The Loss of the Imperfective Aorist in Macedonian

Structural Significance and Balkan Context

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The preservation of the synthetic aorist and imperfect is characteristic of only two regions of Slavic territory: one is the relatively isolated pocket of Lusatian speakers in eastern Germany and the other is a large part of the South Slavic continuum. In the case of Lusatian, the limitation of aorists to perfective verbs and imperfects to imperfective verbs effectively reduces the synthetic preterite to a single paradigm with aspectually-based morphological variation (Marel 1989). On most of Serbo-Croatian linguistic territory, the aorist and imperfect are either obsolete or limited to certain lexical items (Spasov 1989–90).¹ It is only on Balkan Slavic territory—South Serbian, Macedonian, and Bulgarian—that both the subordinate aspectual distinction aorist/imperfect and the superordinate aspectual distinction perfective/imperfective must be kept distinct. Nonetheless, the interaction of subordinate and superordinate aspectual distinctions is not uniform on the whole of this territory, as was already observed by Dejanova (1966:58–59) and by Vidoeski (1962–63). Dejanova (1966:58) noted the tendency of Macedonian to use an imperfective imperfect where Bulgarian has an imperfective aorist, while Vidoeski (1962–63), as well as Peev (1987:251–52), noted that the imperfective aorist is obsolete, or at least highly restricted or uncommon, in much of the West Macedonian dialectal territory, but not in the east. In the course of my own fieldwork in Macedonia in 1973–74 I noticed that some members of my own generation (i.e., those born after the Second World War) were virtually incapable of producing or interpreting imperfective aorists (Friedman 1977:135). Nonetheless, the standard Macedonian grammar (Koneski 1967:423–25) that is still universally cited (Spasov 1989–90) treats the imperfective aorist as a living, albeit rare or restricted, part of the system, which it still is for older speakers, even from Western Macedonia (see also Usikova 1985:97–98). Thus in my earlier analysis of the Macedonian indicative (Friedman 1977) I treated the imperfective aorist as a viable part of the system. It is my intention here to examine the loss of the Macedonian imperfective aorist, which follows generational more than geographic lines. The usual replacement is an imperfective imperfect rather than a perfective aorist. As a consequence aspectual marking has shifted (or is shifting) from the imperfect to the aorist in Macedonian, with the aorist instantiating the perfective feature of closure at the paradigmatic level. The route of loss followed by this category in Macedonian is indicative of the semantics of subordinate aspect and the changes that are taking place in markedness relations and the hierarchy of aspectual features in the Macedonian verbal system. The nature of this shift is highlighted by a comparison with other languages of the Balkans, such as Bulgarian, Turkish, and Albanian.
Although a complete account of the debates concerning the meanings of the oppositions perfective/imperfective and aorist/imperfect are clearly beyond the scope of this paper, I shall give a brief overview of some of the work relevant to the discussion here. Fielder (forthcoming), following Timberlake (1982, 1985), characterizes aspect as referring to the temporal dimension of an event, i.e., the type of space it occupies, and tense as referring to the temporal location of an event. Timberlake (1985) gives a concise overview of types of approaches to aspect as operating on a scale involving oppositions concerned with differences in the quality or structure of time as open/closed (single event; cf. Lindstedt 1985) or simultaneous/sequential (two events; cf. Galton 1976) at one pole and characters of basic types of predicates such as atelic/telic (lexical; cf. Kůra 1983, Brecht 1984) or background/foreground (discourse; cf. Hopper and Thompson 1980) at the other. He assigns an intermediate position to structuralist approaches such as those of Forsyth (1970) and Jakobson (1932/1971), which treats aspect as a configuration of a predicate as whole or complete in (a juncture of) time.

In writing about Bulgarian, Aronson (1985), following Maslov (1959), considers simplex (unpaired, underived) imperfectives as grammatically and paradigmatically distinct from derived, paired imperfectives. According to Aronson, perfective verbs and their derived imperfectives form a lexically marked category that can be called ‘perfective’ (+P); within this category there is a grammatical, paradigmatic opposition between those forms marked as imperfective (+I) and those not so marked (-I), which are perfective in the usual sense. Underived imperfectives and biaxpectuals both stand outside this system and are -P. This in effect puts Bulgarian underived imperfectives outside the grammatical paradigmatic superordinate aspectual opposition. This system is represented graphically in Figure 1.

