The Perfect and Semantics of Perfectivity in Latin

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Abstract: From a semantic point of view, perfectivity is realized in Latin as a complex of meanings combined around the notion of limit, but different in their nature. The particular meanings of limitativity, inceptivity, completivity and punctuality are distinguished. The realization of each of them is closely related to actional semantics of predicates as well as to the context. The analysis of correlation between the particular meaning of perfectivity and actionality (resp. context) in Latin is the question under research in this article.
Key words: Latin language, perfectivity, Perfect tense, actionality, semantics.

The aspectual component of the Latin Perfect, i.e. perfectivity, is realized from the semantic point of view as the complex of meanings combined around the notion of limit but different by their nature. It is necessary to emphasize limitativity, inceptivity, completivity and punctuality [Plungjan 1988].

Limitativity is related to the temporal limit of the situation, thus the terminated situation is considered to have been finished by the point of reference, e.g.: (1 a-d):

1 a) *Amavi … ego olim in adulescentia:// verum … numquam, ut nunc insanio* (Pl. Mer. 263-264) 'I… used to love in adolescence but… I have never gone mad like this before'.

1 b) *Semper Caesarem Capito coluit et dilexit* (Cic. Fam. 13, 29, 6) 'Capito always loved and respected Caesar'.

1 c) *Dum vigebat aetas, militari laude … floruit (Galba)* (Tac. Hist. 1, 49, 4) 'Being young (Galba) flourished … in warfare'.

1 d) *Contra Persas … (Antonius) pugnavit. Primis eos proeliis vicit, regrediens tamen fame et pestilentia laboravi t…* (Eutrop. 7, 6, 2) '(Antonius) fought against the Persians. He defeated them in the first combats but he suffered from hunger and diseases while retreating…'

In all of the above examples the action expressed by the Perfect is temporally limited and reproduced as an action which had happened before a moment in the present, i.e. in the past. That very meaning is the core of aspectual semantics of the Latin Perfect tense.

The termination is related to the nature of the situation that arises due to the attainment of some critical point after which the situation stops and is characterized as completivity. Depending on the location of the given point in the initial or final phase, the inceptive (inchoative) and the completive meanings are differentiated [Plungjan 1988:377; Plungjan 2003:301]. Hereafter we understand "completivity" as the completeness of the

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situation in its final phase taking into consideration the etymology of the term. Owing to the non-established aspectual terminology, these meanings are also characterized as 'ingressiv' und 'effektiv' [Hofmann, Szantyr 1965:301], initiotransformative and finitransformative [Johanson 2000] etc. The Perfect with the ingressive and completive meanings is represented in such examples (2 a-d):

2 a) *Sed quid hoc? Quam valide tonuit?* (Pl. Am. 1130) 'But what's that? How strongly has it thundered? '

2 b) *Omnes iam nostri praeter Tullium tuum venerunt* (Cic. Att. 5, 14, 2) 'Everybody has already arrived except your Tullius'.

2 c) *Perturbatus ego habitu fratris, quid accidisset quaesivi* (Petr. 9, 3) 'Worried about my brother's appearance, I started asking what had happened'.

2 d) … *cum agresti quodam more in Italia viveretur, (Ianus) genus indocile ac dispersum montibus altis composuit legesque dedit Latiumque vocari maluit*… (Lact. Inst. 1, 13, 9) '…when people in Italy lived according to a savage custom, (Ianus) gathered the illiterate and dispersed over high hills tribes and gave them the laws and wanted to be called Latium…'.

Since the attainment of the limit becomes associated with the completion of an action, the meaning of completivity in the narrow sense is more common for the Perfect. Though the final choice depends on the context and actional semantics of the predicates.

Punctivity is characterized as the integral coverage of the whole situation without distinguishing its initial and final phases, the peculiar "collecting" in one point. Properly speaking, a punctive situation is any situation expressed by the Perfect because this tense represents a completed situation as an integral fact giving the retrospective view on it, e.g.: (3 a-d):

3 a) *Repperi. – Quid repperisti?* (Pl. Aul. 818) 'I've found. – What have you found? '

3 b) *Nox abiit, oriturque aurora* (Ov. Fast. 4, 721) 'The night has come to an end and the dawn begins'

3 c) … *(C. Curio) condiciones pacis, quas et Caesar… postulabat et Pompeius aequo recipiebat, discussit ac rupit*… (Vell. 2, 48, 5) '(C. Curio) displaced and destroyed a treaty which Caesar had laid down and Pompeius had also accepted'.

