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#### ITERATIVE VERBS IN WEST SLAVIC LANGUAGES, ESPECIALLY IN CZECH

This paper is a sort of interlude between Bílý (1984) and (1985). After the promises made implicitly in Bílý (1984) it may seem less satisfactory to present an aspect description that is quite conventional in that it defines the so-called iterative aspect as the marked member of the privative opposition between the iterative aspect and the imperfect aspect. This is not exactly an innovation, either (cf. Kopečný 1962). However, the kernel of the problem is the nature of the semantic feature that the iterative aspect is supposed to carry. In my opinion, I have found the correct feature thanks to my more general research into aspect systems, which made it possible for me to dispose of certain misconceptions and theoretical deficiencies in aspect descriptions that I criticized in Bílý (1984). This interlude may be thus justified.

In modern Russian literary language only a few residues of the iterative aspect can be found, e.g. *pisyvat'*, *čityvat'*, *govarivat'*, *znavat'* etc. Such unprefixed verb formation from imperfective verbs is unproductive. The verbs are almost exclusively used for expressing habitual actions related only to the past, they are considered characteristic of an older, and on the whole sub-literary style of language. Sometimes they are used with the intent of mocking an old-fashioned and pompous style of speech. (Cf. Forsyth 1970, 28 and 168-171.) Some of them are however quite frequent in colloquial Russian, as Karcevskij's (1927, 105) characterization of such verbs as "verbes rarissimes" is an apparent oversimplification. As has been noticed by Barnetová (1956), this verb formation is still productive in some Northern Russian dialects. The marginal nature of Russian iteratives is however obvious and, as far as I know, nobody has ever proposed to treat them as a third aspect in Russian.

The situation is quite different in the West Slavic languages, especially in Czech and Slovak. In Polish the situation is not quite clear, and Polish may represent an intermediate stage of development between Czech and Russian. (It is worth noticing that the existing Russian counterparts to the West Slavic iteratives have not fully retained their original iterative meaning. There is nothing iterative

in, e.g. ... *a čto i videla - ne vidala, ... or Slychali novost'?*.)

As this paper will show, the term "iterative" is a misnomer, but I have retained it since it is the generally accepted term and there is hardly any satisfactory substitute. However, before looking at the West Slavic iteratives, we have to look at definitions of some of the semantic features that are used in Bílý (1985) and at the marking conventions used there. A verb may be marked in one of seven possible ways:

- +X feature means that the verb in question is positively specified as to the X feature. Thus it can only occur in those contexts that imply +X.
- X feature means that the verb is negatively specified, i.e. the feature can be paraphrased as +Non-X. Thus the verb can only occur in those contexts that imply -X.
- (+)/(-)X feature means that the verb is positively specified as to the third alternative, which is either 'both +X and -X' or 'neither +X nor -X'. The verb can occur in (+)/(-)X contexts only.
- +/-X feature means that the verb is thoroughly unmarked. It can occur in +X, -X, and (+)/(-) contexts, i.e. in any context.
- (+/-)X feature means that the verb is positively specified as +X or -X, i.e. it can occur in +X contexts and in -X contexts, but it cannot occur in (+)/(-)X contexts.
- (+)/-X feature means that the verb is negatively specified as to the +X feature ('+Non-plus-X'). Thus the verb can occur in -X contexts, and (+)/(-)X contexts, but it cannot occur in +X contexts.
- +/(-)X feature means that the verb is negatively specified as to the -X-feature ('+Non-non-plus-X', which is not the same as +X, since it includes even the third alternative). Thus the verb can occur in +X contexts and in (+)/(-)X contexts, but it cannot occur in -X contexts.