![Figure 1](image)

Aronson (1985:276), citing Forsyth (1970:18) and Stankov (1980:20), writes that the perfective seems to present an invariant meaning “expressing the action as a total event summed up with reference to a single specific juncture.” But, Aronson continues, given the variety of meanings carried by +P forms, given the fact that an invariant cannot be identified for -P forms, and given the tendency of underived imperfectives to develop into perfectives via biaspectuality, then perhaps -P is a formal rather than a semantic category. He then defines +P verbs as those with the formal opposition -I/+I and goes on to suggest that aspect in -P forms is strictly lexical and that +I forms are both formally and semantically marked. Chvany (1988), in her description of the Bulgarian preterite system in terms of universal notional categories as well as language-specific morphemes, tentatively identifies the feature shared by +P forms as [+DISCRETENESS] and suggests that +I may differ from -P forms in that the latter are marked [+CONTINUITY]. She also argues that the "stem extended with E [i.e., the imperfect and present] denotes the 'continuative' meaning, while 'non-continuative' forms connote temporally limited action, as an imperfective aorist does when placed in a narrative sequence of perfective aorists" (Chvany 1988:73). This can be interpreted as supporting the idea that the imperfect is marked for durativity. Giving a succinct summary of the debate between those who view the aorist/imperfect opposition as temporal and those who view it as aspectual, Chvany (1988:85) approvingly cites Lindstedt's (1985:279) statement "the opposition is temporal, and therefore aspectual; or aspectual and therefore temporal" as "a recognition that traditional terms are inadequate." She states that the question is whether reference (imperfect as present in the past) is taken as primary or whether some form of durativity (continuative in Chvany's terms) is basic, the former being the view of the temporals, the latter of the aspectualists.

This type of approach to Bulgarian aspect (see also Kuçera 1983) must, in my opinion, be modified for Macedonian. From a morphological point of view, Bulgarian verbs that are +P and -I are characterized by paradigmatic gaps that are filled in all the other types, e.g., the lack of a gerund. This corresponds to the same lack of a verbal adverb in corresponding Macedonian verbs. As we shall see, however, in the emerging system of Macedonian, perfective verbs are also characterized by the presence of an aorist paradigm, which is lacking in both derived and simplex imperfective verbs. Moreover, the various forms lacking in the perfectives can all be characterized as non-finite. In the aorist/imperfect opposition we have a gap in the finite verbal paradigm. Thus, even if the -P/+P opposition is taken as lexical (or lexicalized) it is nonetheless necessary to account for the Macedonian situation on the level of morphology and morphosyntax.

Turning now to the traditional definition of the Macedonian aorist/imperfect, the standard view of the aorist is exemplified by Koneski (1967:423), who writes: “So ova vreme se iskaživa minato dejstvo što go sfkame vo negovata završenost” [By means of this tense is expressed a past act that we grasp (understand) in its completion]. According to Lunt (1952:90), the action is viewed as having taken place before the moment of utterance and, unlike the
imperfect, the aorist does not specify contemporaneousness. Usikova (1985:95) writes that the aorist ordinarily expresses an action in its concrete entirety ("v ego konkretnoj celosti"). Proposed meanings of the imperfect in Macedonian, as in Bulgarian, can be divided into two principal groups: durativity or progressivity on the one hand and coordination or simultaneity on the other. Thus, for example, Koneski (1967:426) represents the first view when he writes: "So ova vreme se iskaživa dejstvoto što ni se prestataviva vo sveto oživjivanje, što go vospriemane kako izvesen tek, no go opfakame vo negovata izvršenost." [By means of this tense is shown (expressed) an action that is presented to us in its development, which we perceive (accept) as a certain course (flow) and which we do not encompass in its completion]. On the other hand, Lunt (1952:87) espouses the second view with the statement that the general meaning of the imperfect is that of "action viewed as contemporaneous with another moment in the past."

Thus in Macedonian the aorist is traditionally viewed as denoting a single, punctual, usually completed, event as a point advancing a connected narrative, whereas the imperfect denotes duration, coordination, an event in progress or background and not advancing the narrative.