3 d) *Di te ex manibus impuri eripuerunt, di te perpetuent* (Script. hist. Aug. 6, 2) 'Gods have wrested you from the hands of the profane, let gods protect you!'.

Due to the ability of the global representation of the situation by uniting its phases in a whole, we do not separate punctivity as the individual meaning. We understand by it the generic meaning as to inceptivity and completivity and we will correspondingly use this term.

The above mentioned meanings in the aspectual limits of the Perfect zone are not differentiated and do not influence on its general semantics. They are partial realization of perfectivity caused by the context and the actional class of the predicates.

The influence of actionality on the formation of aspectual semantics is generally recognized [Šluinskij 2006:49; Bertinetto 1994; Bertinetto, Delfitto 2000:191], spreading to the languages with the aspect of the inflexional type. Though in comparison with the languages which are characterized by the derivational aspect the connection between both categories is smaller. Such connection somewhat a priori without any statistic data (at least such researches are unknown to us) was accepted in Latin language as the superiority of the telic verbs in the Perfect and of the atelic ones in the Imperfect [Grassi 1967:132]. In order to check this, we analyzed the frequency of using the telic and atelic verbs in the

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Perfect in diachrony. The received results confirm the correctness of this point of view and the uniformity of the distribution in the limits of the diachronic cuts.

Verbal character / Period	Atelic	Telic
Early	22,2 %	77, 8%
Classical	27 %	73 %
Post-classical	30 %	70 %
Late	24 %	76 %

Being formed from the verbs of any actional class, the telic verbs are more common for the Perfect due to the statistic data. It can be explained by the coordination of the aspectual meaning and the actional semantics of the predicate.

The actional semantics of the predicate is to some extent a factor that determines the actualization of either semes. The analysis of the functioning of the predicates of different aspectual types (according to the Vendlerian classification [Vendler 1957]) in the Perfect has the following pattern.

A) States + the Perfect = limitative or inceptive:

4 a) *Erus meus tibi me salutem multam voluit dicere* (Pl. Ps. 982) 'My master wanted me to salute you'

4 b) …*A. Cluentius … nihil mali timuit*… (Cic. Clu. 18) '… Aulus Cluentius… was not afraid of anything bad…'

4 c) *Fuit… faber qui fecit phialam vitream, quae non frangebatur* (Petr. 51, 1) 'There was… a craftsman who has made a glass cup which could not be broken'

4 d) …*ego sensi animam meam et animam illius unam fuisse animam in duobus corporibus*… (Aug. Conf. 4,6,11) '…I felt that my soul and his soul were a one soul in two bodies'

In the given sentences the Perfect represents the prolonged state in the past which was stopped after reaching the temporal limit. The limitedness of the situation can be expressed implicitly, e.g. (4 a-d), where the limit is a moment of speaking, or explicitly if the temporal limits of the situation are indicated, e.g. (4 e-f):

4 e) …*homo voluptati obsequens// fuit, dum vixit* (Ter. Hec. 458-459) '…a man was obedient to delight as long as he has lived'

4 f) *Corcyrae fuimus usque ad a.d. XVI K. Dec.* (Cic. Fam. 16, 9, 1) 'We were in Kerkyra till the sixteenth day before the December calends'

Being used in the Perfect, the stative predicates can also take the inceptive meaning focusing on the initial phase of the situation (5a-d):

5 a) *Ubi primum tibi sensisti, mulier, impliciscier?* (Pl. Am. 729) 'When was the first time you felt yourself bad, woman?'

