is better characterised as relating states of affairs to a time at which they can be evaluated as true, and that it does not have a purely pragmatic function. If (24a), as I have argued, may express a proposition such as: *There are indications in the present that their kitchen will be redecorated,* the adverb *already* may be used to modify the state of affairs in the present by indicating that it still is true, and has been true for some time. By contrast, (24b) is unacceptable precisely because there is no state of affairs anchored to a time at which it could be evaluated. So, it seems that the examples in (24) lend support to the view that *be going to* does, in fact, constrain the explicit content of the proposition expressed by the utterance, and is not a constraint on implicatures. As it is widely recognised that both *will/shall* and *be going to* in the examples considered so far have present tense, it seems reasonable to ask why only the latter construction constrains utterance interpretation in the way in which it

172

does? Let me look at the use of be *going to* in the past tense, which as Haegeman herself observes, presents difficulties for her analysis.

Utterances like (34a) and (34b) have different entailments, since only the latter requires that the anticipated event did take place.

(34)   a.   The Queen was going to arrive three hours later.
       b.   The Queen would arrive three hours later.

The utterance (35a) is acceptable, while (35b) is contradictory.

(35)   a.   The Queen was going to arrive three hours later, but the plan was changed and she did not turn up.
       b.   *The Queen would arrive three hours later, but the plan was changed and she did not turn up.

On the view that utterances with *be going to* express future tense propositions and that, in addition, this construction encodes a constraint on context selection, utterances in which *be going to* is used in the past tense should have the same logical implications as those with the past tense equivalent of *will*, which is clearly not the case. However, on the assuption that *be going to* encodes a largely emptied concept, which is semantically interpreted by an event in the world, it seems obvious that (35a) should not be contradictory. The logical form of the utterance (34a) is readily enriched to the level of some proposition like *The Queen intended to/had planned to arrive*, which, of course, does not entail that the Queen actually did arrive.

I have suggested that *be going to* encodes a concept which is largely devoid of lexical meaning, and I have argued that this loose

173

concept is pragmatically enriched in use. What remains to be shown is that reference to an event in the world is also part of the meaning of *be going to*. What I have said so far could be true whether the construction has the semantics of the progressive, or not. One way of finding out would be to compare the *be going to + inf.* construction of English with the equivalent construction in a language which lacks the simple- progressive contrast. One such language is French. The semantic correspondence between the *be going to + inf.* construction of English and the periphrastic future of French with the verb *aller* ('go') is only partial.[16] Both convey similar overtones, but the certainty that the anticipated event will actually take place is greater in English than in French. This difference between the two languages could easily be explained on the assumption that the English construction explicitly points to some event in the world which is the semantic interpretation of the loose concept of going, whereas the corresponding periphrastic form of French is not explicit in this respect. Putting it roughly, the English expression explicitly says that there is some particular event in the world which is related to another event in the future in a relevant way. The French expression says merely that some event (or other) in the world is related to a future event in a relevant way. Assumptions about the strength of causal connections depend, amongst other things, on the range of events which enter into causal interactions. It is one thing to say that a future occurrence of an event is contingent upon some particular event ongoing at the time of communication, as in English, and it is an altogether different thing to say that it is contingent upon some event or other, as in French. That much is common encyclopaedic knowledge. The hearer who processes the English expression for relevance will naturally be led to the conclusion that there is a strong causal link between the two events, because the semantics of the English progressive construction provides good evidence for that conclusion. The hearer who processes the French

expression has less reliable evidence, and his conclusion will, therefore, also be entertained as less certain. Admittedly, this is a rather sketchy account, but it doesn't seem implausible to me. But why is (35b) felt to be somewhat contradictory?

It seems reasonably clear that the use of the *would + inf.* construction in utterances like (35b) is closely related to the so-called narrative present. Consider (36)

(36)   I couldn't believe it! Just as we arrived, up *comes* Ben and *slaps* me on the back as if *we're* life-long friends. 'Come on, old pal,' he *says*, 'Let me buy you a drink!' I'm telling you, I nearly fainted on the spot.

(Quirk *et al.* (1985:181))

In relevance theory terms the use of the simple present in narration is explained as an instance of interpretive use. Intuitively by using the italicised present tense forms the speaker of (36) is representing past events as if he were experiencing them at the time of communication. Therefore, it seems quite plausible to assume that the utterances with the present tense forms in this use are intended to be interpreted as representing thoughts as they occurred to the narrator, rather than describing the events themselves. Just as narration can involve the representation of past events as they are actualised, it may also involve the representation of thoughts about events (and states of affairs in general) which are anticipated in the past, as in (37):

(37)   Two years later the war *would break out*. The streets now swarming with people *would be deserted*. The threat of air raids *would be lurking* all the time.

175

Clearly the italicised forms in (37) indicate that the utterances represent anticipatory thoughts in the past, though not thoughts directly attributed to a specific subject of consciousness. The future in the past understanding of *would* guides the hearer to process the utterance for relevance in the context of assumptions about some time in the past as well as assumptions about some later time, the time of the relevant development of events. In (37) this gives rise to implicatures like: *Who would have thought that ...* . The most likely implicatures of (34b) would involve assumptions about the contrast between the time at which the Queen's arrival is expected in three hours' time and some relevant later state of affairs - the general atmosphere at the time at which the Queen actually arrived. The utterance (35b) is odd precisely because the continuation (*but the plan was changed ...*) requires a revision of the most manifest interpretation of the first conjunct (*The Queen would arrive three hours later*). Now, if my account of *be going to + inf.* as an instance of the progressive is correct, the utterance (34a) (*The Queen was going to arrive three hours later*) should have a propositional form roughly like: *There were indications at time t in the past that the Queen would arrive at time t' three hours after t.* The optimally relevant interpretation of (34a) does not depend on the assumption that the event of the Queen's arrival actually took place. Consequently, the utterance in (35a) (*but the plan was changed ...*) is not felt to be contradictory.

If the interpretation of utterances with *be going to + inf.* really involves the enrichment of the logical form in the way in which I have argued it does, there is no need too assume that this construction also encodes a constraint on context selection. Also, it seems quite obvious that my analysis accounts not only for all examples which can be explained on Haegeman's approach, but also for those which present difficulties for her analysis.

176

4.6 THE PROGRESSIVE AND THE PERFECTIVE

The features of *delimitedness*, *change* and *duration* circumscribe a range of conceptual contrasts. In Chapter two I have argued that, given the characterisation of the aspectual categories in terms of these features, there emerges a lack of predictable correspondence between the aspectual categories of English and Serbo-Croat in a number of uses. I also suggested that this is to be accounted for in terms of the interaction of the meanings of predicate expressions with the context. I have argued that the progressive of English indicates by part of its linguistic meaning that a particular event instantiating the property is talked about. In this section an attempt is made to show that the semantics of the perfective aspect of Serbo-Croat is to be characterised in terms of the same feature, and that this makes it possible to explain the apparent lack of systematic correspondence of the aspectual categories of the two languages in a number of uses.

In Chapter two I looked at the use of the imperfective aspect in habitual utterances in Serbo-Croat and I pointed out that the choice of the perfective would be inappropriate for a number of reasons. Crucially, the utterances with the perfective would be difficult to contextualise. Intuitively, further information about the circumstances concerning the events described would be required. This is why the utterances in (c) in the examples below ((13) and (14) in Chapter two) are marked with a bracketted question mark.

(38)   a.   John blinks.
       b.   Jovan trepće [imperf.].
       c.   (?)Jovan trepne [perf.].

(39) a. Mary coughs.

  b. Meri kašlje [imperf.].

  c. (?)Meri kihne [perf.].

The intuitions mentioned above are easily explained on the assumption that by virtue of its linguistic meaning the perfective aspect makes reference to a particular [+ complete] event instantiating the property denoted by the predicate. On the one hand, habitual utterances are often generalisations based on individual occurrences of events, so the aspect which points to particular occurrences of events is obviously inappropriate for use in these habituals. This may suggest that in habitual utterances with an understood or explicit frequency adverbial the perfective should be more appropriate. This is indeed the case. On this interpretation the perfective would indicate that there are some specific circumstances under which *John blinks*. On the other hand, by virtue of explicitly referring to individual events, the perfective makes more relevant the assumptions about the spatio-temporal context in which the event takes place. Questions like 'When?', 'Why?' and 'What happened next?', which immediately come to one's mind upon hearing (38c) and (39c), arise as a result of the hearer's attempt to offset the effort involved in processing the utterances with the more explicit perfective aspect in terms of the contextual effects achieved. The more difficult such contextual assumptions are to access, the more stylistically marked and incomplete the utterances with the perfective will be felt to be.

The use of the imperfective in Serbo-Croat in examples for which a characterisation of aspectual meaning in terms of delimitedness predicts the use of the perfective was illustrated by example (12), Chapter two, repeated in (40):

178

(40)   a.   Did John read/Has John read *War and Peace?*

b.   Da li je Jovan čitao [imperf.] *Rat i mir?*

c.   Da li je Jovan pročitao [perf.] *Rat i mir?*

(40c) with the perfective is felt to be inappropriate as a question asking merely about John's having read the book, because it gives rise to some presumably unintended overtones about the time by which the reading of the book should have been completed, the implication that a specific copy of *War and Peace* is being talked about, and the like. This is again readily explained on the view that the perfective aspect of Slavonic is similar to the progressive of English in so far as it makes reference to individual events. Thus, the intuition that a specific copy of the book is being talked about or that a deadline for finishing the book is involved, arise as contextual assumptions in the process of utterance interpretation in much the same way as those mentioned in connection with (38c) and (39c). Consider now the use of the simple in English and of the Serbo-Croat imperfective in sports commentaries.

(41)   a.   Black passes the ball to Fernandez... Fernandez shoots!

b.   Black dodaje [imperf.] loptu Fernandezu... Fernandezu šutira [imperf.]!

c.   ?Black doda [perf.] loptu Fernandezu... Fernandez šutne [perf.]!