Because of the similarities of meaning in the aorist and perfective, the imperfective aorist has always presented problems for analysis and classification. The imperfective aorist in Macedonian is mostly described in the dialectological literature. Koneski (1967:424) discusses the meaning only of repeated imperfective aorists, which describe events lasting a long time but presented as a series of repeated segments, as in (1) and (2):

(1) Nè jadè što nè jadè dodeka ne nè izde.
   'It ate us, and ate us until it had eaten us up.' (Galton 1976:160)
(2) Toj uši, uši, sedumnaest godina!
   'He studied and studied, for seventeen years!' (Lunt 1952:90)

Videzksi (1958:78) describes the imperfective aorist as denoting limited duration ("trajno dejstvo [koj] vo eden vremenski moment prestanalo da se vrati"). Golab (1960:61:160) treats the difference between the imperfective aorist and the perfective aorist as trajnost 'durativity' vs. momentnost 'punctuativity'; Hill (1991:142) writes that the imperfective aorist is used for durative or repeated actions that are completed, or at least over; and Hendriks (1976:222) suggests that the imperfective aorist is used due to lexical properties of individual verbs, as in examples (3) and (4), where the perfective of jadé 'eat' would require a direct object and the imperfective aorist sede 'sit' can be used because of time limit:

(3) Nie jadovme pred da dojde ti.
   'We ate before you came.' (based on Hendriks 1976:222)
(4) Tri dni sede.
   'He stayed for three days.' (based on Hendriks 1976:222)

As was indicated above, Lindstedt (1985) analyzes Bulgarian aspect at its various levels—morphological/paradigmatic, lexical, propositional, etc.—as a series of relations between openness (O) and boundedness (B). He writes: "Imperfective aorists represent the structure O(O) in its purest form" (Lindstedt 1985:178) and "[n] both the imperfective aorist and perfective imperfect, the aorist/imperfect opposition dominates the perfective/imperfective opposition (cf. Comrie 1976:32)—it can impose boundedness on non-boundedness or vice-versa" (Lindstedt 1985:171). Compare Galton (1976:154–55), who views the aorist as a tense denoting a fixed place within the past stretch of time and, when it is imperfective, as dwelling on the event itself, in temporary disregard of the succession, a duration in a series of succession. He views both aspect and tense as "grammatical relations of temporal categories," but tense as reflecting the "relation to the basic point of orientation" and aspect as reflecting "the fundamental properties of time itself—the contrast between the succession of changing events and the immutability of preserving states." If Lindstedt’s concept of "dominate" is equated with Galton’s concept of relative "depth," then it can be argued that Macedonian developments reflect the "strength" of the deeper/dominated category.

According to Guentcheva (1999:115), however, the Bulgarian underrived imperfective aorists, unlike their perfective counterparts, say nothing about achievement, while derived imperfective aorists specify an achievement without claiming that it was realized as such. 4 (Not being sequential, the imperfective aorist can refer to a specific interval that may overlap another.) She sees the basic meaning of the aorist as denoting a past event not in process but appearing the moment it is stated ("au moment où il est énoncé") and writes: "... de nombreuses caractéristiques attribuées à l’aoriste imperfectif comme ‘duré limitée’ (Galton 1976:163), ‘fait non attendu’ opposé à ‘fait attendu’ pour l’aoriste perfectif (Stankov 1976:61–71), de ‘fait isolé’ (Lindstedt 1985:231), ... ne peuvent pas être intégrées dans la valeur fondamentale de la forme verbale et doivent être considérées comme des effets de sens."

Fielder (forthcoming) accepts the basically aspectual nature of the aorist/imperfect opposition. In her view, the imperfect’s marking for durativity enables it to include or imply "a secondary orientation point (Reichenbach’s (1947) R[reference][time]) and thus perform tense functions. The aorist forms do not include a secondary orientation point, but rather co-occur with a bounded interval for their RT." The aspectual nature of the imperfect derives from its simultaneity with its reference point, as opposed to occurring prior to it, as is the case in resultative forms. I would argue, however, that tense is strictly the relationship of event time (ET) to speech time (ST) in Reichenbach’s terms—narrated event (E") to speech event (E") in Jakobson’s approach (1957/1971), and that relations to Reference Time necessarily involve aspect, resultativity, or some similar category (cf. Aronson’s 1991 modification of Jakobson’s schema). In discussing the difference between the imperfective aorist and the imperfective imperfect, Fielder adduces the following examples:

   ‘He worked this way for two days, without lifting his face from the table.
   He drew, he cut, he glued.’
(6) Toj *teže/teže otte njakoliko minuti, kato se borele sas sebe si, posle stana i tiščko se promakna do leglo i.
   'He lay for a few more minutes as he struggled with himself, then he got up and quietly crept over to her bed.'

In both examples, the duration requires imperfection while the limitation requires the aorist.