The features relevant for this paper are M, H, AS, T and AC. (Of course, the capital letters are initials of the names of the semantic features. Since any explicit terminology may be misleading, when we use a term that has been used by others before us, I will not reveal what terms I have in mind.) The features are explicitly and strictly defined as follows:

- +M: The description of the existing "state of affairs" is compatible with the time adverbial that conveys the exact timepoint or that gives examples of exact timepoints. The description of the "state of affairs" is not compatible with time adverbials of duration for a single event (in case of a "state of affairs" that describes a repeated event).
- M: The exact timepoint(s) cannot be conveyed, while time adverbials of duration are possible.
- (+)/(-)M: Both time adverbials of duration and momentary time adverbials are compatible with the description of the existing "state of affairs".
- +H: The "state of affairs" consists of a single event that occurs an unspecified number of times.
- H: The "state of affairs" consists of a single event that occurs once only.
- (+)/(-)H: The "state of affairs" consists of a single event that occurs a specified number of times, more than once.
- +AS defined as to the predication: No +H-marker is compatible with the +AS feature.
- AS defined as to the predication: A +H-marker is unnecessary owing to the semantics of the whole predication.
- (+)/(-)AS defined as to the predication: A +H-marker is necessary if a +H "state of affairs" is to be expressed.
- +AS defined as to the verb itself: The feature implies that the event in question is going on at the moment of speech, if the present tense is used (except for the use of historical present tense).
- AS defined as to the verb itself: The feature implies that the event in question does not go on at the moment of speech.
- (+)/(-)AS defined as to the verb itself: The feature is not specified, there is no implication.
- +T: If there had been any break in the "state of affairs" in question, the same predicate kernel could have been used at a suitable moment of speech without any change of meaning. (The predicate kernel is defined as the whole predication minus "unnecessary"

time adverbials. "A suitable moment of speech" is a formulation that is necessary in order to take care of keeping the same tense. If, e.g. "Peter keeps on writing a letter", a new "now-point", a new moment of speech must be chosen so that the same grammatical tense may be used.)

- T: If there had been any break in the "state of affairs" in question, the same predicate kernel could not have been used. (For example, if "Peter finished writing his letter", a break in the "state of affairs" described would mean that Peter did not finish writing his letter.)
- (+)|(-)T: The situation described for +T would occur for some breaks only, while the situation described for -T would occur for some other breaks. (For example, if "Peter has overslept", some breaks in his sleeping would not change the truth value of the sentence in question, while other (earlier) breaks would mean that the situation described as oversleeping would not occur at all.)
- +AC: The description of the "state of affairs" presents the "state of affairs" as highly salient and relevant at the moment of speech.
- AC: The description of the "state of affairs" presents the "state of affairs" as insalient and irrelevant at the moment of speech.
- (+)|(-)AC: The description of the "state of affairs" is unmarked (unspecified) as to the salience and relevance of the "state of affairs" in question for the moment of speech.

The term "state of affairs" is used throughout the definitions as the most general term possible for any sort of state, activity etc. that is described by the predication in question.

To put it in a simplified way, the West Slavic iterative verbs are formed (with some exceptions) in a uniform way by a derivation from the corresponding imperfect verb. (I refrain from an analysis of what the derivational morpheme is morphophonologically and the problem of whether the morpheme in question is a suffix or an infix, since this would demand a long presentation of my phonological and morphological concepts, which will be presented elsewhere.) It may suffice for our purpose to exemplify the derivation with a typical, productive

example, such as the Czech *psát* vs. *psávat* or the Polish *pisać* vs. *pisywać* ('to write', imperfective vs. iterative). In Slovak there is an alternative way of derivation for some verbs, where a lengthening of the stem vowel is involved, e.g. *kupovat'* vs. *kupovávat'* or *kupúvat'* ('to buy' imperfective vs. iterative). However these two derivations are interchangeable in all contexts, the form *kupúvat'* being a mere doublet based on another dialect.

