

## 不同視角的考察？符號導向的俄語直述句時態分析

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### 摘要

人類得以定出事件前因後果，緣於語法範疇的時態與現實的時間觀念的相關性，此經常為學界爭論的核心議題。時態反映出行為、狀態與時間層面的語法及／或詞彙方式。同時，這種時間層面事件賦有依據包含過去、現在及未來時間序列的特殊時間點。俄語的時態，正如許多語種，通常反映客觀、真實的時間關係，然而這些客觀的時間關係，由於主觀（或修辭）因素，也常為了加強表達效果，發生錯置情況。有數據顯示，時態與時間的缺乏系統對應關係，時態所賦有的功能本身並非精確、與時間彼此相近或者重疊。

本文運用哥倫比亞語言學派(CSL)符號導向的語言架構，分析俄語的直述語氣時態使用。依據時間意義的恆常性，以說話者及／或書寫者接受評價為基準，說明語法時間與現實時間等同及非等同關係所顯示的意義。

關鍵詞：時態、體、發生、哥倫比亞語言學派、俄語

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# What If We Look at The Same Things from a Different Angle? A Sign-Oriented Analysis of Russian Indicative Tenses

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## Abstract

*Tense* as a category of grammar and its correlation with *time* as a fundamental concept that enables human beings to sequence events have been the focus of much debate. Tense is considered a grammatical and/or lexical way to reflect the location of actions, states, and events in time. They are assigned to a specific time point according to a time line that includes past, present, and future. In Russian, as in many other languages, tenses often reflect objective real-time relationships. However, this real-time match is often ‘dislocated’ for subjective (expressive) purposes. The data indicate the systematic absence of correlation between tense and time, revealing that the functions, attributed to tenses, are imprecise or overlap. This paper presents an analysis of tense uses in the Russian indicative, based on the Columbia School (CSL) sign-oriented linguistic framework. We address the problem of accounting for both the time-tense matched and mismatched uses in the language by suggesting a one-to-one correspondence between form and function, relating it to speakers’ and/or writers’ ‘here and now’ moment of speaking/writing.

Key words: tense, aspect, occurrence, Columbia School of Linguistic (CSL), Russian

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# А если мы посмотрим на одни и те же вещи под иным углом зрения? Анализ времен изъявительного наклонения в русском языке с точки зрения теории языкового знака

Igor Dreer

## Аннотация

Грамматическая категория времени и ее соотношение с понятием реального времени всегда были в центре внимания многочисленных дискуссий. В этом смысле под категорией времени понимаются грамматические и/или лексические способы отображения местонахождения действий, состояний и событий во временной плоскости. При этом последние приписываются определенному моменту их осуществления в соответствии с временной осью, включающей в себя прошлое, настоящее и будущее. В русском языке, как и во многих других языках, грамматические времена часто отражают объективные временные отношения. Однако эти объективные отношения нередко нарушаются по субъективным (стилистическим) причинам, а именно с целью придания высказыванию большей выразительности. Предварительные наблюдения над текстами художественной литературы свидетельствуют о систематическом нарушении тождества между грамматическим и реальным временем, указывая на то, что отдельные функции, приписываемые грамматическому времени, являются неточными, сближаются или совпадают. Данная статья представляет собой анализ употребления глагольных времен изъявительного наклонения в русском языке, выполненный в рамках теории языкового знака, разработанной учеными лингвистического кружка Колумбийского университета (США). Мы предлагаем объяснение как тождественному, так и нетождественному соотношению грамматического и реального времени, исходя из неизменности (инвариантности) временных значений. При этом указанные соотношения рассматриваются с точки зрения их восприятия и оценки говорящим и/или пишущим.

Ключевые слова: время, вид, событие, лингвистический кружок Колумбийского университета, русский язык

# What If We Look at The Same Things from a Different Angle? A Sign-Oriented Analysis of Russian Indicative Tenses<sup>1</sup>

Igor Dreer

## 1. Introduction

*Tense* as a category of grammar and its correlation with *time* as a fundamental concept that enables human beings to sequence events have been the focus of much debate (cf. Bull 1971, Comrie 1985, Fleischman 1982). Tense is considered a grammaticalized and/or lexicalized way to reflect the location of actions, states, and events (hereafter, *occurrences*) in time. Occurrences are assigned to a specific time point according to a time line that includes past, present, and future. In Russian, as in many other languages, tenses often reflect objective real-time relationships: the present tense refers to something that happens in present time, the past tense to something that happened in past time, and the future tense to something that will happen in future time. Examples (1)-(5) are instances of the uses of tenses that mirror real-time relationships in Russian language.

*The use of the present tense for present occurrences*

- (1) Посмотрите на фрейлейн баронессу. Видите, как она *держит* спинку? Очень красиво! (Boris Akunin. *Azazel* 'Azazel')  
'Look at Fräulein Baroness. See how she *holds* her back? Very beautiful!'

*The use of the perfective and imperfective past for past occurrences*

- (2) Вечером 18 февраля в Дворянское собрание и в самом деле *съехалась* вся Москва. (Boris Akunin. *Pikovyuy valet* 'The Jack of Spades')  
'On the evening of February 18, the whole Moscow great society indeed *met together* at the Assembly of Nobles.'
- (3) Майор Егоров, большой, пухлый, с глазами навывкате и непрспанным лицом, *сидел* за столом и, макая сухарь в чай, *завтракал*. (Yuriy Bondarev. *Yunost' komandirov* 'When the Commanders Were Young')  
'Major Yegorov, big, plump, with bulging eyes and sleepy face, *was sitting* at the table and, dipping his biscuit in the tea, *was eating* breakfast.'

*The use of the perfective and imperfective future for future occurrences*

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<sup>1</sup> I gratefully acknowledge Yishai Tobin for his thorough reading and for his very helpful suggestions. I will claim possible errors of fact and judgment for myself only.