The treatment of such sentences in Macedonian constitutes an essential difference between it and Bulgarian. The Macedonian equivalents of (5) and (6) would require imperfective imperfects. The imperfective aorist would be rejected as obsolete or dialectal. Similarly, in his analysis of Bulgarian, Lindstedt (1985:169–70) adduces a series of examples illustrating differences in the admissibility of the imperfective aorist, the perfective aorist, and the imperfective imperfect in various contexts, where it can be seen that the imperfective aorist is required for limited duration but not permitted for completed duration:

(7) a. Tja pja pesen[a] tri minuti.
   'She sang a (the) song for three minutes.'

   *Tja pja pesen[a] za tri minuti.
   'She sang a (the) song in three minutes.'

   *Tja izpa pesen[a] tri minuti.
   'She sang a (the) song for three minutes.'

   Tja izpa pesen[a] za tri minuti.
   'She sang a/the song in three minutes'

   Tja pjeve pesen[a] za tri minuti.
   'She used to sing a/the song for three minutes'

   *Tja pjeve pesen[a] za tri minuti.
   'She used to sing a/the song in three minutes'

The imperfective imperfect ((7e, 7f)) can only be used with a habitual or unlimited (open) durational meaning. In the case of (7e), the openness could be specified with an adverb such as veče 'already' to mean she had already been singing the song for three minutes. A comparison with analogous Macedonian examples shows that the imperfective aorist is completely obsolete and that its meaning of limited duration is picked up by the imperfective imperfect.

   'She drank [the] beer for three minutes.'

   'She drank [the] beer in three minutes.'

   'She drank [the] beer for three minutes.'

   'She drank [the] beer in three minutes.'

   'She used to drink [the] beer for three minutes.'

   'She used to drink [the] beer for three minutes.'

In another example, Lindstedt (1985:181) illustrates the fact that in Bulgarian, the imperfective aorist must be used for certain types of sequential events, especially in contexts of limited duration:

(9) a. *Tja spele edin čas i započna da raboti.
   'She slept for an hour and began to work.'

   Tja spele edin čas i započna da raboti.
   'She slept for an hour and began to work.'

This is not the case in Macedonian, however, for which the reverse was true for some speakers:

(10) a. *Taa spele eden čas i počne da raboti
   'She slept an hour and began to work.'

   Taa spele eden čas i počne da raboti
   'She slept an hour and began to work.'

Other speakers were not willing to accept the combination of imperfect followed by aorist as it stood, but suggested as an acceptable alternative either turning the imperfective imperfect into a perfective aorist orta 'slept' or transforming the imperfective aorist into an imperfective imperfect počnulaše; in the latter instance, it was acceptable to have two imperfects describing sequential acts.

As I noted earlier, the loss of the imperfective aorist has been in progress for some time, a fact that I observed in the course of my fieldwork in Macedonia in 1973–74. I investigated the current situation in greater detail in Macedonia in October 1991. For this purpose I devised a questionnaire consisting of 37 Macedonian sentences containing a total of 41 imperfective aorists. Of these, 32 sentences were taken from Macedonian sources, four were translated from Bulgarian, and one from Old Church Slavonic. Informants were told that all the sentences were supposed to be in the past and were asked to correct any that contained mistakes. Most of the questionnaires were distributed in college classes, and thus the majority of respondents represented the youngest generation of educated speakers (39 born between 1962 and 1973). Also surveyed were four educated speakers born in the 1950’s and three born in the 1930’s, for a total of 46. In terms of regional distribution, 18 were born in the west, eight in the east and 18 in Skopje. Of the 79 parents born in Macedonia, however, only seven were from Skopje, 24 were from the east and 48 from the west. The total number of imperfective aorists was 1886 (41 occurrences times 46 informants). Of this total, about two thirds were replaced by imperfective imperfects, one quarter were accepted with imperfective aorists, about 7% were replaced by perfective aorists, and most of the remainder were replaced by imperfective presents (there were also five occurrences of ima perfects or pluperfects). The distribution of replacements and acceptances, however, followed generational lines more than regional ones. According to the number of imperfective aorists accepted, the informants could be divided into three groups:

1. Twenty-three informants, i.e., half of those surveyed, accepted fewer than five of the sentences. All but one of these were born after 1962; seven were from the east or with at least one parent from there. Seven informants (four west, two east, one indeterminate), i.e., a little more than 15% of those surveyed, rejected all imperfective aorists.
2. Thirteen informants accepted five to twelve sentences. All but one of these were born after 1965, and eight were born in or had at least one parent from the east.