On the other hand there has been a long controversy among Bohemists as to the semantic nature of Czech iteratives. (Cf. Poldauf 1949, 1964, 1966a, 1966b, Kopečný 1962, 1965, 1966, Němec 1964 etc.) All authors seem to agree on the semantic features that constitute an iterative verb, namely that the iteratives are to be plus marked for "multiplicity" and "non-actuality". (There is no really satisfactory English equivalent for the Czech terms "násobenost" and "neaktuálnost". Iterativity would have been much better for the former Czech term and Kučera (1981) does use it, but the feature "násobenost" is one of two semantic features claimed to be present in iterative verbs. It is therefore rather misleading. As to "non-actuality", it must be taken in its less usual, secondary English meaning similar to the French "actuel" or the German "aktual".) The term "non-actuality" is intended to denote the inability of an iterative verb to express an event simultaneous with the very moment of speech. The term "multiplicity" has never been strictly defined by the quoted Czech authors, but it is obviously meant to express that an action is repeated.

It is claimed that most perfective and imperfective verbs are unmarked as regards the feature "multiplicity" i.e. they may be used, according to the verbal context and the situation, for expressing single or repeated actions. There also exist some perfective verbs, so-called distributives, that explicitly specify the action as repeated, e.g. *pootvírat (okna)* 'to open (the windows) or by one'. On the other hand, the so-called indeterminate verbs of motion are, of course, imperfective and also semantically plus-marked by the feature "multiplicity". Up to this point the authors are in agreement. The dividing line concerns the nature of the two semantic features in question. Everybody considers the feature "multiplicity" a mere matter of lexicon. Poldauf is of the same opinion as to the feature "non-actuality", but Kopečný claims that "non-actuality" is grammaticalized, i.e. it constitutes the marking of a third iterative aspect. Kopečný's stance is mainly based on morphological reasoning - all primary imperfective verbs, i.e. those that are not derived from perfective verbs, may build iteratives in a

phologically uniform way (with an unproductive little group of exceptions, such as *vídat*, *slýchat*, *jídat*. Poldauf's standpoint is less explicable and rather piquant. He (as well as the other authors quoted) applies only privative oppositions in the traditional structuralistic sense to his aspect descriptions. There is an agreement among Czech linguists (except for Kučera 1981) concerning the nature of the semantic opposition between simple imperfective verbs which are unmarked and corresponding iterative verbs which are marked. A structuralist of the Prague school should have been rather happy with this description and should have accepted the iteratives as the third aspect, since these behave as a structuralist's dream of privative oppositions, viz. the marked iteratives are nearly always substitutable by the corresponding unmarked imperfective verbs.

There are several unsolved problems in the existing descriptions of Czech iteratives:

1. The difference between any kind of repeated actions and our +H feature is neglected. Both the Czech iteratives and the indeterminate verbs of motion (differing from, e.g., the Russian ones) are incompatible with repetitions occurring a specified number of times:

- (1) \* *Pětkrát psával dopis*. 'Five times he wrote (iterative) a letter.'
- (2) \* *Dvakrát chodil do kina*. 'Twice he went (iterative) to the cinema.'

The +H marked verbs of motion in Czech consist of an unspecified number of instances of the corresponding determinate verb. For example, *chodit* = 'jít an unspecified number of times'. A sentence such as (3) is thus possible, but it may only be interpreted as something like 'on two occasions he went round the table an unspecified number of times':

- (3) *Dvakrát chodil kolem stolu*.

(It is doubtful whether (2) can be given a similar interpretation 'during two distinctly separate time periods he went to the cinema an unspecified number of times'.)

2. The difference between +H verbs which need a simple counterpart in a verb unmarked as regards the H feature (such as *nosit* - *nést* /'carry', iter.-imperfective/ or *psávat* - *psát* /'write', iter.-imperfective/) and verbs that describe an activity that is analyzable into smaller physical actions (such as *natírat* (ipf) or *natřít* (pf))

'to paint with a brush') is not observed. Both sorts are talked about as if they were equally marked as regards "multiplicity". This mixture of semantic analysis and analysis of what goes on in the extra-linguistic reality is quite absurd. In this way of thinking we could categorically deny, for example, any semantic connection between the verbs *tie* and *untie*, since tying one's shoes consists of physical movements utterly different from those carried on in untying one's shoes.