5 b) …*gemuit sub pondere cumba//sutilis et multam accepit rimosa paludem* (Verg. A. 6, 413-414) '…a wicker boat moaned under the burden and shipped a lot of mud through its cracks'

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5 c) *Regina, dum tu flebiles questus cies,//terisque tempus, tota nudatis stetit//acies inarmis* (Sen. Phoen.387-389) 'Queen, while you are complaining and waisting time, the whole army stood (=started standing) with uncovered weapons'

5 d) …*vaga turba natantum // … // sera occultati senserunt vulnera ferri* (Auson. Mosella 248-250) '…the wandering throng of fishes …. has late felt (=has started to feel) the wounds of the hidden iron'

The appearance of the given meaning is caused by the aspectual conflict which arises as the result of contrast between the atelicity of the stative predicates and the telic nature of the Perfect. Owing to this the changes of their actional status occur, namely the transformation into the atelic processes with characteristic dynamism, e.g. sto «I stand» (state) - steti «I stood» (= started to stand; process), amo «I love» (state) – amavi «I fell in love» (= started to love; process) etc. However, we believe that there is no reason to distinguish it as a characteristic feature of the stative verbs as some researchers say [Petersmann 1977:178-179; Oldsjö 2001:244-251] because of the context which assists such transformation. Depending on the context, the Perfect of the same stative verb can express the completeness in the initial phase or simple limitativity as in the given examples. *Stetit* means the completeness in the initial phase in the first sentence and the durable state in the second one (6 a-b):

6 a) *Isto aspectu defixus obstupui et mirabundus steti*… (Apul. Met. 2, 7) 'Being impressed by this view, I grew numb and stopped (=started to stand) wondering'

6 b) *Eo die steterunt tantum acies utraque super ripam*… (Liv. 33, 18, 12) 'Both battle ranks only stood on the river bank that day…'

The inceptive meaning can sometimes be the result of subjective perception of the situation. As H. Blase remarks [Blase 1903: 167] it is stipulated by arbitrary translation. The ambiguity of the interpretation can sometimes be stipulated by the common forms of the Perfect for the verbs of different actional classes. The same form is used for the atelic verbs finishing in –eo expressing state and for the telic ones finishing in –sco (so-called "inchoative") showing process, e.g.: albeo "be white" / albesco "become white" — albui which causes subjectivity in the interpretation of its semantics, especially in the neutral context. Thus, in the sentence: *Caesar ubi luxit omnes senatores senatorumque liberos tribunos militum equitesque Romanos ad se produci iubet* (Caes. Civ. 1, 23, 1) «At the dawn Caesar ordered to bring all the senators, their children, military tribunes and the Roman horsemen» *ubi luxit* can be interpreted "*when the dawn came*" i. e. in the inceptive meaning, or "*at the dawn*" as a common state. It depends whether the initial form is *luceo* 'be clear', or *lucesco* 'become clear'. In accordance with G. Haverling the appearance of such meaning could also be caused by levelling the difference between the atelic and telic verbs. Therefore the Perfect *tacui* formed from the stative verb *taceo* 'be silent' has the limitative semantics 'was silent' in the early and classical Latin. In Late Latin it is sometimes used with the meaning 'to get to be silent' influenced by the telic verb *conticesco* 'become silent' [Haverling 2006a:84].

The context is the reason of the formation of the non-trivial aspectual meaning and so its critical role [Haverling 2001: 356; Haverling 2006 a: 85; Haverling 2006b: 278; Pinkster 1988:356] is probably caused by the actionality status in the system of Latin verb on lower levels according to the lexical semantics.

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B) Activities + the Perfect = limitative

Similarly the atelic processes being combined with the Perfect relate to the situations limited in time. Hereby the limitedness may be explicitly influenced by the situation (7 a-c), and may not be formally expressed (4 d):

7 a) … *ubi Pterela rex regnavit oppidum expugnauimus*… (Pl. Am. 412) '…we have conquered the city where king Pterela ruled…'

7 b) *Tot homines sapientissimos et clarissimos, qui illam provinciam ante te tenuerunt, prudentia consilioque vicisti?* (Cic. Ver. 2, 3, 16) 'Have you won so many wise and glorious people who ruled this province before you by a reasonable decision?'