3. Ten informants accepted 20–36 sentences. Five were born in the west before 1953, and three were born after 1968 in the east or with parents from there; one informant was from Gostivar, and one was a child of two of the informants in this group.

There was considerable variation in the number of speakers that found any given example acceptable with an imperfective aorist. Although only one sentence was rejected by all 46 informants, none was accepted by more than 23, i.e., by half of those surveyed. The ranges of acceptance were the following: one sentence by one and two informants, respectively; twelve sentences by six to nine informants; eighteen sentences by 10–13 informants; six sentences by 14–18, and one each by 20 and 23 informants.

In examining the data from the surveys, the question arises concerning what, if any, patterns can be discerned in the choice of which sentences or verbs favored shift to the imperfective imperfect, which to the perfective aorist, and which were more likely to favor retention of the imperfective aorist. At the level of morphology, there does not seem to be a clear correlation between stem class and choice of aspect. Approximately half of each stem category was represented in those sentences for which the imperfective aorist was deemed acceptable by 10 or more speakers. The proportions of stem classes in sentences favoring a shift to the perfective aorist were likewise equally representative.13 In terms of sentence-level aspect, it appears that telicity is the key factor in determining the likelihood of a perfective aorist vs. an imperfective imperfect substitution. Only four sentences showed a significant tendency for informants to shift the superordinate aspect to perfective and keep the subordinate aspect as aorist, and all were highly telic, viz. (11, 12, 13, 14), with 12, 16, 17, and 23 acceptances, respectively.14

(11) Povečev od desetina pati toj go pravi toa. (original in Andrejčin 1938:39)
   'He did it more than ten times.'

(12) Go zel po sebe momčeto, ta go nosi vo edna pusta pustelja. (Koneski 1967:423)
   'He took the lad with him and brought him into a barren wilderness.'

(13) Nejko gi izpraznuvna i napohnuva disagite nekolku pati. (based on Andrejčin 1938:39)
   'Nejko emptied and filled the saddle bags a few times.'

(14) Minogu ališta krojov. (based on Koneski 1949:289)
   'I sewed a lot of clothes.'

The shift of the subordinate aspect to imperfect occurred in every sentence, the number of informants varying from 17 at the low end to 44 at the high (22 sentences had 30 or more, 12 had 22–29, three had 17–18, viz. (15) as well as (12) and (14):

(15) Kazí ednaš, dosta go zavitkuva. (Iljosi 1966:60)
   'Say it already, you’ve beaten around the bush enough.'

Retention of imperfective aorist did not show any clear preferences, although it seemed that those examples most likely to be accepted by the largest number of speakers involved the verb jade, which, despite its prescription as imperfective in the three-volume dictionary, behaves like a biaspunctual (see Trunissen 1986) and also sentences such as (16), which are so frequently cited in both linguistic and pedagogical literature that this may have influenced their acceptability:

(16) A, ne treba, Boško, dosta pivme. (Koneski 1967:427)
   'Oh, it's not necessary, Boško, we've drunk enough.'

In his monograph on the Macedonian verb, Elson (1990) argues that the aorist is marked with respect to the imperfect on morphological grounds; namely that certain markers (stem vowels in other treatments) can occur only as indicators of the aorist (namely io, ū, ū, as in vidov, revit, ēvit), while the indicators used in the imperfect (i/č, ia, as in praveč, gledače) can also occur in the aorist (as in počuav, somlev), to which he adds as evidence the fact that the imperfect stem provided the basis for new forms, such as the imperfect i-form, whereas the aorist stem did not. In my earlier work, I argue that the imperfect is marked with respect to the aorist. The analysis was based in part on the fact that the aorist displays characteristics generally associated with (although not necessarily diagnostic of) unmarked forms—these include greater frequency and less morphophonemic regularity—and in fact on the fact that the imperfect is positively specified for durativity; the aorist lacks a subspecification. I argue in favor of durativity rather than coordination as the invariant meaning of the imperfect on the basis of examples in which the imperfect is clearly describing sequential action as in examples such as (17) and (18), to which can be added the evidence discussed in connection with examples (6) and (9b) above:

(17) Rabotnički igrače prvošištak vo Kosovska Mitrovica i ottamu se vratiti so dva boda.
   'The Workers [a soccer team] were playing big league ball in Kosovska Mitrovica and returned from there with two points.' (Friedman 1977:30)

(18) I, po edna godina se vratit od Kuban, kukurčeto go prodad vo tistot vo Voronež.
    Prvot rabot im vo dvodelnoj artel, potom preminov vo fabrika, nautiv za bravuar. (Solotov 1970:77)
    'And, after a year I returned from Kuban, sold the dog and went to Voronež. At first I was working in a carpenter shop, then I moved to a factory and learned to be a locksmith.'

