
Reviewed by Victor A. Friedman

The Bulgarian (Bg) verb is deservedly famous in the Slavic linguistic world for its complexity. Of the Slavic languages, only Macedonian has a verbal system with a comparably broad range of grammatically expressed distinctions. Fielder’s work enlightens an area which until now has received inadequate attention and merely conventional treatment: she analyzes the semantics and pragmatics of three verbal categories in two types of contexts, viz. tense, aspect, and mood (TAM) in subordinate temporal and conditional clauses. This choice of contexts was motivated by the fact that they represent positions of potential neutralization and hence of testing for semantic, syntactic, and pragmatic distinctions. In choosing these categories in these contexts, Fielder is able to shed light on a broad range of phenomena encompassing much of the Bulgarian verbal system, including categories such as resultativity, taxis, and status. The resulting work is a model of clarity of presentation, thoroughness of treatment, and originality of thought. Fielder truly expands the frontiers of our understanding of the Bg verb and, through it, of language in general.

The book is organized into six chapters, headed by an Introduction (1–2) that functions as an abstract. Chapter 1, “Preliminaries” (3–12), establishes Fielder’s basic theoretical assumptions and methodology. In Chapter 2 (13–87) Fielder presents “An Overview of the Bulgarian Verbal System.” The following three chapters treat the three types of TAM contexts that constitute the body of her work: the iterative (88–199), future (200–73), and imaginative conditional (274–383). In Chapter 6 (384–408) Fielder concludes with a summary of her findings on Bg TAM categories, their relations to the categories of status and taxis, and their significance both for general typological studies and for questions pertaining to language change. (I should note here that Fielder includes resultativity within taxis, a reasonable choice for the Bg verbal system, which has not exploited this category. This is a particularly salient feature differentiating Bulgarian from Macedonian, for the latter has developed a new set of resultative forms [the perfects using ima ‘have’ + neuter verbal adjective] that are opposed to forms marked for taxis alone [the old pluperfect].) The book ends with a glossary of terminology (409–18), a bibliography of around 200 items (419–36), and an index (437–41). The body of the text is enriched by fifteen
figures and 45 tables that are extremely useful in illustrating the forms and complex interrelationships that constitute the subject of this work.

The type of Bulgarian analyzed in F's work is the literary standard of educated speakers from the capital, Sofia, ranging in age from 21 to 74. In the course of the her study F utilizes around 350 examples culled from 2,700 pages of post-World War II (1957-87) bellettristic literature by six authors. Her methodology centers around the testing of actual attested examples with an appropriate alternative verb form substituted in the subordinate clause, e.g., replacing an imperfective present with the corresponding perfective present as in: ... Kogato 'umira'/*'umre' vovek, eta li ima/* sili da mislii kak e zivai...". When a man is dying, he barely has the strength to think about how he has lived..." (151), where the boldfaced form is the one used by the original author. F uses laudable clarity in distinguishing among five types of acceptability/grammaticality: acceptable/most frequent (over 50%), acceptable/less frequent (15-49%), less acceptable/infrequent (10-14%), marginally acceptable/rare (1-9%), and unacceptable. She is also careful to distinguish paired perfective and imperfective verbs from simplex imperfective and perfective verbs (unprefixd imperfectives, and perfectives with no derived imperfective pair), which stand outside this superordinate aspectual opposition and whose TAM behavior is therefore determined by semantic factors.

F's theoretical approach is appropriately eclectic, given the complexity of the data. Her basic theoretical model is a modification of that proposed by Brecht (1994), according to which lexical and grammatical meaning combine in a semantic component to produce the sentence meaning, which is then processed through a pragmatic component (the discourse context and the relationship of the speaker) to produce the utterance value. Her definition of aspect follows that of Chung and Timberlake (1985: 213) as "the relationship of a predicate to the time interval over which it occurs". Within this definition, there are four levels: that of the verb itself, that of the predicate, which combines the verb with its major syntactic arguments, that of the proposition which relates the predicate to its frame (e.g., temporal adverbs), and of the narrative, which puts the proposition in a context of connected propositions. At the propositional level, the feature of closure or boundedness with the event frame is characteristic of perfective aspect. At the lexical level (a combination of the verb and predicate levels), the oppositions open/closed and dynamic/non-dynamic combine to distinguish four Vendlerian situation types: state (English [E] remain, Bg gledam 'look'), change of state (E die, Bg zagledam 'begin to look'), atelic process (E read, Bg pisa 'write'), and telic process (E find, Bg napisa 'finish writing'). F's treatment of tense, as well as taxis (and resultativity), is based on Brecht's (1994) modification of Reichenbach (1947) utilizing the temporal features event time (ET), reference and orientation times (RT), and speech time (ST), which relate to one another as simultaneous, before, or after. Her definition of mood, which goes back to authors such as Kuryłowicz (1956), Gołębiewski (1964), and Janakiev (1962), is "the characterization of an event that is unreal or nonactual" (65).