The simple present in commentaries gives the impression of a quick sequence of events. On the characterisation of the present simple in sports commentaries given in Quirk et al. (1985:180) under the heading *instantaneous present*, this use occurs 'where the verb refers to a single action begun and completed approximately at the moment of speech'. As this characterisation is very similar to a traditional

179

definition of the perfective aspect, one would expect that the Serbo-Croat counterpart of the *instantaneous present* in (41a) should be the present of perfective verbs. But this is not the case. The appropriate translation of (41a) is (41b) with the imperfective, and not (41c) with the perfective. (41c) is somewhat unusual in that it gives rise to the same kinds of questions as the perfective verbs in (38) and (39), i.e. various questions about the circumstances in which the real world event takes place, the sort of assumptions essentially irrelevant (and difficult for the listener to construct) in sports commentaries. Thus, the perfective aspect seems inappropriate for the same reason as the progressive in (42):

(42)   ?Black is passing the ball to Fernandez... Fernandez is shooting.

Admittedly, there are contexts in which (42) would be appropriate (commenting while watching the video recording of the match, for example, where the progressive highlights the relevance of the players' observable behaviour), but, in a live radio broadcast it is the fact that the event occurs, rather than the representation of the event itself, which is relevant, and the simple is the more appropriate form. Also, the progressive explicitly indicates lack of completion, while, in a sports commentary, the event is likely to be completed before the hearer has finished processing the utterance. The aspectual meaning of completion associated with the perfective also makes this category unsuitable for use in sports commentaries. The use of the perfective present would explicitly indicate that the event is completed and the reporter could not assert without contradicting himself that the pass has been successfully intercepted. Thus, the utterance (43) is a contradiction.

180

(43)   (*)Black doda [perf.] loptu Fernandezu... Watson izbacule
        loptu u aut.

        Black passes the ball to Fernandez... Watson kicks out.

The utterance in Serbo-Croat is acceptable only on the understanding
that Watson throws the ball out after it has been successfully passed to
Fernandez. The reading on which Black's pass is intercepted by
Watson is precluded by the use of the perfective aspect. By contrast,
the corresponding utterance in English with the simple aspect allows
the reading on which *Black's pass to Fernandez* is intercepted. It should
be noted that only in the example in English a continuation like
Beautifully intercepted by Watson would be acceptable. But why
wouldn't the reporter choose the progressive here? After all, the
progressive would explicitly indicate that the pass has not been
completed and would make more manifest the possibility that the pass
may be intercepted. The answer is that the simple present of sports
commentaries does not relate the events truth-conditionally. The
reporter is relating as present the events which (he knows) have been
completed. The reporter's utterances echo his past thoughts which
represent events (which, at the time of communication, may, but need
not be completed) as present. In other words, the simple present of
sports commentaries, like the narrative present, is used interpretively,
and not descriptively. The main difference between these two uses is
that, in commentaries, the events being reported are almost
simultaneous with the moment of communication, or are actually still
in progress (and the reporter is anticipating the completion of the
events). In both the narrative present and the present of sports
commentaries, the speaker is not merely describing the events as they
occur, but his realisation of these events. In other words, the reporter's
and the narrator's utterances are interpretations of thoughts which are
representations of other thoughts.[16]

181

The point made about the inappropriateness of the progressive and the perfective in sports commentaries also carries over to the so-called historical present used in narration.

> (44)   a.   He opens the door, enters the room, looks out of the window, and sits down at the table.
>
>   b.   On otvara vrata [imperf.], ulazi [imperf.] u sobu, gleda [imperf.] kroz prozor, i seda [imperf.] za sto.
>
>   c.   On otvori [perf.] vrata, udje [perf.] u sobu, pogleda [perf.] kroz prozor, i sedne [perf.] za sto.

Both (44b) and (44c) are possible translations of (44a). However, the imperfective, in (44b), is the more commonly used form in narration. The perfective, in (44c), seems to focus on the context in which the events occur. A number of facts about the use of the perfective and the imperfective aspects in the so-called historical present are at least consistent with, and therefore lend support to, the assumption that the perfective partly constrains utterance interpretation by virtue of its linguistic meaning in the same way as the progressive. It appears that the perfective and the progressive differ with respect to *completion* but have in common *reference to particular events*, as shown in Table 1.

	Perfective	Progressive
change (a) single (b) complex	+	+
complete	+	-
reference to particular event	+	+

Table 1

182

4.7   THE IMPERFECTIVE AND THE PROGRESSIVE - MORPHEME -*IVA*-

This section looks at some examples of verbs with the imperfectivising morpheme -*iva*- (-*ava*-, -*eva*-) and argues that in addition to the feature [- complete] this morpheme is (with some verbs and verb forms at least) expressive of reference to particular events. It is also shown that the interpretation of a number of verbs with the morpheme -*irati* in the infinitive which are usually considered bi-aspectual differs from the interpretation of imperfective verbs. This lends support to the view I took in Chapter two, that the imperfective aspect encodes the feature [- complete].

There is a small number of imperfective verbs in Serbo-Croat most of which are characterized by the morpheme -*iva*- in the infinitive and present tense forms, and which tend to have a progressive-like interpretation both with respect to *lack of completion* and reference to individual events. These are illustrated in the (b) sentences in the examples below.

(45)   a.   Mislim, dakle jesam.
            I think therefore I am.
       b.   Razmišljam, dakle jesam.
            I am thinking therefore I am.

(46)   a.   Kad god je bio obuzet mračnim mislima, odlazio je iz grada.
            Whenever he was overwhelmed by sombre thoughts, he would leave town.

183

b.   Kad god je bivao obuzet mračnim mislima, odlazio je iz grada.

Whenever he was being overwhelmed by sombre thoughts he would leave town.

(47)   a.   Za vreme predavanja, dobro su razumeli predavača.

During the lecture they understood the lecturer well.

b.   Za vreme predavanja, dobro su razumevali predavača.

During the lecture they were understanding the lecturer well.

Sentence (45a) is the usual translation of *Cogito ergo sum* into Serbo-Croat. Following the observations of Banfield (1982) and Lyons (1982) it is possible to see (45b) as the more appropriate translation (Chapter three, section 3.1.1.3). In (45b) it is himself in the act of thinking which the subject is aware of, and, therefore, he knows that he knows. Similarly, (46b) is understood as an utterance about the subject's awareness of himself being *overwhelmed by sombre thoughts*, while (47b) is felt to be appropriate only in case the people listening to the lecture are showing perceptible signs of understanding. But the contrast illustrated in the examples (45) to (47) is rather exceptional, because the pairs of verbs which differ only with regard to the presence or absence of the imperfectivising affix *-iva-* (*-ava-*, *-ova-*) is the rather restricted modern Serbo-Croat.

Imperfective verbs of Serbo-Croat normally allow for two interpretations corresponding to the progressive or the simple aspect in English. Thus, a sentence such as *Radi* can be translated as 'He/She

184

works' or as 'He/She is working'. Imperfective verbs differ from the simple form of English and the aspectually unmarked verbs of Serbo-Croat in that they retain the feature [- complete] in contexts like 'when-clauses', where aspectually unmarked verbs could have either a perfective or an imperfective interpretation, as the contrast between (48a) and (48b) illustrates.

(48) a. Kad su analizirali [unspecified] problem, raspravljali [imperf.] su o mnogim pitanjima.
          When they were analysing/had analysed the problem they discussed [imperf.] a lot of questions.

      b. Kad su govorili [imperf.] o tom problemu, odgovarali [imperf.] su na mnoga pitanja.
          When they were speaking [imperf.] about the problem, they answered [imperf.] a lot of questions.

While (48a) is readily understood as conveying the idea that the discussion took place after the analysing had finished, by far the most manifest interpretation of (48b) is one on which the answering of questions took place while problems were talked about. The interpretation of (48b) and similar utterances strongly supports the view that the imperfective aspect grammaticalises the feature [- complete].

Some verbs with the -iva- morpheme in the infinitive are not used in the present tense, but only in the past tense and in the future tense. The present tense is made with the corresponding verb without the -iva- morpheme.

185

(49) a.   Kartoteka sadrži mnogo podotaka [inf. sadržati].

             The file contains a lot of data.

      b.   *Kartoteka sadržava mnogo podataka [inf. sadržavati].

             *The file is containing a lot of data.

      c.   ?Kartoteka je sadržala mnogo podataka [inf. sadržati].

             The file contained a lot of data.

      d.   Kartoteka je sadržavala mnogo podataka [inf. sadržavati]

             The file contained/used to contain a lot of data.

      e.   ?Kartoteka će sadržati mnogo podataka [inf. sadržati].

             The file will contain a lot of data.

      f.   Kartoteka će sadržavati mnogo podataka [inf. sadržavati].

             The file will contain a lot of data.

The difference between the sentences (49c) and (49d) is one of aspect. (49c) is interpreted as perfective, with the verb indicating change of state, (49d) as imperfective, and indicating state. The same holds for (49e) and (49f) respectively. But in the present tense only the 'simple' form without the -iva- affix can be used. (49a) has an imperfective stative interpretation. The examples in (49) are of some interest because they illustrate the way in which the interaction of tense and aspect constrains the use of verb forms. The unacceptability of (49b) is due to the stative meaning of the verb, just as the English counterpart with the progressive '*The file is containing a lot of data' is unacceptable. The question marks in the examples (49c) and (49e) are to indicate that the utterance would have a completive interpretation, and would suggest that the file did or will contain a lot of data for some

relevant period of time. In other words the utterances are difficult to contextualise. It is not easy to determine the clear pattern of the contribution of the *-iva-* morpheme. Certainly, it always conveys lack of completion. In those cases in which there is a corresponding form without this morpheme, *-iva-* also expresses reference to individual events, like the progressive construction of English.

4.8 THE PERFECTIVE AND THE SIMPLE

In Chapter two (section 2.3.3) I argued that process verbs of English in the simple aspect are not to be characterised as [+ complete], i.e. perfective. This was illustrated by the examples (21a) and (21b) (repeated here as (50a) and (50b)):

(50) a. John ran for several hours this morning, and, for all I know, he may still be running.

b. Lily strolled along the beach, and she may still be strolling there.

Some native speakers find both of these examples slightly (or more than slightly) difficult to interpret and even odd. So, let me give yet another example which shows that the sense of completion with the past simple form of process verbs is really not determined by their linguistic meaning, but is pragmatically established.

(51) A: How did Susan spend the morning?

B: She worked on Peter's paper all morning and she is still working on it.

187

As far as I have been able to find out, native speakers of English find B's reply perfectly appropriate. Since *work* is a process verb and is used in the past simple tense form, without suggesting and, certainly, without entailing completion or termination of the process, the completive meaning of process verbs in the past simple tense form should not be considered as due to the linguistic meaning of the predicate but as pragmatically derived.