- (4) Я его сейчас *сниму*. Если что *пойдет* не так, разнеси ему башку. [...] – Ты его *приплюсуешь* к счету, – сказал Пашка. – Он хоть из наших, но морда у него фашистская. (Yuriy Nagibin. *Bogoyar*)

‘I’ll take him off. If something *goes* wrong, smash him his head. [...] – You will *add* him to your credit – said Pashka. – Though he is one of us, but he has a fascist ugly mug.’

- (5) – Вот тебе и сдача, батюшка, – сказала она. – Ровно рублик, можешь не пересчитывать.

– Не *буду пересчитывать*, – сказал я. (Arkadiy and Boris Strugatskiye. *Ponedel’nik nachinayetsya v subotu* ‘Monday Begins on Saturday’)

‘– Here is your change, dear sir, – she said. One ruble exactly, you don’t need to count it again.

– I’m *not going to count* it again, – I said.’

However, as previously noted, this real-time match is often ‘dislocated’ for subjective (expressive) purposes. The data indicate the systematic absence of correlation between tense and time, revealing that the functions, attributed to tenses, are imprecise or overlap: the present can be used instead of the future and the past, the future replaces the past and the present, and the past appears where the present and the future are expected. This subjective time-tense mismatch is frequent in Russian. One way to reconcile time and tense is to come up with *ad hoc* labels such as ‘the historic present’, ‘the perfective present’, ‘the future in the past’, etc. that emphasize the expressive or stylistic, i.e. extralinguistic and pragmatic purpose of the use of tense morphology. Another way to deal with these expressive tense uses is to analyze them without establishing correspondence between time and verb tense (cf. Casparis 1975, Hirtle 1975, Weinrich 1964). As Tobin (1990b: 462) points out with respect to the Modern Hebrew tense system:

“If, indeed, [...] there is no objective correlation between time and tense, then one must reach the obvious conclusion that time really may not be the motivating force behind the use of the [...] tense system and, therefore, seek a more satisfactory explanation elsewhere to account for the more subjective use of tense morphology which is not time-related.”

In this paper, we will analyze the tense uses of the Russian indicative and provide a single and unified explanation for both matched (objective) and mismatched (subjective) time-tense relationships, expressed by the verb tense morphology, as being based on the notion of the linguistic sign and its invariant meaning.

## 2. Previous studies

Studies expressing a point of view claiming that Russian is a “tenseless”

language, to a greater or lesser extent, are rather typical of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Aksakov 1875, Katkov 1845, Nekrasov 1865, Pavskiy 1850), but are uncommon today. Disagreement with this extreme point of view was expressed in the traditional analyses by Potebnya (1941), Shakhmatov (1963), Vinogradov (2001). The category of tense in Russian is often considered together with the category of aspect, as a background or a prism through which the meaning of the aspect is manifested (cf. Forsyth 1970, Knyazev 2007, Maslov 2004, Paducheva 1996, Zolotova 1975, 2002, and Zolotova et al. 2004).

Analyses that assume the centrality of tense meaning are represented by the works by Bondarko (1962, 1971, 1990, 1991), Isachenko (1960) and Barentsen (1973, 1983). Bondarko postulates temporality as a functional-semantic field, made up of linguistic means of various levels “whose grammatical centre is tense” (Bondarko 1991: 95). This field represents a core (nucleus) meaning “around which all the other (peripheral) [lexico-grammatical] language means revolve” (*ibidem*). In other words, Bondarko proposes a kind of a complex hierarchy which he refers to as the semantic field of temporality that includes features associated with temporal deixis and temporal relations in their close connection with the fields of aspectuality, modality and temporal localization (*ibidem*, p. 46). Bondarko (1971: 49) starts from the idea that each tense is used according to its grammatical meaning and the communicative purpose of a sentence. In the inventory of Russian “aspectuo-temporal” forms of the indicative, Bondarko distinguishes the imperfective past, present and future, respectively, the perfective past, and the perfective present-future (Bondarko, 1962 29-30, 1971: 54-55). The core temporal meaning of the past tense is the location of the occurrence in past time, preceding the moment of speaking or another occurrence (Bondarko, 1962 34-35). The core temporal meaning of the present tense is that of the ‘real’ or actual present (*ibidem*, p. 36-37). The core temporal meaning of the future tense is the location of the occurrence in future time, following the moment of speaking or another occurrence (Bondarko, 1962 35). Bondarko, however, does not attribute invariant meanings to these linguistic forms and advocates thereby secondary meanings, i.e. polysemy of these forms in order to account for various uses of the past, the present and the future that refer to time points different from their basic meanings.

Barentsen (1973, 1983) comes up with a unifying view on the Russian tense system, which he analyzes in terms of remoteness and proximity. According to

Barentsen (1973: 9), the category of tense specifies the localization of events on the time axis, perceived from the speaker's and/or writer's (hereafter, *encoder's*) perspective. This localization may or may not match the real time, but it represents the encoder's perception of reality that he or she wants to communicate to the hearer and/or reader (hereafter, *decoder*). Therefore, the concept of moment of speech as a temporal reference point is replaced by the encoder's orientation point/period on the time axis. Events convey the meaning 'remoteness' or 'irremoteness' depending on their localization before or after this orientation point, respectively. The forms meaning 'remoteness' possess the marker  $-л$  [l] as a distinctive morphological feature. They are distributed between two subcategories: the 'unreality' and the 'past', depending on the presence or the absence of the particle *бы* [by] 'would', respectively. Unlike the perfective forms, the imperfective forms meaning 'irremoteness' allow for further distinction between the 'present' and the 'future'. The former indicates that an event describes the encoder's orientation period directly, whereas the latter indicates the absence of a direct contact with the orientation period, implying nevertheless the possibility to access it in the future. The attribution of the tense meanings to the time axis leads Barentsen to divide the latter into different periods in order to explain and interpret the "mismatched" uses of tenses. Thus, starting with the sign-oriented principles, Barentsen finally returns to the interpretation of messages instead of demonstrating the appropriateness of the postulated meanings whenever the temporal forms appear.