F's outline of the Bg verb system in Chapter 2 is, as she states, necessarily programmatic and somewhat simplified. Nonetheless, it covers all of the main issues in a thorough and objective manner. F's outline reviews the literature and gives the views on which her analysis will be based in such a way that the reader familiar with Bulgarian is oriented to her approach and the reader unfamiliar with Bulgarian will be able to follow her arguments. After a comprehensive treatment of the thesis question of whether the Bg aorist/imperfect opposition is aspectual or temporal and whether it denotes coordination or duration, F states: "The assumption of the current study is that the imperfect/aorist opposition is primarily an aspectual one in the contemporary Bg verbal system. The fact that the imperfect's aspectual characteristic is durative (or continuous in Chvany's [1988] terminology) allows it to include or, perhaps more accurately, imply a secondary orientation point (the Reichenbachian RT) and thus perform tense functions" (44).

Of the future she writes: "Despite numerous convincing arguments that the future is actually a mood rather than a tense, it will be considered a tense here" (56). She justifies this decision by giving priority to form over function, but notes that given her definition of mood, the future tense overlaps with modality insofar as future events are potential rather than actual.

On the basis of her definitions and decisions, F distinguishes three non-indicative moods in Bulgarian: the imperative, the conditional, and the conjunctive. Under imperative she includes analytic constructions with da, neka, and neka da + present tense as "quasi-imperatives"; the conditional is limited to the paradigm of b'or + aorist l-participles (hence the so-called future-in-the-past, which is usually modal in function, is treated with the other futures); and the conjunctive consists of subordinated da + present tense, generally functioning as an infinitive. The question of whether the particles da and neka should be treated as paradigmatic rather than syntactic in Bulgarian is the subject of considerable debate (F cites Rudin 1985: 53-63). In F's treatment here, the conjunctive is completely homonymous with one of the quasi-imperatives, the distinction being defined by syntactic context: the quasi-imperative occurs in a main-clause, the conjunctive in a subordinate clause. In Chapter 4, however, F labels the collocation of da + present tense as a da-construction (202). While she is sympathetic to treating da + present as a conjunctive mood, she acknowledges that da occurs with other tenses and avoids committing herself. The exact position of da in the system is in any case not crucial to
narrated event by the speaker rather than the ontological evaluation as real or unreal. Nonetheless, she correctly asserts that in its closeness to mood, status as a category merits inclusion in her work, and she does not hesitate to make good use of it where it can provide a relevant explanation, particularly in distinguishing types of conditionals.

The main body of F's work, chapters 3–5, subjects the choice of TAM categories in subordinate temporal and conditional clauses to a thorough and rigorous analysis whose conclusions are both convincing and enlightening. Because of both the complexity of the task that F has set herself and the thoroughness with which she has accomplished it, this review can only indicate some of the highlights of her conclusions.

In Chapter 3, F establishes a series of graded axes of contextual features that explain the choice of imperfective or perfective aspect in iterative subordinate clauses. The two main types of gradation concern the contextual feature of connectedness and the grammatical category of manner, which represents the intersection of aspect and mood as the quantifier and qualifier, respectively, of the narrated event. (In this regard consider the E sentence if he bought figs, he would eat them, which can have an iterative [if = ‘whenever’] or modal [bought = ‘were to buy’] interpretation, depending on the context.) The choice of perfective aspect in subordinate iterative clauses correlates with both marking for connectedness and for manner. Temporal connectedness is characterized by sequentiality and modal connectedness by causality. Sequentiality is associated with adverbial rather than attributive clauses, with non-stative as opposed to stative main-clause verbs, and with the order subordinate-clause > main-clause (e.g., ‘if... then...’). In terms of subordinating conjunctions, kogato ‘when[ever]’ is at the imperfective, non-marked side of the axis, kato ‘as/when’, sada kato ‘after’, and stomo ‘as soon as’ are in the middle, and ako ‘if’ and ai ‘if’ are at the perfective, marked end of the axis. In terms of manner, perfective correlates with present versus past main-clause verbs, with irreal versus real, with qualified (singular) versus quantified (plural) arguments, and with representational versus non-habitual (indefinite arguments, present subordinate-clause verb) versus habitual and non-representative (past subordinate-clause verb, definite arguments).

Although earlier F stated that the future would be treated as a tense despite its modal properties, she concludes in Chapter 4 that the future marker sato is “a modal particle, one function of which is to denote future, or rather non-actual events” (265). Here, as elsewhere, F reflects the complexities of the Bg verbal system rather than trying to force them into a procrustean bed of impermeably fixed categories. She demonstrates in this chapter that the conjunction ako ‘if’ is coordinated with the meaning ‘future’ when the verb is perfective present, ‘present’ when the verb is imperfective present, ‘imminent future’ with sato (s + da) + perfective
present, and 'volition' with ści (+ da) + imperfective present. A perfective
is preferred in the subordinate clause if the main-clause verb denotes non-
actuality (modality), i.e., an epistemic modal, imperative, or future. This
preference operates regardless of whether the subordinating conjunction
is temporal or modal.