In this section I address the following questions. If process verbs are to be characterised in terms of ongoing successive changes, i.e. as [- complete], how do they receive a completive interpretation in certain uses? Why do they differ from state verbs in this respect? Why are imperfective verbs of Slavonic closer to state verbs of English than to process verbs in these uses?

The verb *run* is normally said to denote a process, i.e. to involve change, without involving endpoints. Therefore, one would expect that it should be translated into Serbo-Croat by an imperfective verb, not a by a perfective one. And yet, as the discussion of the examples in (13), repeated as (52), shows, this is not always the case.

(52) a. They ran when the tram stopped.

b. Trčali su [imperf.] kada se tramvaj zaustavio.

c. Potrčali su [perf.] kada se tramvaj zaustavio.

On the most easily accessible interpretation, (52a) is taken to be about an instance of an event in the past. The 'when-clause' gives some relevant contextual information, by explicitly indicating that an individual event is talked about. So, in Serbo-Croat there is no need to avoid the implications associated with the use of the perfective. The verb *run*, like all process verbs, may be used in describing both

188

complete and non-complete events (see section 2), and that its simple
past tense form in (52a) is correctly interpreted as describing the onset
of the process. The translation with the perfective, (52c), is more
economical than the one with the imperfective, (52b), because it saves
the hearer the processing effort necessary for arriving at the intended
interpretation. But why then do process verbs like *run* not allow for the
interpretation on which the process is in progress at the time of the
event of the *when*-clause? It follows from the principle of relevance
that a rational communicator will formulate his utterance so that the
first assumption the hearer makes about the propositional form
expressed by the utterance is likely to be the correct one. The word
when indicates that the evaluation time for the proposition expressed
by the main clause is the same as the evaluation time of the proposition
expressed by the subordinate clause. The encyclopaedic assumptions
about causal connections between events are normally highly manifest
and are not contradicted by the lexical meanings of the two
propositions. So, it is patently impossible to think of a context in which
the past simple form of a process verb would be intended to have other
than an inceptive interpretation and still be optimally relevant.
Examples like (50) show that this possibility exists at least in principle.
However, when the past simple form of the process verb is used in the
main clause followed by a *when*-clause' the hearer will, in almost all
conceivable contexts, consider the inceptive, completive interpretation
first. A rational communicator intending a non-inceptive, non-
completive reading would fail to conform to the principle of relevance.
By misguiding the hearer to consider first the interpretation which he
did not intend to communicate, the speaker would be putting the hearer
to the expense of greater processing effort than necessary for the
derivation of his intended interpretation. Also, on the assumption that
the meaning of *when* is to be defined as a moment rather than as an
interval of time longer than a moment, and that all process verbs

189

readily allow for an achievement-like momentary understanding, it is clear why the use of *when* should strengthen the completive interpretation of the verb in utterances like (52a). For example, the verb *study* in the utterance *John studied hard on the day when Mary arrived*, does not receive a completive understanding. The utterance is readily taken to mean that *Mary's arrival* took place at some time within the interval during which John was studying. The so-called state verbs like *believe* also allow for a completive reading in linguistic contexts similar to (52), but this interpretation is less salient than the non-completive reading. Consider the examples in (53) ((15a) in Chapter two and its Serbo-Croat translations):

(53)   a.   Macbeth believed in ghosts when he saw Banquo.
       b.   Magbet je poverovao [perf.] u duhove kada je video Bankoa.
       c.   Magbet je verovao [imperf.] u duhove kada je video Bankoa.

The semantic difference between state verbs and process verbs is defined in terms of absence of change in the former and presence of change in the latter. Bearing in mind that inception involves change, it should be reasonably clear why the inceptive interpretation is more salient for verbs like *run* in (52a) than for those like *believe* in (53a). The verb *run* denotes change, whereas *believe* does not. Since the idea of *change* is intrinsically associated with the ideas of *transience* or *temporariness*, and *completion*, the use of a verb which denotes change (e.g. *run*) will make the completive interpretation more accessible than the use of a verb which does not denote change (e.g. *believe*). The processing effort involved in arriving at an interpretation which involves both change and completion is greater than the processing effort required for arriving at a completive interpretation of a verb

190

which already denotes change. Moreover, a speaker intending a non-completive reading may readily use the progressive only with process verbs, but not with state verbs. In other words, the speaker of (53a) does not have the same choice as the speaker of (52a), if he wants to indicate that the state of affairs described by the main clause is [-complete].

It seems reasonably clear that the choice between the perfective and the imperfective aspect is explained in relevance theory terms. The speaker who uses the perfective form guarantees that the optimally relevant interpretation will be one on which the transition from the state of not believing into the state of believing in ghosts is the intended reading. The word *when* indicates that the time at which the state of affairs of the main clause obtains is the time at which the truth conditions for the proposition expressed by the subordinate clause are guaranteed to be met. Therefore, the hypothesis that Macbeth's seeing Banquo causes his believing in ghosts is highly manifest and highly likely to be the first one to be considered by the hearer. The understanding of (53a) on which *Macbeth's seeing Banquo* immediately precedes and causes his *believing in ghosts* is more explicitly conveyed by the perfective in (53b) (*poverovati*, roughly: 'begin to believe'), than by the imperfective in (53c). The former is understood as laying emphasis on the causal connection. The latter also allows for a reading on which the event in the *'when*-clause' (immediately) precedes *and causes Macbeth's believing in ghosts*. But, in most readily conceivable contexts, the speaker who uses (53c) would also be taken to communicate the following assumptions: (i) *Macbeth's seeing Banquo* is not the cause of his believing in ghosts, and (ii) it is not the inception of *believing in ghosts* which is talked about. These assumptions would arise in the search for an interpretation which would offset the processing effort required for interpreting the utterance

191

with the imperfective. Had the speaker not intended any extra effects to be derived, he would have used the more economical utterance with the perfective. I now turn to some issues concerning situation type aspect.

Chapter Five

PRAGMATICS AND SITUATION TYPE ASPECT

The classification of verbs into situation types is based on the view that verbal predicates denote conceptual contrasts which fall into four neat classes (*states, processes, achievements,* and *accomplishments*) defined by the features of *change, duration,* and *delimitedness*. Other defining features, like *dynamicness* have occasionally been considered as definitional (Lyons (1977); Morris (1984)). While it is rather obvious that *dynamicness* is derivative upon change, the relation between complexity of change and duration poses considerable problems (cf. Bach (1981)). I take *duration* as a primitive.

Some version of the well known and fairly standard classification of verbal predicates according to the situation types they denote seems to me to be right (see Chapter two). But how the information about a predicate's membership of a particular situation type is stored and retrieved is far from clear. Most putative state verbs take the progressive construction quite happily, while process verbs are readily interpreted as achievements in the past simple tense, as well as in 'when-clauses', for example. Accomplishment predicates may allow for a reading incompatible with their definitional meaning in some linguistic contexts (*John will write a letter, moreover he'll finish it*), but not in others (**John wrote a letter, moreover he finished it*). This chapter considers some consequences of relevance theory for an explanation of these as well as some other related problems.

5.1   VERBS OF STATE

By way of introduction, consider a standard textbook characterisation of state verbs.

> The choice between 'state' and 'event' is inherent in all verbal usage in English. A state is undifferentiated and lacking defined limits. An event, on the other hand, has a beginning and an end; it can be viewed as a whole entity, and can also make up one member of a sequence or plurality of happenings... In fact, to speak more plainly, 'state' and 'event' are semantic rather than grammatical terms. Strictly, we should not talk of 'state verbs' and 'event verbs', but rather of 'state' and 'event' meanings or uses of verbs.
>
> (Leech (1975:4))

What exactly pertains to meaning and what to use, when it comes to defining state verbs? I will look at the issue in relevance theory terms, a framework which requires that the disjunction 'meaning or use' be rephrased as 'meaning and use', since the distinction between linguistically encoded and pragmatically determined aspects of utterance meaning is central to this theory.

In Chapter four I have argued that the progressive aspect grammaticalises reference to a particular event instantiating the property denoted by the verb. Can this account of the meaning of the progressive shed some light on the semantics of state verbs? The usual assumption is that it can, and in a straightforward way too. Since the progressive makes reference to events by part of its meaning, state verbs could be identified as those which cannot be used in this construction. This is what Lyons (as well as many other authors) seems to claim:

194

> *Stative verbs constitute the most important subclass of verbs that do not normally occur in the progressive aspect in English. Stativity, then, is lexicalised, rather than grammaticalised in English: it is part of the aspectual character of some verbs... The incompatibility of stativity and progressivity is explicable, however, in terms of the language independent ontological distinction of static and dynamic situations.*
>
> (Lyons (1977:706-7))

Provided that the putative ontological distinction is really warranted, the explanation depends on the tacit assumption that every verb expresses a concept and is fully specified with respect to the situation type that it denotes. Not only does this position explain the incompatibility of state verbs with the progressive, but it also predicts it. The problem is that it predicts it wrongly since only a handful of English verbs are ungrammatical in the progressive. Certainly most of those which have the same temporal interpretation as *know* in the utterance *John knows / *is knowing maths* take the progressive quite happily, as illustrated by the examples in (1) ((2), (3), and (9) in Chapter four):

(1) a. Peter is being polite.

  b. John is living in Muswell Hill.

  c. Mary is loving the fruit salad.

The lack of an explanation for the exceptions to this, presumably defining, criterion, presents a problem for the classification, and one can try to solve it in two ways: (a) by finding other criteria which would hold more tightly, and (b) by characterising the meaning of the majority of so-called state verbs in some other way which does not absolutely preclude their use in the progressive. This second line I will try to pursue, but I propose to give some arguments against the first one first.

195

Lakoff (1965) gives his well-known classificational criteria for state verbs, based on their restrictions on their occurrence in the following grammatical constructions: (a) the progressive, (b) the imperative, (c) adverbials like *deliberately, reluctantly, well, enthusiastically* etc., (d) the complements of the verbs *persuade* and *remind*, (e) the *do-something* construction, (f) *for*-phrases, and (g) use with *instead of*. Lakoff claims that state verbs are incompatible with all of these, as illustrated below.