The study of Isachenko (1960) deserves particular attention because of his consistent sign-oriented analysis of the semantic structure of tenses in Russian, based on the Jakobsonian concept of markedness (cf. Jakobson 1984). This concept is usually characterized by the opposition of two members, one of which is marked (*strong*, according to Isachenko), i.e. it signals the presence of a semantic feature, and the other, unmarked (Isachenko's *weak*) member, does not signal it. Isachenko further applies this concept to his analysis of the tense system in the Russian indicative which he represents as a network of binary oppositions (*ibidem*, p. 80). Isachenko distinguishes, on the one hand, two aspects, perfective and imperfective, where the perfective is a marked member of the pair and, on the other, three tenses: the preterit, the present and the future. He analyzes three imperfective forms (preterit, present and future) and two perfective ones (preterit and present). The

difference between the tenses revolves around the semantic feature ‘the relation to the moment of speaking’ (*ibidem*, p. 88). Depending on whether or not a tense designates this feature, Isachenko opposes the preterit (past, marked) form and the non-preterit (present and future, unmarked) forms. Unlike the aspectual opposition, Isachenko postulates the imperfective preterit as being a marked member of the pair ‘the perfective/imperfective preterit’ because this form signals a performed break with the moment of speaking, whereas the perfective preterit may signal a consequence that continues up to the moment of speaking. Among the non-preterit forms, Isachenko opposes the imperfective future (marked for a not performed break) and the imperfective and perfective present (unmarked for a not performed break). He finally opposes the perfective (non-actual) present (marked for non-actuality) and the imperfective (actual) present (unmarked for non-actuality). Despite the coherence of Isachenko’s analysis, the question why the native speakers of Russian *always* interpret the “perfective present”, taken out of context, as a future tense is left open. The idea that this form can be used for occurrences outside the realm of the future (*ibidem*, p. 78) does not necessarily mean that it signals the present. Moreover, we will show further below that other forms in Russian verb morphology, including both the imperfective preterit and future, marked for a break with the moment of speaking, can be used to express present occurrences.

### 3. Columbia School Theory

In order to find a unified explanation, we must first decide how we define language, what language actually represents for us. All the other theoretical and methodological assumptions will follow from our definition. We will present an alternative analysis of tenses of the indicative in Russian, based on the Columbia School sign-oriented linguistic framework (hereafter, *CSL*), founded by William Diver and continued by his students<sup>2</sup>. *CSL* views language as “a symbolic tool whose structure is shaped both by its communicative function and by the characteristics of its users” (Dreer, 2007: 258). This definition implies two assumptions: *a*) that language is a device of human communication and *b*) that language is an instance of human behavior.

It follows from the first assumption that the structure and the nature of

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<sup>2</sup> The *CSL* approach is presented in the works of Contini-Morava and Goldberg (1995), Diver (1969, 1981), García (1975), Reid (1979), Tobin (1990a, 1993, 1995).

language are a direct result of its communicative function. Since human communication “requires a set of perceptible signals each of which is associated with some conceptual content” (Contini-Morava, 1995: 2), CSL considers Saussurean signs (signals [*signifiants*] inseparably connected with abstract invariant meanings [*signifiés*]) to be basic analytical units, as opposed to words and sentences. Human communication is not always produced in words and sentences, and the latter are, moreover, too diverse – unlike concrete linguistic signs – to differentiate between ideas “in a clear and constant way” (Saussure 1983: 110). This *communicative factor* or orientation also explains the distribution of signs in language: the sign appears where it does because its single invariant meaning conveys information that contributes to a particular communicative purpose. The encoder uses the relatively abstract invariant meanings of individual signs to convey an infinite number of specific contextual messages. However, the link between an invariant meaning and inferred communicated messages is indirect. If sentences conveyed ideas directly, then the creation of messages, on the one hand, and their comprehension, on the other, would remind one of a computational process. Concepts, contained in lexical and grammatical components of sentences, would be a direct and simple literal summation. It seems more plausible that the whole message is greater than the meanings, conveyed by its component parts. In this case, the abstract invariant meanings of component parts serve as hints by which decoders infer what is being communicated in context. The discontinuity between the invariant meanings of signs and their various messages is bridged by human inferential abilities that constitute the *human factor* or the second assumption of the CSL definition of language. The human factor provides the commitment to take into account *human intelligence*, *memory limitations*, and *human efficiency* that reflect the nature of human beings to strive consistently for maximum communication with minimal effort<sup>3</sup>. It is the human factor that underlies the fact that language possesses a comparably limited number of invariant meanings that can convey an indefinite number of diverse messages to which these meanings contribute. For the same reason, language creates grammatical sets or *interlocks* when one signal has meanings in different grammatical systems simultaneously. In other words, a linguistic item does not

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<sup>3</sup> See Tobin (1995: 11–14, 1997: 20–21) for further discussion.

have a strict single meaning, but rather constitutes a set of concepts that economically represent this item from different points of view. For example, within the system of Russian personal pronouns, the third person singular pronoun *ona* [ona] ‘she’ appears as an interlock of at least four grammatical systems: the System of Person with the meaning *other*<sup>4</sup>, the System of Number with the meaning *one*<sup>5</sup>, the System of Gender with the meaning *female*, and the System of Case with the meaning *high contributor*<sup>6</sup>. In this sense, the CSL notion of interlock differs fundamentally from the traditional notions of several meanings or functions that one form can have. As stated by García (1975: 56):

“To the extent that such varied functions are mutually contradictory, they point to erroneous analysis [...]; to the extent that the various ‘meanings’ are not mutually contradictory, they should be traced, and ascribed, to the context to whose influence they are due. It should be clear that the confluence of different meanings from different systems cannot possibly be contradictory, though it may be more or less coherent.”

### 3.1 Hypotheses

Instead of establishing a catalogue of temporal functions, we will apply the principles of CSL to present an alternative sign-oriented analysis of tense uses in the Russian indicative. This language belongs to so-called aspect-oriented languages with a simplified system of tenses in its inventory, embedded in two aspects – perfective and imperfective. We claim that our analysis can account for both the matched (objective) and the mismatched (subjective) tense-time relationships by virtue of being based on invariant meanings postulated for each verb tense.