As can be seen from the foregoing exposition, however, the Macedonian imperfective aorist is even more marginal than it was forty years ago, when Koneski and Lunt wrote the descriptions of Literary Macedonian that still serve as the primary sources of information today. Moreover, it is clear that generational lines are even more important than geographic in determining the degree of acceptability of imperfective aorist forms.15 In describing the current Macedonian literary language, it is essential to recognize that for most speakers, especially young adults (and presumably future generations), the imperfective aorist has become obsolete. For the language of these speakers, the imperfective aorist is
at best marked as both archaic and dialectal and thus has a place in their linguistic system that can be equated to a cross between the marked second singular of English (e.g., *thou goest*), which is universally recognized but never used except in ritual or ironic contexts, and such markedly dialectal (regional) constructions as *he might could go*, which are in common use within their local contexts but are unacceptable in the broader (especially written) literary standard. Thus, in a present-day description, the Macedonian verbal system must be bifurcated into conservative and innovating. The conservative system is that which I described in my monograph (Friedman 1977). But the complete absence of the imperfective aorist from the speech of some speakers combined with the indication that this is not a dialectal peculiarity but rather the direction in which the language is changing, necessitates a reassessment of markedness relations within the system.

In that system in which the Macedonian aorist is limited to perfective verbs, it is for all practical purposes marked for perfectivity, i.e., +P in Aronson’s terms, [+DISCREETNESS] in Chvany’s, some sort of boundedness or closure in systems such as those of Lindstedt and Timberlake. I would also argue that in Reichenbachian terms, the Macedonian aorist is limited to its RT (the equivalent of co-occurring with a bounded interval, in Fielder’s terms). On the other hand, the imperfect has the ability to occur with both perfective and imperfective verbs and can be used in all those contexts formerly reserved for the imperfective aorist, e.g., limited, general, and sequential duration in time. Thus the imperfect does not carry the aorist’s limitation to perfectivity; in Reichenbachian terms it need not correspond exactly to its RT, so that in its duration it can co-occur with the boundaries of its RT or within them. These ideas can be represented graphically in Figure 2.

Leaving to one side the problem of the modality and iterativity of the perfective imperfect, which is outside the scope of this work, it would seem that in the innovating Macedonian system the extension of the imperfect into areas formerly reserved for the aorist and the aorist’s exclusion from those areas has resulted in, or is at least leading to, a situation in which the imperfect’s durativity is its chief meaning by contrast with the marked perfectivity of the aorist. It would thus appear that in the Macedonian literary language at the end of the twentieth century the aorist could be treated as marked or becoming marked with respect to the imperfect.

An alternative view of the situation is provided by the above-mentioned framework proposed by Aronson (1985) for Bulgarian, which in effect puts underived imperfectives outside the grammatical paradigmatic superordinate aspectual opposition. In such a system, the imperfective and perfective could each be viewed as having a single past tense—descended from the imperfect in the former and the aorist in the latter—while the perfective imperfect would be treated as marked for a category such as manner (the intersection of aspect and mood, see Aronson 1977). The relation of the perfective imperfect to the imperfective imperfect would be regarded as a mere historical artifact rather than a morphological fact of the current system in need of integration into a complete account. Such a system is illustrated in Figure 3.
A comparison of Macedonian subordinate aspect to aspectual systems in other languages of the Balkans can cast additional light on its nature and functioning. I have already shown how Macedonian differs significantly from Bulgarian, its closest relative. I shall now examine the relationship to Turkish, which, among other things, is said to have influenced the Macedonian verbal system (e.g., Golč 1960). Basically, in both Macedonian and Turkish the aorist and imperfect are defined in virtually identical terms such as those given above in the discussion of traditional approaches. For example, the Turkish aorist (di-past) is defined by Kononov (1956:231) as denoting a single event completely finished by the moment of speech (corresponding to the Russian perfective past), while the imperfect in -yordu is said by Kononov (1956:231) to be used for an unfinished action taking place at a definite time in the past, and Kononov adds that it corresponds to the Russian imperfective past. T. Koschmieder (1953) also observed the correspondence between Slavic perfective and imperfective aspect and the Turkish paradigms in -di and -yordu. But what is of interest for this paper are those examples where the expected correspondence does not occur, for it is precisely in those cases that we can see those factors differentiating the Macedonian and Turkish aspectual phenomena and thus come to a deeper understanding of their respective markedness relationships. In a comparison of translations from one language into the other or from a third language into both, significant divergences from the expected correspondences do occur. Thus, for example, in the Macedonian and Turkish translations of Šoloxov's Russian novella Sud'ba čeloveka [The Fate of Man], aorists and imperfects constitute virtually identical percentages of the total finite verb forms in both translations (about 30% aorist and 15% imperfect). However, there are 45 examples out of about 300 where the correspondences are the opposite of those that would be expected—that is, one language's imperfect corresponds to the other language's aorist. Of these non-correspondences, there are 28 instances (i.e., more than 60%) in which a Macedonian imperfect corresponds to a Turkish aorist. In a collection of Macedonian short stories translated into Turkish (Zekeriyha 1967), we find similar percentages of past tenses, and of 42 non-correspondences in 36 instances (i.e., 85%) a Macedonian imperfect is translated by a Turkish aorist.