(2)   a.   *John is knowing that.

          b.   *Know that I am here.

          c.   *John knew the answer reluctantly.

          d.   *I persuaded John to hear the music.

          e.   *He knew the answer though Bill told him not to do so.

          f.   *John knew that fact for his teacher's sake.

          g.   *I heard the music instead of looking at the painting.

Two objections to these tests are of interest here. First, even if the tests in (2) have a diagnostic value, they do little in the way of explaining the differences in the behaviour of those verbs that satisfy them. Second, not only are there verbs that one would want to call state verbs and which are perfectly acceptable in the progressive and the imperative constructions, but the criteria (c) to (g) do not correlate only with lack of dynamicness.

These are the sorts of problems that a plausible and well developed characterisation of state verbs (and situation aspect, more generally), ought to be able successfully to address. Sag (1973:85) examined Lakoff's tests and sceptically concluded: 'So many factors are

involved, in fact, that an accurate account of the facts is beyond the scope of ... any ... theory hampered by its reliance on discrete categorisation.' In what follows I will try to dispel Sag's scepticism by arguing that relevance theory makes it possible (a) to show why and how state verbs are to be distinguished as a class, and (b) to accommodate the apparently problematic examples.

5.2 PROCESS VERBS AND ELIMINATION RULES

I would like to pursue the possibility (S&W (1986)) that with verbs, like with other lexical elements, the information about meaning is stored in the three types of entries, and that this is significant for the classification of state verbs versus others. Consider (3):

(3)   a.   A killed B on Sunday.
           b.   B died on Sunday.

The lexical entries for the concepts *killed* and *died* contain the information that they are verbs in the past tense. The encyclopaedic entries include assumptions about instruments used for killing, potential causes of death, etc. Information about these verbal predicates is, arguably, represented in the logical entries for these concepts, associated with the meaning postulate-like elimination rules in (4) and (5):

(4)   'Kill' elimination rule
        Input: (X - kill - Y)
        Output: (X - action of a certain type - Y)

(5)   'Die' elimination rule
        Input: (X - die - Y)
        Output: (X - event of a certain type - Y)

197

Let me call the elimination rules in (4) and (5) *action rule* and *event rule*, respectively. (Both *kill* and *die* satisfy the condition for eventhood, in so far as they denote properties which involve change. It is to be noted that the term *event* is often used more narrowly to include only delimited change, and cover accomplishment and achievement predicates to the exclusion of process ones. The term *action* is intended to indicate agentivity.) It seems quite plausible to argue that the difference in the defining linguistic meanings of state verbs as opposed to event verbs can be expressed just in terms of the availability of elimination rules like (4) and (5) (referred to as *action/event rules* hereafter). Event verbs would be defined as those whose logical entries contain *action/event rules*. Some of the so-called state verbs would be defined as unspecified with respect to action/event rules (*live, feel, stand*). The compatibility of these verbs with the progressive would then appear to be pragmatically determined: the comparative compatibility of a given verb with the progressive would depend on whether that verb denotes a property which is readily thought of as instantiable by an event. The dynamic meaning of verbs like *feel* in *He felt a sharp pain in his knee*, would also be explained pragmatically, in terms of a process of inferential enrichment driven by the principle of relevance. Other state verbs like *contain, own* etc, which cannot appear in the progressive, could plausibly be characterised by *state rules* in their logical entries, of the same kind as the *action/event rules* illustrated in (4) and (5). The account proposed would have the advantage of maintaining the intuitively appealing binary distinction between event verbs and state verbs, without the requirement that all verbs be characterised positively, by the necessary presence or necessary absence of features like *stativity*. This is precisely the sort of account which I believe to be correct. On this approach, the non-dynamic meaning of the great majority of the so-called state verbs could be seen as pertaining solely to the encyclopaedic entry, and not the

198

logical entry which contains information about the necessary content of the concept. The assumptions about the lack of dynamism, etc., associated with verbs like *live, wait, expect, feel* and many others, are stored as highly manifest in the encyclopaedic entries for these concepts. They are part of the conceptualised meaning of the verb, but not a necessary part of it. They are available as assumptions in the context against which other facets of the meaning are interpreted. Since their place is in the context, they can be, more or less easily, cancelled out, as in the progressive, when the properties they denote are talked about as instantiated in the form of events. However, if this proposal is to deserve further consideration, a number of problem examples, pointed out by Sag (1973), need to be accounted for.

5.3 RELEVANCE THEORY AND TESTS FOR STATE VERBS

Sag (1973) gave a series of examples showing that Lakoff's tests are inadequate and put forward his sceptical conclusion mentioned earlier. I will argue that given (a) the characterisation of state verbs proposed above, (b) my analysis of the progressive and, (c) the framework of relevance theory, the problems for a discrete categorisation, receive a natural explanation.[17]

Let me mention (semantic) markedness again, this time in relation to the progressive of state verbs. I have argued in Chapter four that (semantic) markedness is to be explained in terms of the amount of processing effort required in the construction of assumptions necessary for the contextualisation of the utterance. The same account holds for the progressive of state verbs.

199

(6)   a.   John doesn't feel well.

       b.   John isn't feeling well.

(7)   a.   The baby resembles her mother.

       b.   The baby is resembling her mother more and more.

       c.   ?? The baby is resembling her mother.

(8)   a.   Antoinette understands Russian.

       b.   Antoinette is understanding Russian better and better.

       c.   ?? Antoinette is understanding Russian.

All the information regarding the kind of situation that predicates with *feel, resemble* and *understand* can be used to denote is stored in the encyclopaedic entries for the corresponding concepts. All three are readily used in predicating properties like *feel well, resemble one's mother* or *understand Russian* as relatively stable nondynamic conditions of their subject referents ((6a), (7a) and (8a)), and all three can be conceived of as instantiated in the form of events. The meaning of the progressive is to be defined in terms of reference to an event instantiating the property denoted by the predicate, and the predicates in (6) to (8) take the progressive. However, *feel well* does so more readily than the predicates *resemble one's mother* and *understand Russian*, acceptable only in (7b) and (8b), respectively, with explicit indications of change (*more and more, better and better*), but not in (7c) and (8c), which seem marginal at best. In terms of relevance theory, the difference in the degree of stylistic markedness between the progressive form of *feel*, on the one hand, and *resemble* and *understand Russian* on the other, would n⌀ot be seen as a difference in the grammaticalisation of the degree of *stativity* or *dynamicness* in the

meanings of these verbs. It would, I believe, be explained as a difference in the accessibility of contexts in which talking about *feeling*, *resembling* and *understanding* as instantiated in the form of events achieves adequate contextual effects. Thus, (7c) and (8c) are marginal because they require (or at least may require) too much processing effort on the part of the hearer to construct the assumptions necessary for the contextualisation of the utterance. The adverbials *more and more* in (7b) and *better and better* in (8b) function as contextual clues. They make it possible for the hearer to access the right contextual assumptions at lower processing cost than would otherwise be required. Similarly, *always* in (9), and *something* in (10), facilitate the accessing of assumptions required for arriving at the intended interpretation.

(9)   Mary always knew the right answer, which I couldn't ever do.

(10)   Mary knew the right answer, which was something I couldn't ever do.

The words *always* and *something* respectively, make it more manifest to the hearer that the predicate *know the right answer* is used here loosely to represent something like *produce evidence of knowing the right answer*. An explanation can also be given for (11) to (14) in which *all* is noticeably better than *what*.

(11)   All/?What Harry did to get himself shot was resemble a Nazi.

(12)   All/?What Margo did to win a trip to Miami was know who fought the battle of Fallen Timbers.

(13)   All/?What Mary did to get herself arrested was owe the
        cop some money.

(14)   All/?What you have to do to get busted is have a lid in
        your glove compartment.

The contribution of the quantifier *all* to the interpretation of utterances
of the type *All X did ...* is that it gives rise to the implicature: *X didn't
do much*. If the speaker intends to convey simply the idea: *The only
thing that X did ...*, there are more economical ways of doing so: *What
X did ...*, or *X did Y and ..., Z happened to X because he did Y* etc.
But, why would these be more economical than the more explicit *All X
did ...*? In relevance theory terms, they would be more economical
precisely because they are less explicit. The use of a redundant item
(redundant in that it explicitly expresses some meaning which would be
taken as part of the explicit content of the utterance even in the
absence of that item) increases processing effort. Implicatures like *X
didn't do much ...* are derived in the process of interpreting the
utterance for relevance. The extra amount of effort involved in
processing the more explicit utterance is offset if it gives access to some
effects. So, when the hearer has processed: *All John did to get shot*, he
will have formed the hypothesis: *John didn't do much to get shot* as an
implicature, i.e. as an assumption which the speaker may have
intended to communicate by using a more explicit form than was
necessary to express the proposition conveyed by his utterance. The use
of a non-agentive verb in the continuation: *was resemble a Nazi*, only
strengthens the implicature communicated by the first part of the
utterance, by virtue of implicating something like *John did patently
nothing to bring about the state of affairs described in the first conjunct.*

202

Consider the present perfect and the verb seem in (15) and (16), respectively:

(15) a. *The baby is resembling her mother at the moment.

b. ?The baby's been resembling her mother for a month now.

(16) a. *Mary is wanting something.

b. Mary seems to be wanting something.

The present perfect and the verb *seem* point to certain characteristics of events. The first relates the past and the present, while the second one highlights the role of perceptible evidence of the state of affairs described in the complement clause by its lexical meaning. Since the progessive points to instantiations of properties, i.e. to events in the real world, it gives rise to the overtone of limited extension in time and indicates the availability of perceptible evidence of the event. Thus, both the present perfect and the verb *seem* may make it easier for the hearer to process the progressive for contextual effects. The same kind of explanation holds for the examples below.

(17) a. Nowadays the kids are wanting us to bring them toys.

b. *The kids are wanting us to bring them toys at the moment.

(18) a. John is owing a lot of money to the company these days.

b. *John is owing a lot of money to the company at the moment.