## 4. Russian Verb Tense Morphology

We claim that the Russian verb tense morphology represents a semantic interlock of at least two grammatical systems, related to the encoder’s “spatio-temporal-existential and sensory-experiential perception of [occurrences] as the ‘here-and-now’ point of speaking and/or writing [hereafter, *encoding*]” (Tobin 1990b: 464). The larger semantic concept (hereafter, *semantic substance*) of the first system deals with “*whether [an occurrence] has been experienced or*

<sup>4</sup> In her CSL analysis of the Spanish pronoun system, García (1975: 61-71) postulates the meanings *speaker* for the first person pronouns, *hearer* for the second person pronouns and *other* for the third person pronouns.

<sup>5</sup> As stated by Reid (1991), the System of Number for English verbs opposes the meanings *one* for the singular and *more than one* for the plural.

<sup>6</sup> For more details about the CSL analysis of the Russian case system, see Beytenbrat (2011).

*is/was accessible [...] to the senses of the encoder at the point of [encoding], i.e., the 'here and now' of the speech act*" (*ibidem* p. 467, emphasis added). Tobin (1989, 1990b) refers to this deictic system as the System of Experience. Just as in Modern Hebrew, the Russian System of Experience has two invariant meanings:

- (a) *Experienced*, meaning that the occurrence has been perceived or experienced
- (b) *Not-Experienced*, meaning that the occurrence has not been perceived or experienced

Following Barentsen (1973: 6), Isachenko (1960: 80-81), Jakobson (1984: 6), and Vinogradov (2001: 443-445), we define the Russian past as the marked member of the category of tense as opposed to the present and the future. The markedness of the past is reflected, on the one hand, by concrete linguistic signs, namely the stem and the stem endings of the past that differ from those shared by the present and the future. On the other hand, the unmarkedness of the present and the future tenses results from the fact that they both express "unperformed" occurrences that are in progress or not yet realized. Thus, the meaning *Experienced* will be invariably related to the Russian past tense morphology, i.e. the perfective and imperfective past. The meaning *Not-Experienced* will be invariably related to the Russian present and future tense morphology, i.e. the imperfective present as well as the imperfective and perfective future.

When Jakobson (1984: 6) further writes about the Russian preterite (as he calls the past), he states that "this form expresses, in fact, no particular time, but solely a break in the direct connection between the subject and the action". Benveniste (1966) also suggests the distinction between closeness of occurrences to or their remoteness from the encoder's present, by postulating two narrative modes: *discours* 'discourse' and *histoire* 'story, history', each of which uses its own set of verbs. The former emphasizes communication and direct involvement of the encoder and the decoder, while the latter focuses on story telling without direct impact on the encoder. Therefore, we postulate the second system with which the Russian tense morphology constitutes the interlock. Following Tobin (1989, 1990b), we refer to this system as the Space-Time-Existence System whose semantic substance deals with "*the placing of an [occurrence] in relation to the encoder at the point of [encoding], i.e., the 'here and now' of the speech act*" (Tobin 1990b: 466, emphasis added). Just as in Modern Hebrew, the Russian

Space-Tense-Existence System has two invariant meanings:

- (a) *Proximate*, meaning that an occurrence is in spatio-temporal-existential proximity to the encoder and invariably related to the Russian imperfective present morphology, and
- (b) *Remote*, meaning that an occurrence is in spatio-temporal-existential distance from the encoder and invariably related to the Russian imperfective and perfective past and future morphology.

Thus, the Russian tense morphology of the indicative, based on the proposed interlocked grammatical systems, can be represented as follows:

- (a) the Russian present tense simultaneously signals the meanings *Not-Experienced, Proximate*;
- (b) the perfective and imperfective past tenses simultaneously signal the meanings *Experienced, Remote*;
- (c) the perfective and imperfective future tenses simultaneously signal the meanings *Not-Experienced, Remote*.

As previously mentioned, the System of Aspect, represented by the opposition of perfective/imperfective, forms an essential part of the Russian verb morphology. Taking this system into account will allow us to better understand both the most common and exceptional uses of the Russian verb tenses. Following Forsyth (1970: 8), we assume that the Russian perfective “*expresses the action as a total event summed up with reference to a single specific juncture*”, while the imperfective “*does not inherently express the action as a total event summed up with reference to a single juncture*” (*ibidem*, p. 11). Based on these definitions, we claim that the System of Aspect in Russian represents the interlock of at least two grammatical systems. Following Diver (1986) and Tobin (1993), we will conventionally refer to the first system as the System of Orientation that serves roughly to *express the initial or final internal limit of the realization of an occurrence* perceived by the encoder. Within this System of Orientation, the perfective is *marked* for the meaning Result, while the imperfective – *unmarked* for Result, for short. Following Tobin (1990a, 1995), the second system will be referred to as the System of Semantic Integrality that serves to *present occurrences in continuous or discontinuous space, time, or existence*. Within this system, the perfective is *marked* for Semantic Integrality, i.e. it is used for potentially discrete occurrences, perceived as a unified set. On the contrary, the imperfective is *unmarked* for Semantic Integrality, i.e. it is used for occurrences, perceived separately or in a continuous space, but never as “*a single specific juncture*”

(Forsyth 1970: 8). In other words, within this interlock, the perfective means *Result*, *Integrity*, and the imperfective means *Non-Result*, *Non-Integrity*.