Typical examples of Macedonian imperfects corresponding to Turkish aorists generally involve durative qualification by adverbs such as Macedonian dolgo, Turkish uzun zaman 'for a long time' or contain explicit time limitations, as in examples (19) and (20).

(19) a. A zošteto mi tene tolku dolgo me barate? (Šoloxov 1970:33)
    b. Peki neden beni bu kadar uzun zaman aradin? (Šoloxov 1969:42)

(20) a. Tri meseci se milonaz. (Maleski 1969:101)
    b. Tam üçy se sesitler. (Zekeriyha 1967:13)

They all therefore represent the type of datival duration that in Bulgarian is rendered—often obligatorily—by an imperfective aorist. Since the imperfective aorist is obsolete in Macedonian, however, an imperfect must be used in such durational phrases. In the case of (21), however, we have the portrayal of an achievement in the course of its development, i.e., as an activity, since the village provides a telos (goal):

(21) a. Taka molčči našeguvavanje vo seloto. (Drakul 1969:28)
    b. Bóyše susarak kőyne indik. (Zekeriyha 1967:82)

"Then we went down silently into the village."

According to Guentcheva (1990:112-13), this is also a meaning of the Bulgarian imperfective aorist, and in fact the village could be taken as a spatial limitation that is the equivalent of the temporal limitation in the other sentences. The Macedonian imperfects are describing events in terms of duration, whereas the Turkish aorists present these same events as past occurrences without any additional specification—although it is clear that in terms of traditional definitions we would expect the form corresponding to the Slavic imperfective. I should also note here that all of the ten synthetic imperfective aorists in the Bulgarian translation of Sud'ba čeloveka correspond to imperfective imperfects in the Macedonian translation but to di-pasts in the Turkish. On the other hand, examples showing Macedonian aorists corresponding to Turkish imperfects all involve activities and states that Macedonian presents as inchoative or completive moments while Turkish leaves them as progressing in time. Examples (22) and (23) are typical:


"Our people withdrew to Greece. Sandre remained in Vrbjani."

(23) a. Se zančar, no dostojav na noze. (Šoloxov 1970:30)

"I reeled but I managed to remain standing."

In terms of markedness relations, it is interesting to note here that the Macedonian aorists are in a sense adding a nuance of perfective markedness by eliciting events that are basically activities or states, while Turkish is using its imperfect to emphasize the durational nature of the events in question. The Macedonian and Turkish aspectual oppositions aorist/imperfect can be characterized by the fact that in Turkish the aorist is clearly the least marked, most general past tense, being unmarked for aspect and carrying marking only for tense (past) and status (confirmative). In Macedonian, however, the markedness relationship between the aorist and imperfect has always been an arguable point, and now at the end of the twentieth century the restrictions appearing in the aorist offer strong motivation either for considering it marked for perfectivity with respect to the imperfect or for viewing the whole opposition itself as undergoing a restructuring into an opposition peripeteia vs. manner. The comparison with
for the purely aspectual features under consideration here, and therefore discussion of it will be excluded.