203

In the absence of contextual indications to the contrary, the progressive construction in the present tense is taken to refer to an instantiation of the property denoted by the predicate as simultaneous with the present conceived more or less loosely (i) as some relevant period of time including the time of communication, or (ii) as the time of communication proper. The adverbial *nowadays*, which explicitly refers to the former, hardly poses any constraints on the temporal interpretation of the utterance. It points to the broader idea of the present as the temporal context against which the utterance is to be processed for relevance, without thereby excluding the possibility that the property denoted by the predicate is being instantiated at the time of communication, but also without requiring that it be so. It is, therefore, quite natural that some predicates may denote properties whose instantiations are easier to interpret as relevant when talked about loosely and construed as obtaining at the present in the broader sense indicated by *nowadays*, than when they are described as anchored to the time of communication proper. Consider (17b), for instance. The verb *want* is normally taken to denote a disposition rather than an event. The effect of the progressive will be to highlight the relevance of the observable manifestations of the property, limited extension in time, etc. It is easier to contextualise the utterance which points to the relevance of observable manifestations of *the children's wanting toys* over some more inclusive period of time, as indicated by *nowadays*, than the corresponding utterance with *at the moment*. The reason may be that (17b) doesn't give rise to any contextual effects which wouldn't be communicated more economically by the utterance with the simple: *The children want us to bring them toys at the moment.* By using *nowadays* the speaker may try to draw attention to the kids' behaviour over some period of time (the present in the broader, loose, sense) as in (17a), and weakly communicate a range of assumptions: *It is difficult to fulfil one's children's wishes, Children are very persistent in asking*

204

for what they want, Children are a nuisance, etc. However, an account on which all these arise as implicatures which the hearer derives in search of what the speaker intended to communicate by talking about *wanting* as instantiated, predicts that (17b) should be appropriate in some suitably convoluted context, though not an easily accessible one. The same kind of explanation accounts for the utterances in (18).

Not only state verbs, but also, more generally, future time adverbials with the progressive construction in the present tense, require the expenditure of considerable processing effort. In these examples the speaker is instructing the hearer to relate an instance of a certain property to the present, while explicitly locating its occurrence in the future. The future time adverbial indicates that the event is predicated of present time only loosely, and, in English, the conflict is resolved by implicatures about the future occurrence of the event being predictable at the time of communication: *the event is arranged already, there are indications that its occurrence is on the way,* and others as well. As G&W (1982) point out, the possibility of using the progressive present with future time adverbials like *tomorrow* is rather exceptional, and lacking in Spanish, which also makes a distinction otherwise very close to the simple-progressive one of English. So, if a state verb, i.e. a verb which does not necessarily denote a type of event, takes the progressive present with future time adverbials (like *tomorrow*), requiring more processing effort than the use with any present time adverbials (such as *nowadays* or *at the moment*), it will predictably be acceptable with these as well. The progressive present of *hear* in (19a) may easily be taken to indicate that the future instance of *hearing what the opponents have to say* is already arranged.

205

(19) a. Tomorrow I am hearing what our opponents have to say.

b. At the moment I am hearing what our opponents have to say.

c. Nowadays I am hearing what our opponents have to say.

(20) a. Nowadays many conservatives are expecting Major to win the next elections.

b. At the moment many people are expecting the conservatives to win the next elections.

c. *Tomorrow John is expecting Major to win the elections in 1992.

It is to be noted that *hearing what one's opponents have to say* is quite compatible with the idea of prearrangement. The use of the present tense form is justified precisely because it gives rise to this assumption, which, if the speaker had used the *will + be -ing* construction, would be lost (unless the whole utterance were made more complex, and the implicature communicated by (19a) were made explicit, thus demanding greater expenditure of processing effort). But other verbs, like *expect* in (20c) are very difficult to interpret in this use. What could (20c) be taken to mean? That on the following day there will occur an instance of John's entertaining certain expectations regarding the elections in 1992, and that this event is somehow prearranged and already on the way. That is very difficult to envision. I assume that (20c) would be better in the context of John's behaviour regarding the election being consciously planned, with the utterance being used loosely, say as: *Tomorrow, it's John's turn to pretend that he is expecting Major to win the next election.* It should also be noted that (20c) cannot be used felicitously merely with the import of *Tomorrow John will be expecting* ... , for it would invariably run against the principle of relevance.

206

Informally speaking, the principle of relevance requires two things: (a) that the utterance be relevant enough to be worth processing, and (b) that the hearer should not be put to a greater expenditure of processing effort than is necessary t¢o arrive at the intended interpretation. Since, in this case, the use of the *will + be -ing* construction would invariably require less effort than the progressive present form, (20c) would still not be consistent with the principle of relevance (more precisely, with the second part of the presumption of optimal relevance).

I would like to mention another two points regarding the divergent behaviour of state verbs. The first one concerns the unacceptability of the verb *be* in those (so-called) reduced relatives in which its *-ing* form is not interpretable as an elliptical progressive, as the contrast between (21b) and (22b) illustrates:

(21)   a.   *Anyone who is being a communist will be shot.

        b.   *Anyone being a communist will be shot.

(22)   a.   Anyone who is being stubborn will have his teddy bear taken away.

        b.   Anyone being stubborn will have his teddy bear taken away.

All the other state verbs readily occur in reduced relatives like (22b). So, *be* differs from other state verbs in this respect. An explanation which seems quite plausible to me is that the verb *be* is unacceptable in reduced relatives like (21b) because it does not make a contribution to the propositional content of the utterance. One might as well say: *Any/Every communist will be shot.* What about those verbs which are ungrammatical in the progressive?

207

(23) a.   *The box which is containing five chocolates is on the table.

b.   The box containing five chocolates is on the table.

c.   *The box is containing five chocolates.

(24) *John is having a good book.

On the approach proposed here, the progressive of verbs like *know*, *contain*, *own* and some others, which are truly ungrammatical in this construction, is explained as precluded by a *state rule* in the logical entry of each of these verbs.

I have proposed an account on which (a) the majority of the so-called state verbs should be seen as unspecified with respect to eventhood, as their aspectual character is underdetermined by their conceptual content, (b) the eventhood of an event verb is plausibly treated as part of the necessary content of the concept denoted by that verb, in terms of a meaning postulate/inference rule, and (c) there are also a number of verbs which are marked as stative by rules of this type. Let me now consider the feature [+ complete] associated only with event predicates.

5.4   EVENT VERBS AND DELIMITEDNESS

In Chapter four, section 4.8, I have tried to relate the aspectual choice of the simple in English and the perfective of Serbo-Croat by pointing out the difference in the linguistic meanings of these aspectual categories and their consequences for aspectual choice in these two languages. This section looks at the meaning and use of the simple aspect in relation to the underdeterminacy thesis (see Chapter one).

Process verbs readily receive a completive (i.e. delimited) understanding in utterances such as (25), and in others as well:

(25) In the afternoon, when he goes to school, John will meet his friends.

The form *goes* in the '*when*-clause' is not taken to denote an ongoing process, but a complete (i.e. delimited) event, the change from *John's being at home* to *John's having left for school* (with the implication that he will get there). Consider the contrasts in (26) and (27):

(26) a. Mary cried (for hours) when she broke the flower pot.

b. Mary was annoyed when she broke the flower pot.

(27) a. John hit the policeman and ran.

b. John heard the alarm and ran for miles trying to find the shelter.

The verb *cry* in (26a) is ambiguous, as indicated by the adverbial in brackets. On one reading, the verb is inchoative, it describes the onset of the process. On the other reading, enhanced by the adverbial *for hours*, it is just the process that is being described. The latter reading of (26a) is typical of state predicates in sentences like (26b). The examples in (27) also illustrate the indeterminacy of process verbs with respect to completion. On the preferred interpretation, (27a) is fairly accurately paraphrased as *John hit the policeman and started running*, while the predicate *ran for miles* in (27b) clearly denotes an ongoing process (in the past), but the moment of hearing the alarm is not

209

necessarily construed as the onset of running. Examples like these strongly suggest that verbs standardly included in the class of process verbs, are, in fact, unspecified with respect to delimitedness. In other words, the presence of the action/event rule in the logical entry for a verb, automatically triggers, as it were, the availability of two conceptual formats; all change can be represented either (a) as delimited (i.e. discrete, complete, etc.) or (b) as non-delimited (i.e. non-discrete, incomplete, etc.). Languages differ with respect to how systematically their verb systems reflect this universal conceptual distinction. Slavonic languages do so very regularly, English less so, since the linguistic meaning of process verbs of English does not specify how the concepts they denote are marked for the feature of delimitedness. The bracketed '-' sign in Table X (Chapter two; p. 76) could have been left out. The intuition that *run* and *cry* denote [- complete] situations (rather than onsets of situations) is based on the interpretation of these verbs in the immediately accessible context. If one thinks of the verb *run*, the first idea that comes to mind is one of process or continuous activity. In other words, the intuition that the verb *run* is a process verb (and not an achievement verb) is to be explained in pragmatic terms. The decoding of the verb *run* will provide the information that (that)this verb denotes an *action/event*. Depending on the context, the verb may then be understood as referring to an ongoing process, or its linguistic meaning may be enriched such that the verb is understood as referring to a momentary change of state from *not running* to *running*. The situation with transitive verbs taking singular count NPs as their direct object is somewhat different. The presence of a singular count noun as the direct object is normally assumed necessarily to induce the feature [+ complete]. Such VPs are referred to as predicates of the accomplishment type.

Accomplishment VPs seem clearly to fall into two groups. The first one includes those predicates which seem unspecified with respect to completion, like process verbs (eg. *play the sonata* in (28a)). The second group includes those which are, apparently, unambiguously delimited.

(28)   a.   Mary played the sonata.

         b.   Mary was very nervous. She played the sonata for a while, but had to stop when she was half way through.

(29)   a.   They built the bridge.

         b.   *They built the bridge for three years.

The simple form of the predicate *play the sonata* strongly invites a completive interpretation. The verb *play* may denote either discrete or continuous change, while the NP with the count noun *sonata*, refers to a delimited object. What sort of knowledge about change in a discrete object may be relevant? First, it may be relevant that a certain process applies to an entity to some degree. Second, it may be relevant that the process affects the entity as a whole. Why does one tend to assign the latter interpretation to predicates like *play the sonata*? The answer lies with people's disposition automatically to maximise the relevance of utterances. Crucially, the information that a process affects an entity as a whole entails that it affects its parts. In other words, *Mary has played (the whole) sonata* entails *Mary was playing the sonata*, but not the other way round. Other things being equal, information about a process applying to an object as a whole, will be more relevant. Clearly, *Mary (has) played the sonata* is a more economical way of communicating that *Mary was engaged in the activity of playing the sonata, and she played the whole piece*, than some

more elaborate utterance, such as this one, would be. Of course, in some contexts the information that *Mary played only part of the sonata*, may be more relevant, in which case the predicate *play the sonata* receives a non-delimited reading, as in (28b), or the speaker may want to point out assumptions about the ongoing activity itself as relevant, and the progressive is the obvious form to use, as in (30a).