Taking into consideration that in Russian the perfective appears in the past and future, while the imperfective appears in the past, present and future, the Russian verb morphology of the indicative with respect to the aspectual-temporal oppositions, based on the proposed interlocked grammatical systems, can be represented as follows:

- (a) the Russian perfective past simultaneously signals the meanings *Experienced*, *Remote*, *Result*, *Integrity*;
- (b) the imperfective past simultaneously signals the meanings *Experienced*, *Remote*, *Non-Result*, *Non-Integrity*;
- (c) the imperfective present simultaneously signals the meanings *Not-Experienced*, *Proximate*, *Non-Result*, *Non-Integrity*;
- (d) the perfective future simultaneously signals the meanings *Not-Experienced*, *Remote*, *Result*, *Integrity*, and
- (e) the imperfective future simultaneously signals the meanings *Not-Experienced*, *Remote*, *Non-Result*, *Non-Integrity*.

It follows from this hypothesis that the use of tense morphology in Russian does not depend upon the real time of the realization of an occurrence (though tense uses often objectively reflect it), but rather on the encoder's subjective view of how this occurrence is related to his/her 'here-and-now' point of encoding. The following data represent the so-called literal and figurative uses of the Russian verb tense morphology in individual examples.

## 5. Tenses in Russian: Analysis of Individual Examples

We will now deal with the examples of the common matched and non-matched uses of tense morphology in Russian to show that all of these uses are motivated by the postulated invariant meanings.

### 5.1 The use of the past tense for past occurrences

- (6) Пятнадцать лет *прошло* с тех пор, как я *окончил* строительный институт [...] За это время я *попысел* и *обрюзг*, *стал* нервным и раздражительным. (Vladimir Voynovich. *Khochu byt' chestnym* 'I Want to be Honest')  
'Fifteen years *have elapsed* since I *graduated* from the Civil Engineering Institute [...] Since then, I *have grown* bald and flabby, *have become* nervous and irritable.
- (7) В то время, когда Серый и Шмырь *спали*, я *ловил* и *варил* рыбу, после *спал* я, они *ловили* и *варили*. (Viktor Astaf'yev. *Tsar' ryba* 'Czar Fish')  
'While Seryy and Shmyr' *were asleep*, I *was fishing* and *cooking* fish, then I

*was asleep, they were fishing and cooking it.'*

In examples (6) and (7), the past tense expresses occurrences that took place in past time, i.e. perceived as happened by the moment of encoding, and emphasizes the temporal detachment of these occurrences from the encoder's 'here and now', even if the consequences of their realization are relevant to this moment, as in example (6). Both examples fit in with the postulated invariant meaning *Experienced, Remote* of the past tense and differ only aspectually. Example (6) is an instance of the use of the perfective to express internally limited occurrences, each of which is viewed as a single whole, which corresponds with its postulated invariant meaning *Result, Integrality*. Example (7) is an instance of the use of the imperfective to express unlimited occurrences without reference to their integrality, which corresponds with its postulated invariant meaning *Non-Result, Non-Integrality*. Since the aspect is not the focus of our analysis here, we will not deal with this system, unless its correlation with the meanings of the Tense System (i.e. Experience–Space–Time–Existence interlock) influences the encoder's choice of the tenses.

## 5.2 The use of the past tense for present occurrences

- (8) И Владимир Семеныч бросил пить. Так бывает: *вошел* клин в сознание – стоп! (Vasiliy Shukshin. *Vladimir Semënych iz myagkoy sektsyi* 'Vladimir Semënych from the Upholstered Furniture Section')

'And Vladimir Semënych had stopped drinking. So happens: a wedge *has driven* into consciousness – stop!'

Example (8) illustrates the use of the perfective past in the context of the so-called habitual present. As stated by Forsyth (1970: 171-172) and Bondarko (1971: 66-70), unlike the actual present, the habitual present extends our experience concerning a past occurrence to similar occurrences in the present and in the future. The postulated invariant meaning *Experienced, Remote, Result, Integrality* of the perfective past makes it appropriate for the expression of typical occurrences. The perfective past presents a single occurrence as if it took place in the way that can serve as a model in other situations in the present so that a wider linguistic (e.g., the verb *бывает* 'happens') and situational context shows that we deal with a typical occurrence here, regardless of formal time reference.

- (9) Батюшка... – Тимофей весь собрался, подполз поближе. – Чего я тебя *хотел* попросить... (Vasiliy Shukshin. *Biletik na vtoroy seans* 'Ticket to the Day Show')

‘Father... – Timofey plucked up his courage, crept up closer. – What I *wanted* to ask you...’

- (10) Я теперь чего сюда прибился? — заходясь в напряженной, едва сдерживаемой ярости, говорил Гуж. — Думаешь, немцам служить? *Чихал* я на немцев. Мне надо рассчитаться с некоторыми. (Vasiliy Bykov. *Znak bedy* ‘Sign of Misfortune’ (1982), taken from the Russian National Corpus)

‘Why did I join them now? – said Guzh, with an intense, hardly restrained rage. – Do you think to do the Germans a favor? I *don't give* a damn for the Germans. I need to settle old scores with some people.’

Examples (9) and (10) are instances of the use of the imperfective past to express present occurrences rather than anteriority to the moment of speech. In example (9), the imperfective past “softens the abruptness of the corresponding sentences with present-tense verbs” (Fleischman 1983: 186). By saying *I wanted to ask you*, the encoder politely implies about his experienced request, leaving the decoder the ‘distance’ to act freely. In the present, this request would sound more insistent. Example (10), on the other hand, emphasizes the distant relationships that the encoder experiences between himself and a wider situational context. Here, the verb, used affirmatively in the imperfective past, actually serves to deny ironically the occurrence in the present (cf. the tense usage in the English translation). But whatever message may be associated with the uses of the imperfective past, all of them suit its postulated invariant meaning *Experienced, Remote, Non-Result, Non-Integrity*.

### 5.3 The use of the past tense for future occurrences

- (11) Узнал, что я в тягости, насмерть перепугался. « Ну, говорит, теперь я *погиб*. И дома узнают – жизни не будет, и со службы попрут ». (Fëdor Abramov. *Dom* ‘The House’)

‘He learned that I was pregnant, got frightened to death. "Well, he said, now I *am done*. They will learn about it at home – I will have no life and they will throw me out of the job”

- (12) Ну ладно, – сказал Володин, – допустим, ты всех внутренних ментов *грохнул*. Так ведь тогда тобой внутренний ОМОН займется. (Viktor Pelevin. *Chapayev i Pustota* ‘Chapayev and Void’ (1996), taken from the Russian National Corpus)

‘Well, – said Volodin. – Say you *banged* up all the local cops. So, then the local OMON will lay you out.’