8 For an excellent outline of Guentcheva’s framework, see Chvany 1991.
9 I purposefully chose the verb pie ‘drink’ instead of pee ‘sing’ because in the survey I describe later, the latter showed a higher level of acceptance in the imperfective aorist.
10 Research for this article was supported in part by a grant from the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), with funds provided by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the U.S. Department of State. None of these is responsible for the views expressed. I also wish to thank the University of Skopje, Ministry for Information of the Republic of Macedonia, and my many Macedonian colleagues, friends, and informants who helped me with this work. They, too, are not responsible for the views expressed here.
11 One informant was born abroad and one did not indicate her place of birth. As a result of massive urban immigration since the Second World War, combined with the fact that it is located at the intersection of major bundles of isoglosses, Skopje is so dialectically mixed that it must be considered separately from both east and west.
12 In view of the fact that most speakers still use their native dialects at home, place of parents’ birth can be taken as a significant factor. One pair of respondents consisted of siblings, and their parents were only counted once. Other parents were either not born in Macedonia or their place of birth was not indicated on the questionnaire.
13 The sample was too small to test a difference between derived and undervived imperfectives, since I only had two of the former, viz. (12) and (14).
14 Fifteen other sentences had at least one shift to the perfective aorist, but nine of these by only one or two speakers; the total number of shifts was 112, with four sentences accounting for 64 instances—i.e., for over half the total.
15 In this context, it is important to keep in mind that the informants born in the ‘thirties all went to elementary school at a time when most of Macedonia was part of Bulgaria, i.e., during World War Two, and were thus required to learn Bulgarian, in which language the imperfective aorist is still a vital literary and colloquial form. This may have had some influence on their judgments, and on those of their children.
16 The situation in biaxialts requires further investigation. One could nonetheless argue that even if both imperfect and aorist occur in a biaxialt verb, those paradigms are merely functioning as formal manifestations of the verb’s imperfective or perfective meaning in any given context. For the overwhelming majority of biaxialts, the distinction would only occur in the second person singular.
17 The pasts using the marker -in Turkish corresponding to the aorist/imperfect opposition in the synthetic paradigms in Macedonian are likewise marked for confirmative status (see Friedman 1978). I am omitting any references to marking for status in this discussion, as this category does not affect the aspectual considerations at issue here (see n. 7 above).
18 The Turkish form is paltim.
19 I should add here that intense contact with Serbo-Croatian during much of the twentieth century must also be considered as a potential factor in the loss of imperfective aorists, since these forms are extremely marginal or completely absent from that language. Nonetheless, the process of simplification was already set in motion before Serbo-Croatian was a significant contact language beyond the northern dialect area.
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Incomplete Language Acquisition and Language Shift

The Slovak Language in America*

Louise B. Hammer

The Slovaks who came to America around the turn of the century were, for the most part, monolingual in Slovak. Some of their children shifted to being bilingual in English and Slovak. Others, especially those late in the birth order, became monolingual in English.

Language shift, the movement away from one language to another, is a common result of language contact in a community. Grosjean (1982) has surveyed the literature on bilingualism, language maintenance and language contact. His study has identified various factors that are relevant to language maintenance or extinction. Among the factors that play a crucial role in immigrant language extinction in America are the following: American nationalism, the assimilative power of American society and American educational policy.

American nationalism played a primary role in causing many immigrants to give up their languages. This was particularly true during the second decade of this century, when the nation prepared for war against Germany. The drive to assimilate non-English speaking immigrants was very strong, because of the fear that the minority would demonstrate more loyalty toward the country of its birth (the country of its language and culture) than toward its new homeland (Davis 1920:655).

Ethnic minorities often experienced prejudice because they were 'different' or poor. Language shift frequently occurs when there are sharp differences in prestige and societal support for the languages concerned. In addition, the language that is thought to be more useful economically usually replaces the one that is of lower utility. These factors militated against the maintenance of the Slovak language in America and other immigrant languages. As the older generation died off, people stopped speaking their immigrant language (Haugen 1989:69).

Until recently, the United States has had a policy of monolingual education in English in all public schools. Instruction in Slovak, for the most part, took place only in church schools. Even there it was usually offered as a language course, a Saturday class or a summer course. It was not generally the language of instruction in the schools. As a result, many second-generation Slovaks (i.e., the first generation to be born in America) exhibit incomplete acquisition of the Slovak language.

Our study was undertaken in the summer of 1989 in an effort to determine the Slovak language competency of that first generation of Slovak speakers, most of whom are now in their sixties, seventies and eighties. Dr. Ivor Ripka and I recorded the speech of 45 informants who satisfied certain criteria. The selection