(30) a. Mary was playing the sonata. The lights went out.

  b. Mary played the sonata. The lights went out.

The first utterance in (30b) would normally be taken to suggest that *Mary played the whole sonata*. Also, the operation of the principle of relevance explains why the event in the second utterance is typically construed as subsequent to the event in the first one. When a sequence of completed events is being related, the assumption that the order in which they are talked about corresponds to the order in which they occur, will characteristically be the most manifest one when the utterance is processed in the immediately accessible context. Once the hearer has assumed that the speaker is talking about a temporally ordered sequence of states of affairs, the assumption that the temporal ordering of these states of affairs corresponds to the order in which their mental representations are constructed, will also be the most manifest one in many contexts. Two possible exceptions are those cases in which (a) there are indications in the context that the temporal order does not matter, or (b) there are highly manifest (and even explicit) indications that the order in which the events are talked about is not the one in which they occurred.

(31)   A: Did you have a busy day?

             B: Yes, I fed the cats, worked on my paper, made pancakes, played football, went to the launderette, and wrote a couple of letters.

(32)   John lost his balance and fell. He slipped on a banana skin.

The speaker B in (31) is giving a list of his activities on a particular day. On the one hand, nothing much follows from the fact that B first did one thing rather than another. On the other hand, A's question does not suggest that the order of the events in time is relevant. By contrast, it is a matter of common knowledge that losing one's balance precedes and causes one's falling down. When the two events are talked about in the same sentence, as in (32), they will be understood as part of one and the same occasion on which *John first lost his balance and then fell.* The second sentence in (32) is about the event which is, in the light of our encyclopaedic knowledge, normally taken as causing loss of balance, and falling down. But why is the ordering of events in time more constrained in conjoined clauses than in individual sentences? Consider (33).

     (33)   ??John lost his balance, fell down, and slipped on a banana skin.

Blakemore (1987) argued that the processing of conjoined propositions is different from those expressed by individual sentences in that a conjoined proposition signals that the propositions which it is made up of have contextual effects in virtue of being conjoined, whereas a proposition expressed by an independent sentence is independently processed against the context. *John slipped on a banana skin* is perfectly acceptable in (32), where it is taken as an explanation for

213

John's losing his balance and falling down. In order to contextualise the conjoined proposition expressed by (33), the hearer must first establish the temporal relation between the states of affairs described by the conjuncts, as it is part of the propositional content of the complex proposition expressed by the utterance. For example, *John fell and the dog bit him* and *The dog bit John and he fell* will obviously be taken to describe different states of affairs. The order of occurrence of the events in (33) strongly suggested by the order in which the events are talked about, runs counter to the one favoured in the light of common knowledge about the causal and temporal relations between events such as *slipping, losing one's balance* and *falling down*. In other words, the difficulty in interpreting (33) is due to conflicting processing instructions (cf. Carston (1990:19-20)). The problem does not arise in (32) because the proposition 'John slipped on a banana skin' is here contextualised independently of the preceding two, although these are used as contextual assumptions. What about the possible temporal relations between the events in (34)?

(34)   Mary played the sonata. The lights went out.

The interpretation on which the first sentence in (34) is about Mary's playing the sonata as part of the programme, and the event of the lights' going out is construed as preceding Mary's performance would proobably be ruled oout by considerations of relevance. Whatever the context, if the speaker wants to communicate that *the lights went out before Mary started playing*, there are more economical ways of doing it. On one possible, and readily accessible, reading, *the lights go out after Mary has finished playing the sonata*. But, crucially for my point, an interpretation of temporal inclusion of the event in the second sentence within the time span of the event in the first one is also possible, as shown in (35).

214

(35) Mary played the sonata for a while. When she was half-
way through the lights went out, and she had to stop.

What the example in (35) shows is that the delimited (i.e. completive)
meaning of accomplishment predicates like *play the sonata* is not
linguistically encoded, but is only the more salient (manifest) of the two
aspectual meanings available for all so-called process verbs. But, how
are those accomplishment predicates which, apparently, unambiguously
denote delimited events to be accounted for?

A number of accomplishment VPs (*build a bridge, write a letter,
make a cake* etc.) are putatively incompatible with *for X units of time*
adverbials regardless of the context, and fail other tests for non-
delimitedness as well. One good illustration was given in (29b). Here
are some more examples.

(36) a. */?John painted a picture for an hour.

b. */?John built a house for three years.

c. */?Mary made a cake for an hour.

d. */?Jane wrote a letter for ages, but didn't finish it.

What all the predicates in (36) have in common is that in each of them
the change denoted by the verb brings about the existence of the object
NP referent. I believe this to be quite significant. Consider the
contrasts between the pairs of utterances in (37) and (38):

(37) a. Mary played the sonata.

b. Mary was playing the sonata.

215

(38)   a.   John built the house.

        b.   John was building the house.

Both (37a) and (37b) are interpreted as entailing that *there is/was a sonata*, but only (38a), and not (38b), entails that *there is/was a house*. This is quite important. As the process of utterance interpretation involves the assignment of referents to referring expressions, the hearer processing the utterance for relevance will be driven to assume that for every referring expression with descriptive content (*house, cake, letter*) there is a referent which fully satisfies the description. In the examples (37a) and (37b) the (non)delimitedness of the change denoted by the verb does not interfere with the interpretation of referential expressions in the object NP. However, in (38), the object NP *a house* is freely construed as referring to an existing house only if the change denoted by the predicate is understood as complete. The point is that, if a completive reading were available for the predicate *build the house*, (38a) would potentially express two propositions with different truth-conditions depending on whether or not the event is construed as completed. If it were possible to find a context in which the events in (38a) and the like would receive a [- complete] interpretation it would be plausible to argue that with predicates of the accomplishment type the feature [+ complete] should be explained as pragmatically derived. However, the best that one can do is to find contexts in which the [- complete] reading is not really very odd. I will look briefly at some of them and I will suggest that the grammaticalisation of completion in accomplishment predicates is driven by pragmatics. Maximising the relevance of the utterance drives the hearer to choose the interpretation on which the conditions for assigning referents to referring expressions are fully met. With predicates like those in (36) this will be possible only if the event is construed as complete. As it seems patently impossible to find a context in which utterances like

those in (36) and (38a) would be fully acceptable with a non-completive reading, the conclusion which imposes itself is that the feature [+ complete] in these predicates is to be attributed to their linguistic meaning (i.e. to semantics rather than pragmatics). What the examples with accomplishment predicates do show is that pragmatic considerations may plausibly be assumed to have led to the grammaticalisation of the feature [+ complete] with accomplishment VPs.

(39)   a.   *John built a house for three years, but never finished it.

      b.   */?John built the house for three years, but never finished it.

Assuming that the definite article functions as 'an indication that the conceptual representation to be assigned is accessible at no unjustifiable processing cost' (Kempson, forthcoming), an obvious explanation for the slight, but, according to some native speakers, clearly noticeable.

The difference in the acceptability of (39a) and (39b) suggests itself. As the definite article indicates that the referent is readily accessible, in those utterances in which the very existence of the referent is contingent upon the change denoted by the verb, the use of the definite article in the object NP will reduce the sense of the object referent's being contingent upon the change, and the non-delimited reading should be at least somewhat less odd. This seems to be true. If (39b) is bad, (39a) is certainly worse. Also, according to the native speakers I have asked for judgements, the utterances in (36) seem worse than those in (39a).

The position of the adverbial *for x units of time* also seems to make some difference to the acceptability of a non-completive reading for those accomplishment predicates which would normally preclude this interpretation.

> (40) (?)For three whole years he built the house, but couldn't finish it.

In (39), by the time the hearer starts processing the adverbial, he may already have derived a completive reading for the VP. In (40), however, the adverbial is processed first, and the hearer anticipates a non-completive reading of the predicate. In addition to this, the word *whole* in (40) indicates that it is the period of time in its entirety which is relevant, and the progressive is thus rendered a somewhat less manifestly appropriate form, as it would be felt to lay emphasis on the activity itself, and not on its outcome.

Native speakers' judgements about the acceptability of the utterances in (36) as they stand vary to some extent. So, given (a) what has been said about the significance of the availability of referents for object NPs, (b) the availability of forms which would unambiguously indicate non-delimitedness (the progressive, expressions like *spend X units of time -ing*, etc.), (c) the felicitous examples like (40), and (d) variation in people's judgements about dubious utterances such as those in (36), it seems reasonable to explain the grammaticalisation of completion in accomplishment predicates in terms of (a) and (b), in other words, to explain pragmatically why certain VP predicates grammaticalise completion. The examples (41) and (42) seem to provide support for this view.

(41)   a.   *John will write a letter, but he won't finish it.

            b.   *John wrote a letter, but he didn't finish it.

(42)   a.   John will write a letter. Moreover he'll finish it.

            b.   ?/*John wrote a letter. Moreover he finished it.

If the feature [+ complete] were not part of the semantics of the VP *write a letter*, then either (41a) or (41b), or both, should be acceptable in at least some contexts, which is not the case. But, if pragmatic considerations were not involved in the interpretation of accomplishment VPs in some crucial way, then (42a) ought to be as difficult (or impossible) to contextualise as (42b). The utterance (42a) is about a state of affairs in the future, the one in (42b) a state of affairs in the past. I have already drawn the distinction between two classes of accomplishment predicates: (a) those in which the process denoted by the predicate brings about the existence of the object referent, and (b) those in which there is a direct object whose existence does not depend on the process. Obviously, *write a letter* would normally fall under (a). But, strictly speaking, this VP could also be in group (b). For example, if the context includes the assumption that *John always does things by half and never finishes his letters*, then the speaker may choose to predicate the property *write a letter* of *John* without logically implicating the completion of the letter. What is important here is that the state of affairs described by the utterance should belong to a possible world, rather than to the actual world. The first utterance in (42a) describes a state of affairs in the future. This utterance would probably not be taken to assert that the end result of (the) *John's writing the letter* will be a complete *letter*, especially in the light of the speaker/hearer's knowledge about John's ways and habits. But, why then is this interpretation not available for the first utterance

in (42b)? (42b) describes a state of affairs in the past. When a process which in the normal course of events leads up to an outcome, is talked about as taking place in the future, the very fact that that process takes place may be as relevant as the idea that it will have the anticipated outcome. However, when an event of the same type is said to have taken place in the past, the interpretation on which the expected outcome was actually reached will also be more relevant. If the speaker intends to say that an event which normally results in the existence of a *letter* has actually occurred, without having been completed, he should say so explicitly. In this way the hearer would be spared the processing effort involved in considering an interpretation, and then rejecting it.