- (13) Не отдадут, не отдадут, – горько заплакал блондинатлет. – *Плакали* наши денежки, ребята... (Vasiliy Aksënov. *Ozhog* ‘The Burn’)

‘They will not give them back to us, they will not give them back, – the blond athlete started to cry bitterly. – We *can kiss* our money goodbye...’

The common feature of the past and future tenses is to express remoteness from the encoder's 'here and now' point of encoding. By using the past tense, meaning *Experienced, Remote*, as in the set of examples (11)-(13), the encoder presents future occurrences as if they were already witnessed or experienced, i.e. as anticipated *faits accomplis*, which correlates with the postulating invariant meaning. One might argue that example (11) is rather a marginal use of the perfective past, confined to specific perfective verbs (*погиб* 'was killed', *пошел* 'went', etc.). However, example (12) illustrates the use of another type of perfective verbs to imply a future occurrence. Nevertheless, both examples (11) and (12) emphasize a particular result, perceived as a single juncture, impossible to change. The message, conveyed by example (13) with the imperfective past, on the other hand, merely implies that an occurrence did take place without any reference to a specific result or specific point in time, which matches the postulated meaning *Non-Result, Non-Integrity*.

#### 5.4 The use of the present tense for present occurrences

- (14) Туда! Туда! Вон Кенджеш! Вон волчица его *тащит!* – вопила соседка, в ужасе хватаясь за голову. (Chingiz Aytmatov. *Plakha* 'The Scaffold')  
 'That way! That way! Kendzhesh is over there! Look, the wolf *is carrying* him! – yelled the neighbor woman grabbing her head in horror.'
- (15) Бедняки при любых обстоятельствах *терпят* убытки. Бедняков постоянно *штрафуют* [...] Если бедняк случайно *роняет* мелочь, то деньги обязательно *проваливаются* в люк. (Sergey Dovlatov. *Inostranka* 'A Foreign Woman')  
 'The poor in all circumstances *suffer* losses. The poor *are* constantly *finned* [...] If the poor man accidentally *drops* small change, the money always *falls* through a manhole.'

Examples (14) and (15) are instances of the use of the imperfective present for present occurrences. In example (14), the occurrence, expressed by the verb, takes place simultaneously with the encoder's 'here and now' moment of encoding. In example (15), however, we deal with occurrences in the habitual present, which implies, as we previously mentioned, the extension of the encoder's experience to analogous occurrences in the present. Nonetheless, in both examples, these not yet performed occurrences are presented as being really or allegedly perceived by the encoder, that is as being close to his/her 'here and now' moment of encoding, which corresponds to the postulated invariant meaning *Not-Experienced, Proximate, Non-Result, Non-Integrity* of the imperfective present.

### 5.5 The ‘historic’ use of the present tense

- (16) Раз как-то причалились, напарник мой – к бабе одной проворной, та самогонку добрую варганила, а я – к зазнобе своей. *Подхожу* к дому-то, а там меня *поджидают*: человек восемь *стоит*. (Vasilii Shukshin. *Chuzhiye* ‘Strangers’)

‘Once, we landed. My companion – to a nimble woman who used to concoct a good moonshine, and me – to my sweetheart. I *went* up to her home, and there they *had* already *been waiting* for me: there *were* eight of them.’

This is a well-known stylistic or metaphoric use of the imperfective present to express occurrences that happened in the past “as if they *were* being witnessed at the ‘moment of speaking’” (Forsyth 1970: 150). In this example, one can notice that the present tense, meaning *Not-Experienced, Proximate*, is used for the most stirring and emotional occurrences to the encoder (*подхожу* ‘went up’, *поджидают* ‘had been waiting’, *стоит* ‘were’), thus, producing the effect of being experienced live. On the contrary, the past tense, meaning *Experienced, Remote*, is used to report the single (*причалились* ‘landed’) or the repeated (*варганила* ‘used to concoct’) occurrences as being less relevant to the encoder’s story.

### 5.6 The use of the present tense for future occurrences

- (17) Господа, у меня очень м-мало времени. Я собрал вас, чтобы покончить все разом. Завтра – да, собственно, уже нынче – я *покидаю* пределы города... (Boris Akunin. *Lyubovnik smerti* ‘He Lover of Death’)

‘Gentlemen, I have very l-little time. I assembled you to finish all together. Tomorrow – today actually – I *am leaving* the city limits...’

- (18) Ты только представь себе, как сложится дальше жизнь этой девочки — она *растет*, а за ней уже утвердилась слава дьяволицы. В школу *ходит*, девушкой *становится*, а за ней — молва по пятам. [...] И люди *боятся* ее, *шарахаются* от нее. (Eduard Volodarskiy. *Dnevnik samoubiytsy* ‘The Suicide’s Diary’ (1997), taken from the Russian National Corpus)

‘Just imagine how this girl will get along for the rest of her life. She *will grow* up, and her fame of succubus will have strengthened by this time. She *will go* to school, she *will become* a girl, and the rumor – hard on her heels. [...] And people *will be* afraid of her, *will shrink* away from her.’

In example (17), the present tense refers to an arranged, albeit future occurrence, “viewed as if it were already a reality, i.e., relevant and most salient to the speaker’s point-of-view at the ‘here and now’ point of [encoding]” (Tobin 1989: 67). Example (18) is an instance of the use of the present tense in a wider context that refers to imaginary future occurrences. Unlike example (17) above where the encoder outlines what he will be doing, in example (18) the encoder imagines the

future occurrences as if they were part of the present (cf. Bondarko 1971: 154-159). Nevertheless, both examples do not differ grammatically: in both of them, the encoders use the imperfective present, meaning *Not-Experienced, Proximate*, to picture the future occurrences as if they were happening before their very eyes.