7 c) *Quare ergo servivisti ?* (Petr. 57, 4) 'What have you seved? '

7 d) *Theopompus et Polydorus reges, qui Messenium bellum XX annis gesserunt* (Amp. 14, 3) 'Kings Theopompus and Polydorus have been making the Messenium war for twenty years'

C) Accomplishments +Perfect = completives (8 a-d):

8 a) *Scripsere alii rem// versibus quos Faunei vatesque canebant*… (Enn. Ann. 7, 213-214) 'Others wrote poems about that which were sung by fauns and soothsayers…'

8 b) *(Neocles) uxorem Acarnanam ciuem duxit, ex qua natus est Themistocles* (Nep. Them. 1, 2) '(Neocles) married the inhabitant of Acarnania who gave birth to Themistocles'

8 c) … *Cn. Domitius tribunus pl. legem tulit ut sacerdotes, quos antea collegae sufficiebant, populus crearet* (Vell. 2, 12, 3) '…Gneus Domitius, tribune of the people, introduced a law for people to elect flamens who were earlier re-elected by colleagues'

8 d) *Sapientia*… *aedificavit sibi domum et subdidit columnas septem* (Cypr. Epist. 63, 5, 1) 'Wisdom… built a house for itself and put it on seven posts'

The verbs in the Perfect are telic because they are used with the direct object. The interpretation of the Perfect is the final point of the process, i.e. the reaching the internal limit. The meaning of limitativity remains taking the back seat.

D) Achievements + the Perfect = completive/punctive

The meaning of completivity is realized in the Perfect of the verbs of the actional events class (9 a-d):

9 a) *Ancillula …// … anulum istunc attulit quem tibi dedi* (Pl. Mil. 986-987) 'That ring I gave you … was brought… by a maid'

9 b) *Interiectus est etiam nuper liberis, quem ad nostrum Atticum de senectute misimus* (Cic. Div. 2, 3) 'A book "About Senility" has been also recently written; we have sent it to our Atticus'

9 c) …*pars equitum…nobilissimos Belgarum, in quis ducem Valentinum, cepit* (Tac. Hist. 4, 71, 5) '… some horsemen… have captured the most notable of Belgae including headman Valentinus'

9 d) *Duces autem confecerunt Parthicum bellum, Statius Priscus et Avidius Cassiu set Martius Verus per quadriennium, ita ut Babylonem et Mediam pervenirent et Armeniam vindicarent* (Scr. Hist. Aug. 7, 1) 'Military leaders Statius Priscus and Avidius Cassius have finished the war with the Parthians in four years' time so that they came into Babylon and Persia and punished Armenia.'

Instantaneousness is typical for the given actional type and helps to take the situation in the Perfect as a whole, i.e. such situation is characterized by punctive character.

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However, we do not focus on the final point but we consider such Perfect as completive due to the completeness of an action.

The realization of perfectivity depending on the actional class of predicates is typical but non absolute. Depending on lexical semantics of the used verbs, one of the semes can come to the fore. So the Perfect is characterized by a clearer meaning of limitativity while expressing the telic instant verbs (10 a-d):

10 a) *Dum fuit (amator), dedit:nunc nil habet* (Pl. Truc. 217) '(A lover) has been giving till he had: now he has nothing',

where the subordinate clause restricts the limited action expressed by the Perfect *dedit*. In the analogous cases the atelic predicates with stative or progressive meaning actualize the seme of punctivity. Such predicates are connected with the indication of the unlimited or indefinite duration or they pertain to the habitual action:

10 b) *Semper sensi filio// meo te esse amicum*… (Pl. Capt. 140-141) 'I always felt that you are a friend of my son…'

10 c) *Hoc itinere adeo graui morbo adficitur oculorum, ut postea numquam dextro aeque bene usus sit* (Nep. Hann. 4, 3) 'On this way (Hannibal) suffered from such a nasty ocular disease that some time later he has never used his right eye equally with the left one'

10 d) … *intravit (Quartilla) …, una comitata virgine, sedensque super torum meum diu flevit* (Petr. 17, 1) '…(Quartilla) came in accompanied by one girl and having sat on my bed, she has been crying for a long time'

However, the Perfect always expresses the stopped situation regardless of the actional type of predicates and the context. This seems to be a reason to consider **limitativity** as its core meaning because of the combination of the temporal and aspectual features.

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