In Chapter 5 F shows that in imaginative conditional contexts
connectedness, status, and taxis interact with mood, aspect, and tense. The
subordinate-clause verbs in subordinate aspectual contexts are almost
exclusively perfective, which is consistent with the facts of distribution
demonstrated in the previous two chapters. With the exception of a few
generally stative unpaired (simplex) imperfectives, the conditional is
excluded from subordinate clauses. As a result, tense functions in these
contexts to distinguish hypothetical from counterfactual non-actuality
(modality). In counterfactuals of the type 'if not A then B, where A took
place and B did not', the aorist is generally used when the speaker is
certain that A took place, whereas the perfect is used if the speaker is
unsure of the actuality of A. The pluperfect is preferred for past
counterfactual conditionals where the event did not take place at a specific
time in the past, and it is generally preferred over the aorist. The present
is used for hypothetical conditionals, i.e., non-actual events with the
potential to occur, and the imperfect can occur in both counterfactuals and
hypotheticals, but functions, according to F, to encode present
counterfactuals. She also demonstrates how the imperfect and pluperfect
are used to distinguish speculative from expectative propositions in unreal
contexts, i.e., how temporal categories can be used to encode a type of
status.

F both summarizes her foregoing analyses and arguments and
discusses their broader implications in Chapter 6. Of particular
importance are her insights on the prototypicality of verbal categories and
the emergent nature of their grammar. The interrelationships of tense,
aspect, and mood in Bg temporal and conditional subordinate clauses
helps clarify grammatical relations at higher levels of abstraction, e.g., in
terms of categories such as distance (status + tense + taxis) and manner
(aspect + mood), and at the same time gives indications of the directions in
which the language is changing, e.g., in the increasing restriction of the
conditional mood form and the use of aspect to convey modality.

The text is remarkably free of typographical errors, especially taking
into account its difficulty and complexity. The examples are excellently
translated, and the relevant phrases and verb forms are clearly marked so
that the reader who knows no Slavic language can follow the details of
every argument. I will note in passing just two tiny errors that the reader
unfamiliar with Bulgarian or Slavic might miss: in example 2.29 (49) the
English translation of bojanski should be 'Bojanka' not 'Bojan', and in
examples 4.27 and 4.27a (219) the Bg forms trága/ťrágneš are 2nd
singular, but the English translations are 1st plural.

This is a highly original and important work. Since Bulgarian
participates in two types of linguistic groups, viz. the Slavic genetic group
and the Balkan areaal group, it is an especially useful subject for this sort of
investigation. F's work is exemplary of the kind of study that needs to be
done for a variety of languages. It is accessible to linguists working in any
theoretical model and provides both useful data and significant insights
and analyses. The author's modified structuralist framework is arguably
the most appropriate for attempting to penetrate to a deeper understanding
of how this part of language works. F concentrates on a valuable and
inadequately studied topic, i.e. tense, aspect, and mood in
temporal and conditional subordinate clauses, and yet at the same time
her work contributes significantly to an analysis of the Bg verbal system as a
whole as well as to insights into the nature of grammar.

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Stunová proceeds from the assumption that despite the hypothesis of an invariant meaning, the differences between Russian and Czech aspectual usage are by no means matters of detail, but of a systematic nature, for which the invariant cannot account. She therefore sets herself the task of going beyond this and sees the problem less in the system than in the functioning of aspect in actual discourse, where it interacts with various other elements in context. Thus, she finds that in Russian the discourse level has greater importance than in Czech, which concentrates more on the internal structure of each event as opposed to the Russian preference for larger units at the expense of lexical meaning. It is to be noted particularly that S’s discourse-oriented approach was not preconceived, but imposed itself on her in the course of the analysis.

Setting out to investigate the invariant meaning of the verbal aspect, S deals first with the structuralist approach, in which the perfective aspect is the marked term along Jakobsenian lines, the “mark” constituted variously by internal limit or totality, so that the imperfective aspect, thought to be unmarked, rather takes over what is left by verbal expression. She traces this meaning all the way to its formulation in the latest Russian Academy Grammar. In contrast to this structuralist search for the ultimate semantic components of the category Aspect, which embodies a paradigmatic approach, a more syntagmatic approach is taken by those who primarily consider the speech situation (or the text), in which the juncture of the event described to other events or situations in the same utterance comes to the fore. By this token, it becomes easier to account for different aspectual usages in the individual Slavic languages, while still adhering to one overall aspectual meaning.

This, then, narrows down the concrete task which S sets herself in the ensuing pages, comparing Russian and Czech usage, basic identity of the message to be conveyed being assumed. In such a study, a pure marked-unmarked approach does not seem to carry us very far, since it would lead us to expect a loss or else accretion of information somewhere, where the other aspect is chosen. Her judiciously selected examples often show a complete reversal of aspectual classification in the two languages. To be