### 5.7 The use of the future tense for future occurrences

(19) Вечером он сказал Жене: « В следующую субботу *уйду* ». (Boris Akunin. *Smert' Akhileisa* 'The Death of Achilles')

'In the evening, he told Zhenya: « I *will leave* next Saturday. »'

(20) В следующий раз *будешь драться* честнее. (Boris Akunin. *Smert' Akhileisa* 'The Death of Achilles')

'Then next time, you *will fight* fair.'

The same detachment from the encoder's 'here and now' moment of encoding, observed for the past occurrences in examples (6)-(13) above, holds for occurrences in the future tense, as in examples (19) and (20), with the only difference: here, the encoder does not perceive these occurrences as taken place. Both examples are consistent with the postulated invariant meaning *Not-Experienced, Remote* of the future tense and differ only aspectually, i.e. with respect to the expression of result and semantic integrality. The perfective future in example (19) expresses "a single prospective action as a total event" (Forsyth 1970: 131), whereas the imperfective future in example (20) emphasizes rather a future occurrence in its duration.

### 5.8 The use of the future tense for present occurrences

By their pragmatic implications, we distinguish between the uses of the future tense to express actual present occurrences and those that express typical occurrences.

(21) Граждане, громко объявил капитан, все задержаны до соответствующих распоряжений. *Попрошу* следовать за мной. (Vasiliy Aksënov. *Skazhi izyum* 'Say Cheese!')

"Citizens", the captain announced loudly, "everybody is detained until further notice. *Please* follow me.'

Example (21) illustrates the use of the perfective future for a request at the moment of its actual realization. This situational context is similar to that in the past tense, as in example (9) above. In both examples, "the participants have either clear-cut roles, or are strangers, [which] may be interpreted as reflecting a certain kind of 'distance' between them" (Tobin 1990b: 474). But, unlike example (9), in (21) the complete realization of the occurrence is still anticipated, which correlates

with the invariant meaning *Not-Experienced, Remote*, postulated for the future tense.

- (22) А ты чей же *будешь*, чтой-то я никак не *признаю*. (Vladimir Voynovich. *Stepen' doveriya* 'A Degree of Trust')  
 'And whose boy then *are* you? I just *can't recognize* you for some reason.'

Example (22) illustrates the use of both the imperfective and perfective future within the same sentence to express actual present occurrences. The imperfective future presents a fact as if it were not yet established, i.e. not yet experienced, and whose verification were the matter of the immediate future. From the negated perfective future, the decoder infers "the inability of the subject to achieve the total performance and result of the action" (Forsyth 1970: 143). Negation of the desired result also produces the effect of distance between the encoder's 'here and now' moment of encoding and the potentiality to achieve this result. Here again, both inferred messages are motivated by the postulated meaning *Not-Experienced, Remote* of the future and differ only in whether or not they make a specific claim concerning result and semantic integrality.

- (23) Чонкин? – Циля посмотрела на мужа, как на глупого человека. – Ха! Он *будет* мне еще *говорить*! А как же тогда Ривкин и Зускин? (Vladimir Voynovich. *Zhizn' i neobychnyye priklucheniya soldata Ivana Chonkina* 'The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin')  
 'Chonkin? – Tsilya looked at her husband as if he were a stupid. Ha! You *don't say* so! Then how about Rivkin and Zuskin?'

In example (23), the imperfective future is used to express the encoder's indignation, caused, following Bondarko (1971: 169), by incompatibility between the decoder as a person, deserving only the encoder's contempt, on the one hand, and the opinion that he dares give in the present and, who knows, maybe expect to do this in the future, on the other. Again, the postulated invariant meaning *Not-Experienced, Remote, Non-Result, Non-Integrality* of the imperfective future contributes to express these distant relationships between the encoder and the decoder.

- (24) Мучаемся, а не боремся. Устаем. *Приедешь* на дачу, *затопишь* камин, смотришь на огонь – обожаю, между прочим, на огонь смотреть, – а из огня на тебя... какое-нибудь мурло смотрит. (Vasilii Shukshin. *General Malafeykin*)  
 'We suffer, but don't fight. We get tired. You *come* to the dacha, *light* a fire, watch it burning – I love, by the way, looking at the flames – and some snout stares at you out of the fire.'

(25) Вот бывает так, ты *будешь идти* – на тебя все на улице *будут оглядываться*, а она хоть сама прилипай – а никому не нужна. (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. *V krughe pervom* ‘In the First Circle’)

‘It happens when you *walk*, everybody along the street *turns around* to look at you – but even if she throws herself on somebody, nobody will want her.’

Examples (24)-(25) illustrate the quite common use of the perfective future and the occasional use of the imperfective future, respectively, in the context of the habitual present. These uses imply the encoder’s anticipation or expectation of occurrences, similar to those he/she experienced before (cf. Potebnia 1941: 106), which corresponds one more time with the postulated meaning *Not-Experienced, Remote* of the future tense. The difference between examples (24) and (25) lies within the System of Aspect. As mentioned above, the use of the perfective future, as it appears in example (24), is often referred to as “the perfective present” or “perfective present-future” (Forsyth 1970: 120, Bondarko 1962: 29-30, 1971: 54-55). The difference with the imperfective present is obvious. While the present tense refers to multiple regular occurrences, in this example, the perfective future presents “a recurrent action (or a multiple action in general) not in flat ‘blanket’ fashion, but, as it were, by selecting one occasion, one complete performance, and holding this up as a sample of the recurrent phenomenon” (Forsyth 1970: 174). We see that this use fits in with the postulated invariant meaning *Result, Integrality* of the perfective future. The imperfective future in (25), however, emphasizes the duration of a typical occurrence in the present, implying that it may be repeated in the future. This use also corresponds with the postulated meaning *Non-Result, Non-Integrality* of the imperfective future.