Chapter Six

CONCLUSION

I have taken some problems that arise in the use of aspectual categories and considered them in the light of a relevance theoretic pragmatics. The main conclusions of my analysis can be summed up in the following points. First, relevance theory makes it possible to explain aspectual choice while maintaining an austere semantics. Second, the relevance theoretic approach to aspect does not need to invoke subjectivity (or any other related notion) which is notoriously difficult to define. Three, the principled account of the semantic features definitional of the aspectual categories of English and Serbo-Croat makes it possible to give a natural explanation of the correspondence of the aspectual categories of the two languages in a number of uses. Four, the relation between language particular (simple-progressive, perfective-imperfective) and language universal (situation type) aspectual categories largely falls out from the grammaticalisation of (in)completion and/or reference to instantiation by the former. Five, the difference between *state verbs* and *event verbs* is captured by meaning postulate-like rules in the logical entries for the concepts which these verbs denote. Six, pragmatic factors (specifically the processing effort required for arriving at the speaker's intended interpretation of his utterance) explain why the aspectual contrast between process and accomplishment has come to be grammaticalised in some VPs rather than in others.

I have shown that explanations of problems relating to verbal aspect which invoke the notion of subjectivity do not hold, and that most examples put forward in support of the subjectivity thesis receive

221

a natural explanation in terms of the relevance theory distinction between descriptive and interpretive use. Most linguistic entities presumed to be expressive of subjectivity are readily explained as instances of interpretive use.

I have taken the view that the aspectual categories of English and Serbo-Croat can be explained in terms of the grammaticalisation of *completion* and *instantiation*. The progressive of English and the imperfective of Serbo-Croat grammaticalise lack of completion. The perfective aspect of Serbo-Croat grammaticalises completion, whereas the simple is unspecified with respect to this feature. Both the progressive and the perfective point indexically, as it were, to a particular event instantiating the property denoted by the verbal predicate, while the imperfective and the simple do not. The imperfective differs from the simple in that the simple is unspecified with respect to completion, whereas the imperfective has the feature [- complete]. I have argued that this characterisation of the linguistic meaning of aspectual categories of English and Serbo-Croat is sufficiently specific and adequate. The overtones that individual aspectual categories receive in use and the lack of strict correspondence between aspectual categories across languages are readily explained in terms of relevance theory.

The standard classification of verbal predicates according to the situation types they denote does not make it possible to explain the use of the predicates belonging to particular categories. I have proposed an analysis which uses S&W's distinction between three formats in which conceptual information can be represented, and I have argued that the distinction between state verbs and event verbs can be explained in terms of meaning postulates or inference rules in the logical entries of individual verbs.

My consideration of verbal aspect in the preceding chapters is very partial. I have focused on a restricted number of phenomena, argued against some approaches, and proposed an account in relevance theory terms. The analysis could be significantly substantiated in a number of ways. A more in-depth pragmatic account of a wider range of uses of aspectual categories could and should be given. The relation between aspect and other closely related categories also needs spelling out. This is especially true of the interaction of tense and aspect which I have touched on, as well as of the category of voice, which has not been mentioned at all. To give but one example, imperfectivity seems to correlate with emphasis on the role of the subject (cf. Morris (1984)). In Russian, only perfective verbs have a passive form, whereas in Serbo-Croat some imperfective verbs have a passive form while others do not. It seems plausible that this affinity between the passive and the perfective and its grammaticalisation in Russian could be explained pragmatically.

The framework could be applied to and tested on data from a greater number of languages. Some languages like Spanish make a distinction close to the simple-progressive one of English.

My treatment of aspect largely ignores other frameworks, such as cognitive grammar (cf. Langacker 1987)), Jackendoff's (1983; 1987) theory of concepts, various localist approaches (cf. Anderson (1973)), syntax (cf. Tenny (1987)), Word Grammar (Hudson (1984; 1990)), and others as well. A comparison of a number of analyses within different frameworks would probably give more interesting insights. This task would require a considerable fleshing out of the relevance theoretic account that I have made a start on in this thesis.

223

NOTES

1. The aspectual categories central to this study are exemplified and discussed at some length in Chapter two. My purpose here is merely to illustrate various possible distinctions that have been made. A reasonably detailed introductory overview is Comrie (1976). Ridjanovic (1976) gives an overview of the terms used in studies on Slavonic languages in general and Serbo-Croat in particular.

2. Intuitively, the idea of an individual occurrence of the event is more salient in (2a) than in (2c).

3. Whichever way the analysis goes, one has to account for the fact that the utterance has only one tense form, while two moments (or intervals) of time are referred to. So, the sentence has one tense, but the utterance apparently communicates two propositions and has two tenses. Rouchota (1991) gives a relevance theoretic account of the epistemic use of *will* in terms of higher level explicatures.

4. S&W (1986:38-46) give a detailed discussion of the notion of manifestness; *salience* is the closest non-technical term.

5. Comrie (1976) rejects this view. The contrast between aspectually unmarked verbs of Serbo-Croat with the imperfective ones supports the view that the imperfective encodes lack of completion (cf. Chapter four, section 4.6).

6. The verb *use* is illustrative in this connection. Consider the following situation: When one is on a bus one can be said to be *using* a ticket. One talks about this situation as a process, although it has many characteristics of a state. What makes one think of *using* as an event in this case is probably the idea that the state of affairs in question is temporary, that it involves a specifiable beginning (getting on the bus) and an end (getting off the bus). It should be noted that the verb *use* behaves like an event verb in utterances with the present simple, such as *Jane uses her dictionaries ...*, which are interpreted as habitual (or iterative). Thanks to Bas Aarts for drawing this example to my attention.

7. Comrie (1976:113) gives the example in Russian. The same point can be made by the Serbo-Croat translation in (12). Most examples (13) to (21) are taken (and/or adapted) from C.S. Smith (1983;1986).

8. I cannot attempt to do justice to Banfield's syntactic arguments here. I hope to show that whether these arguments hold good or not, they have no bearing on the analysis of aspectual categories like the progressive.

9. See Banfield (1982:206-7) for an accoount of anaphora which invokes the notion of subjectivity and the E node.

10. In Lyons' own words:

> Modern Anglo-American linguistics, logic, and philosophy of language has been dominated by the intellectualist prejudice that language is, essentially, if not solely, an instrument for the expression of propositional thought. This prejudice is made manifest in Katz's (1972, pp. 18ff.) defence of the principle of effability; in Lewis's (1972, pp. 205ff.) treatment of non-declaratives; in Dummett's (1973) sustained argument to the effect that, whereas languages might exist in which it is impossible to ask questions or issue commands, a language in which one cannot make assertions is inconceivable; in Chomsky's (1966, 1968, 1975) version of Cartesian, or neo-Cartesian, rationalism; in Fodor's (1978) formulation of the thesis that there is a universal language of thought, whose structure is more or less isomorphic with that of natural languages; and in many other influential works which, though they might differ considerably on a wide variety of issues, either pay no attention at all to the non-propositional and non-assertive components of language or play down their importance.
>
> (Lyons (1982: 103-4))

11. These examples are given here only by way of illustration. The interpretation and the conditions for use of the perfective and imperfective aspects are examined in more detail in Chapter four.

12. Banfield looks at utterances like (1). She observes that (1) is a contradiction, and gives a stipulative explanation.

> (1)   Though I think that [the fortunate girl]ᵢ will be here tomorrow, he said that [poor Winifred]ᵢ isn't due till Tuesday.

Arguably, in reported speech or thought the use of evaluative words like *poor* and *damned*, each of which expresses an attitude attributed to a SELF, 'must mean that the quoting speaker so assented to the quoted speaker's opinions that he "expressed" similar ones' (Banfield (1982:56). This presumably explains why (1) is a contradiction. And the attribution of the attitude expressed by the evaluative adjectives to the quoting speaker even when they appear only in the embedded clause of indirect speech follows from the principles *1E/1I* and 'Priority of SPEAKER'. In fact, both explanations are simply wrong. For example, the addition of *his* in the embedded clause as shown in (2) resolves the contradiction.

> (2)   Though I think that [the fortunate girl]ᵢ will be here tomorrow, he said that [his poor Winifred]ᵢ isn't due till Tuesday.

The possessive *his* in (2) indicates that the intended interpretation is the one on which the words *(my) poor Winifred* and, consequently, the attitude expressed by them, are attributed to the quoted speaker. So, the utterance (1) is not truly contradictory but somewhat difficult to process, because it is not clear who considers Winifred to be a poor girl. The temptation to derive the contradictory interpretation is purely pragmatically determined. All expressions of attitude are attributed to the most manifest subject of consciousness. In conversation and in utterances with the pronoun *I* the most manifest subject of consciousness will be the speaker, since there is no requirement that the quoted speaker's words should be reported, and the hearer's immediately accessible context does not (or may not) include assumptions which would support the reading on which the evaluative expression is to be attributed to the quoted speaker. The possessive *his* in (2) makes more

226

manifest the intended interpretation and reduces the amount of processing effort necessary for arriving at the intended interpretation. Both of Banfield's principles ('1E/1I' and 'Priority of SPEAKER') are entirely unnecessary, and their impact on utterance interpretation falls out entirely from considerations of relevance. Furthermore, there is nothing to block the interpretation on which the quoting speaker's and the quoted speaker's perspectives coincide. Other things being equal, the construal on which the speaker expresses both his own and the quoted speaker's attitude, view, judgement or perspective, may be highly relevant in the initial context in which the utterance is processed, and is, therefore, accessed unless precluded, either overtly (by *his* in (2)), or by some highly manifest assumptions in the existing context which would make this interpretation implausible (i.e. not relevant enough to be considered by the hearer).