### 5.9 The use of the future tense for past occurrences

(26) Академик Е. Чазов – человек, непосредственно отвечавший за здоровье советских руководителей [...], впоследствии *напишет*: «В конце концов страна потеряла конкретное руководство. [...] (Yegor Gaydar. *Gibel’ Imperii : uroki dlya sovremennoy Rossii* ‘Collapse of an Empire: Lessons for Modern Russia’ (2006), taken from the Russian National Corpus)

‘The Academy member Ye. Chazov, a man who was directly responsible for the health of the Soviet leaders [...], *would write* later: “In the end, the country lost its own leadership. [...]’

(27) ...и под новый 1962 год мы с женой повезли мой хранимый архив к её приятелю Теушу в Москву (через три с половиной года он-то и *будет* захвачен опричниками). (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. *Bodalsya telënok s dubom* ‘The Oak and the Calf’)

‘...and on the eve of 1962, my wife and I took my archive to her friend Teush in Moscow (three and a half years later, it *would be* taken by oprichniki).’

Examples (26)-(27), represent the so-called future-in-the-past use of the future tense when it refers to a past occurrence, posterior to other past occurrences, as being a future occurrence. As previously stated, both the future and past tenses contribute to express the distance between occurrences and the encoder's 'here and now' moment of encoding. However, unlike the past, the future tense emphasis is on the encoder's anticipation or expectation of occurrences rather than on presenting them "as a reality at the point of speaking" (Tobin 1990b: 471). This emphasis is contributed to by the postulated invariant meaning *Not-Experienced, Remote* of the future. Therefore, the encoder uses the future tense, as in (26)-(27) above, to deal with facts that are less relevant to the actual narration but may be important to the understanding of subsequent events.

- (28) Альма совсем одичала, начисто. Лает на меня, как будто я чужой. Я раз не выдержал, подошел и тоже – как *залаю*. Напугал ее до смерти... (Sergey Dovlatov. *Zona* 'The Zone')  
 'Alma has grown completely wild. She barks at me as if I were a stranger. Once I could not stand it, came up and also suddenly *started to bark*. I scared her to death.'

Example (28) is an instance of a very expressive use that the perfective future has in its inventory when in the context of the past tense, together with the particle *как*, it depicts "a single unexpected and violent action interrupting the even tenor of narration" (Forsyth 1970: 152). Following Potebnia (1941: 116), we claim that the turn *как* 'so much' + *future*, used for past occurrences, emphasizes causal rather than temporal relationships between so-called main and subordinate clauses. In such messages, the consequence is either omitted, i.e. inferred from the causal subordinate clause, or deemphasized. The more the consequence is deemphasized, the more attention the cause deserves. As a result, the cause in focus together with the postulated invariant meaning *Not-Experienced, Remote, Result, Integrality* of the perfective future produce the communicative effect of a sudden, unexpected occurrence.

- (29) Ночь истекала. А луна все сияла. Вся деревня была залита бледным, зеленовато-мертвым светом. И тихо-тихо. Ни собака нигде не *залает*, ни ворота не *скрипнут*. (Vasiliy Shukshin. *Kalina Krasnaya* 'Snowball Berry Red')  
 'The night was running out. The moon kept shining. The whole village was full of a pale, greenish-dead light. All was quiet. No dog *barked*, no gate *creaked*.'

The postulated invariant meaning *Not-Experienced, Remote, Result,*

*Integrality* of the perfective future underlies its use not only in the context of the habitual present, as in example (24) above, but also in the context of the past tense to express the encoder's anticipation concerning "the sporadic performance of single actions, or of a number of actions not connected with each other in any sequence" (Forsyth 1970: 180). Example (29) illustrates the use of the negated perfective future for occurrences that were expected to take place, at least occasionally, but which in fact did not. The use of the past, meaning *Experienced*, *Remote*, which, in this context, would not break into the narration, would lose the communicative effect of unexpectedness or suddenness.

- (30) В Москве у меня был парень, герой моего романа. Если я уезжала куда-нибудь, он обязательно провожал. Яблоко мне на дорогу *вымоеет*, в Шереметьево *отвезет*, час *будет махать* рукой, хотя знает, что я его уже не вижу. Потом *приедет* встретить, хотя, казалось бы, зачем меня встречать? – сама могу сесть в машину и доехать. (Yelena Khanga. *Pro vsë* 'About everything' (2000), taken from the Russian National Corpus)  
 'In Moscow, I had a guy, the hero of my romance. If I left somewhere, he always saw me off. He *would wash* me an apple that I could eat on the journey, *would take* me up to Sheremetyevo and *wave* his hand for an hour, though he knew that I could no longer see him. Then he *would come* back to meet me, though, one would think, what for? – I could get into the car and drive alone.'

Example (30) illustrates the difference between the perfective and imperfective future used within the same sentence to express reminiscences of repeated occurrences. While the perfective future emphasizes the expected sequence of these occurrences with reference to their result, the imperfective future focuses on the anticipated duration of the occurrence, indicated lexically (*час будет махать* 'would wave for an hour'). Again, despite this aspectual difference, both messages are contributed to by the postulated meaning *Not-Experienced*, *Remote* of the future.

## 6. Conclusion

To summarize, we have presented a functional sign-oriented analysis of the use of the verb tense morphology in Russian. We have based this study on the CSL premise that language is "[a] system of systems composed of various sub-systems (revolving around the notion of the linguistic sign) which are organized internally and systematically related to each other and used by human beings to communicate" (Tobin 1995: 7). This has meant our commitment to base our analysis of both time-tense matched and mismatched uses on interlocked grammatical systems composed of invariant meanings rather than on diverse

polysemic and ad hoc meanings that reflect real-time relationships.

We have also illustrated the applicability of the adopted CSL sign-oriented approach by multiple examples of the tense uses. We realize that these examples alone do not allow us to be sure that the encoder's choice of the tenses is not random. Therefore, it would be useful to examine how the tenses will be distributed within texts and whether or not their distribution will be confirmed quantitatively. However, this subject is outside the immediate scope of this paper and needs further research.

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