13. The examples used in this section are taken or adapted from G&W (1982), unless otherwise indicated in the text.

14. The examples (22) to (34) are taken or adapted from Haegeman (1989).

15. I'm grateful to Lorna Gibb for drawing to my attention the difference between the periphrastic future time expressions of English and of French to my attention.

16. The use of the present simple of sports commentaries may seem similar to the use of this form in stage directions and directions in general, as in recipes, for example (e.g. *I peel the potatoes, put them in an oven proof dish, and ...*). I believe that these too are instances of interpretive use. However, in these cases the utterances are not used as interpretations of attributed thoughts, but as representations of desirable (i.e. relevant thoughts). I do not propose a detailed analysis here.

17. The examples (6) to (24) are taken or adapted from Sag (1973).

227

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen R. (1966), *The Verb System of Present-Day American English*. The Hague: Mouton.

Anderson J. (1973) *An Essay Concerning Aspect*. The Hague: Mouton.

Bach E. (1981), 'On time, tense and aspect: an essay in English metaphysics', in P. Cole (ed.), *Radical Pragmatics*, New York: Academic Press, pp. 63-81.

Banfield A. (1982), *Unspeakable Sentences. Narration and Representation in the Language of Fiction*. Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Bennett M. (1981) 'Of tense and aspect: one analysis', In Tedeschi and Zaenen (eds.) (1981), pp.13-31.

Blakemore D. (1987), *Semantic Constraints on Relevance*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Bolinger D.L. (1974), 'Concept and percept: two infinitive constructions and their vicissitudes', *World Papers in Phonetics, Festschrift for Dr. Onishi's Kiju*, Tokyo, pp.65-91.

Bull W.E. (1963), *Time tense and the verb*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

Burger A. (1969), 'Signification et valeur du suffixe verbal francais -e-', in Godel R. (ed.), *A Geneva School Reader in Linguistics*. Bloomingtom & London: Indiana University Press, pp. 232-244.

Carston R. (1985), 'Saying and implicating'. Paper delivered to the Cumberland Lodge Conference on Logical Form, April 1985.

Carston R. (1988) 'Implicature, explicature and truth-theoretic semantics'. In Kempson R. (ed.) (1988) pp. 155-183.

Carston R. (1989), 'Quantity Maxims and Generalised Implicature', *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics*, Vol. 2, pp. 1-32.

Clark W. (1991) 'Relevance theory and the semantics of non-declaratives'. University of London PhD thesis.

Clifford J.E. (1975), *Tense and Tense Logic*. The Hague: Mouton.

Comrie B. (1976), *Aspect*. Cambridge: CUP.

Comrie B. (1985), *Tense*. Cambridge: CUP.

Dahl O. (1985), *Tense and Aspect Systems*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Dowty D. (1979), *Word Meaning and Montague Grammar*. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Enç M. (1986), 'Towards a referential analysis of temporal expressions', *Linguistics and Philosophy*, Vol. 9, pp. 405-26.

Enç M. (1987), 'Anchoring conditions for tense', *Linguistic Inquiry*, Vol. 18, pp. 633-657.

Forsyth J. (1970), *A Grammar of Aspect: Usage and Meaning in the Russian Verb*. Cambridge: CUP.

Fries C.C.(1959), *The Structure of English*, London: Longmans, Green and Company.

Goldsmith J. and Woisetschlaeger E. (1982), 'The logic of the English progressive'. *Linguistic Inquiry*, Vol. 13, No.1, pp. 79-89.

Gorayska B. (1985), 'The Semantics and Pragmatics of English and Polish with Reference to Aspect'. University of London PhD thesis.

Haegeman (1989), '*be going to* and *will*: a pragmatic account, *Journal of Linguistics*, Vol. 25, pp. 291-319.

Hockett C. (1958), *A Course in Modern Linguistics*. New York: Macmillan.

Hopper P. (ed.) (1982), *Tense-aspect: Between semantics and pragmatics*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Hornstein N. (1977), 'Towards a theory of tense' *Linguistic Inquiry* 8, pp. 521-557.

Huddleston R.D. (1969), 'Some observations on tense and deixis in English', *Language* 45, pp. 777-806.

Ivić M. (1958), 'Sistem ličnih glagolskih oblika za obeležavanje vremena u srpskohrvatskom jeziku', *Glasnik Filozofskog fakulteta u Novom Sadu* III, pp. 139-149.

Ivić M. (1970), 'O upotrebi glagolskih vremena u zavisnoj rečenici. Prezent u rečenici sa veznikom *da*', *Zbornik za filologiju i lingvistiku*, XIII/1, pp. 43-54.

Ivić M. (1983), 'Načini na koje slovenski glagol ovremenjuje ponavljanu radnju', *Lingvisticki ogledi*, Beograd: Prosveta, pp. 37-56.

Ivić P. (1954-55), 'O vidu glagolskog oblika *budem*', *Naš jezik* VI, pp. 237-245.

Jackendoff R.S. (1983) *Semantics and Cognition*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Jackendoff R.S. (1987) *Consciousness and the Computational Mind*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Jespersen O. (1924), *The Philosophy of Grammar*. London: Allen & Unwin.

Jespersen O. (1909-1949), *A Modern English Grammar on Historical Principles*. IV, Copenhagen Munksgaard. (reprinted ed. in (1961), London: Allen & Unwin.)

Johnson M.R. (1981), 'A unified temporal theory of tense and aspect', in Tedeschi & Zaenen (1981) pp. 145-77.

Joos M. (1964), *The English Verb. Form and Meaning*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Kempson R. (1977), *Semantic Theory*. Cambridge: CUP.

Kempson R. (forthcoming), Language and Cognition: A Licensing Grammar.

Kempson R. (ed.) (1988), *Mental Representations*. Cambridge: CUP.

Kenny A. (1963), *Action, Emotion and Will*. London: Routledge.

Kucera H. (1981) 'Aspect, Markedness and t_o'. in Tedeschi and Zaenen (1981), pp. 177-191.

Kuno S. and Kaburaki E. (1977), 'Empathy and syntax', *Linguistic Inquiry*, Vol. 8, pp. 627-72.

King L.D. (1983), 'The semantics of tense, orientation, and aspect in English', *Lingua*, Vol. 59, pp. 101-54.

Lakoff G. (1965), 'On the nature of syntactic irregularity', Indiana University Ph.D. thesis.

Langacker R.W. (1987), 'Nouns and verbs', *Language*, Vol. 63.

Leech G.N. (1969), *Towards a Semantic Description of English*. London: Longman.

Leech G. (1975), *Meaning and the English Verb*. London: Longman.

Lyons J. (1977), *Semantics*. Vol.2. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lyons J. (1982), 'Deixis and subjectivity: *Loquor ergo sum?*', in Jarvella R.J. and Klein W. (eds.), *Speech Place and Action. Studies in Deixis and Related Topics*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., pp. 101-24.

McCawley J. (1971), 'Tense and time reference in English', in Fillmore C.J. & Langendoen D.T. (eds.) *Studies in Linguistic Semantics*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. pp. 97-113.

Morris R. (1984), 'Aspect, case and thematic structure in English'. University of London PhD thesis.

Mourelatos A. (1981) 'Events, Processes and States'. In Tedeschi P. and Zaenen A. (eds.), pp. 191-213.

Prior A. (1967), *Past Present and Future*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

231

Quirk R. (1978), 'Aspect and variant inflection in English verbs', *Language* 46, pp. 300-311.

Quirk R. et al. (1985), *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London: Longman.

Rouchota V. 'Epistemic modality and the *tha + verb* construction in Modern Greek'. Paper delivered at the Spring Meeting of the LAGB, March 1991.

Ryle G. (1949), *The Concept of Mind*. London: Barnes and Noble.

Sag I. (1973), 'On the state of progress - on progressives and statives'. In Baily C.J. and Shuy R. (eds.) *New Ways of Analyzing Variation in English*. Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C., pp. 83-95.

Saussure F. (1967), *Cours de Linguistique Generale*. Paris: Payot.

Smith C. (1981), 'Semantic and syntactic constraints on temporal interpretation', in Tedeschi P. and Zaenen A. (eds.) (1981), pp. 213-239.

Smith C. (1983), 'A theory of aspectual choice', *Language*, Vol. 59, pp. 479-501.

Smith C. (1986), 'A speaker-based approach to aspect', *Linguistics and Philosophy*, Vol. 9.

Smith N. V. (1981), 'Grammaticality, time and tense', Phil. Trans. R. Soc. London. B. 259. pp. 253-265.

Smith N. V. (1989), *The Twitter Machine*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Smith N. V. (1989), 'Observations on the pragmatics of tense', *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics*, Vol. 2, pp. 82-95.

Sperber D. and Wilson D. (1986), *Relevance: Communication and Cognition*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Stevanović M. (1969-1970), *Savremeni srpskohrvatski jezik* II. Beograd: Naučna knjiga.

Tedeschi P. and Zaenen A. (eds.) (1981), *Syntax and Semantics*, Vol. 14, New York: Academic Press.

Tenny C. (1987) 'Grammaticalising aspect and affectedness'. MIT PhD thesis.

Twaddell J.F. (1965) *The English Verb Auxiliaries*. Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press.

Vendler Z. (1967), *Linguistics in Philosophy*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Weir C.E. (1986) 'English gerundive constructions'. The University of Texas at Austin PhD thesis.

Wekker H. (1976), *The Expression of Future Time in Contemporary British English*. Amsterdam, North-Holland.

Whitaker S.F. (1983), 'The future progressive - an experiential approach', *IRAL*, XXI/2.

Whorf B.L. (1952), 'The relation of habitual thought and behaviour to language', in *Collected Papers on Metalinguistics*, Foreign Service Institute, Dept. of State, Washington, D.C.

Wilson D. and Sperber D. (1986), 'An outline of relevance theory'. *Encontro de Linguistas: Actas*. University of Minho, Braga, Portugal. (Also published in *Notes on Linguistics* 39, (July 1987)).

Wilson D. and Sperber D. (1988), 'Representation and relevance'. In Kempson R. (ed.) *Mental Representations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wilson D. and Sperber D. (1989), 'On verbal irony', *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics*, Vol. 1, pp. 96-119.

Wilson D. and Sperber D. (1990), 'Linguistic form and relevance', *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics*, Vol. 2, pp. 113-43.

Žegarac V. (1989), 'Relevance theory and the meaning of the English progressive', *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics*, Vol. 1, pp. 19-30.