3. Verbs like *stýkat se* 'be in touch, associate with', *vládnout* 'govern, rule', *dopisovat si* 'correspond with each other' are claimed to be marked as regards "multiplicity" and "non-actuality". Again an analysis of the extra-linguistic reality is used for the analysis of the verbs in question. For example, a verb such as *vládnout* 'rule, govern' is a sort of superordinate without any corresponding subordinate. It is a "summary-verb", describing a lot of various activities that have some common denominator but where it is difficult to draw borderlines. Can eating a dinner with a foreign ambassador be subsumed under 'governing'? The superordinate nature of this verb is confirmed by the impossibility to use it for concrete actions. We cannot say "*Král/president vládne*" when the king/president is putting his signature under a law etc. "To govern" in connection with concrete actions is only possible in various secondary uses, such as metaphors, irony etc. ("The chief was busily governing and sent two more missionaries into the cooking-pot.") Similarly *dopisovat si* 'to correspond' is a superordinate of a rather vague nature and without any natural candidate for a single event. (Besides, what should the single event be like? What is the basic element summarized by "corresponding"? Something like "to send a letter to somebody plus to receive a letter from him/her".) Verbs of this kind are thus not +H marked in our description. They are -M marked and +/-H unmarked. (See Appendix A for the feature analysis of some typical verbs as regards M, H, AS, T and AC features.)

4. At times it is quite obvious that certain preconceived concepts are forced upon language facts. Thus Poldauf (1949, 126ff) describes the verb in *Šel kolem stolu* 'He went (imperfective) round the table' as "actual" and "non-multiple", the verb in *Chodil kolem stolu* 'He went (imperf., non-determinate verb) round the table' as "actual" and "multiple", and the verb in *Chodíval tam* 'He used to go (iterative) there' as "non-actual" and

"multiple". Since two oppositions are used in this description, two times two possibilities give rise to four possible feature combinations. And, indeed, Poldauf finds the missing combination in *Chodil tam* 'He used to go (imperfective, non-determinate) there ', which he claims is "non-actual" and "non-multiple". This is merely a result of a wishful binaristic thinking. It is both antiintuitive and it remains unsupported by any linguistic reasoning. On the other hand, had Poldauf appeared to be right in his claim, then the features "multiplicity" and "non-multiplicity" would have lost any comprehensible meaning and would have become mere labels dictated by the linguist's unprovable faith.

5. Anyway, with certain uses of iterative verbs it is impossible to talk about "non-actuality" and "multiplicity" in the sense these terms are used by the quoted authors.

(4) *Stával tam dvoupatrový dům.* 'A two-story house used to stand (iterative) there.'

(4) does not at all mean that the house only stood there sometimes. The participants of the Czech controversy on the nature of iterative verbs are surprisingly in agreement about such cases. They all accept the idea of the "mental frame", presented in Kopečný (1962, 15), i.e. they claim that what is expressed by (4) is that the speaker saw the house now and then. (Strangely enough Kopečný (1966, 260) seems to go into a polemic against his own feature over the same example sentence.) Kučera (1981, 179 ff.) refuses the far-fetched interpretations of mental frames and asserts that the meaning of (4) is 'the house stood there a (very) long time ago'. (The use of iteratives in the past tense for expressing actions that took place a long time ago, is dutifully noted by Czech linguists, but it has never played any part in the theoretical analyses.)

We may add that things are even worse in the present tense:

(5) *Knihkupectví mívá tu knihu ve výloze.* 'The bookshop has (iter.) the book in the shopwindow.'

It is claimed, as could be expected, that "the speaker sees the book at times", i.e. the idea of a mental frame is applied again. In fact, (5) should be paraphrased as something like "I am not sure if the book still is in the shop-window, it was there quite recently, but I do not dare draw the conclusion that it is still there." Cf. the impossibility of (6):



(6) \**Knihkupectví určitě mívá tu knihu ve výloze.*

*Určitě* 'certainly' is not compatible with the uncertainty of (5).

As to the term "non-actuality", it cannot mean 'a any other time than the moment of speech'. To take care of other things than the present tense, the "actuality" and "non-actuality" is said to be transposable to other grammatical tenses. (No definition of the term transposition used in this sense has ever been given.) But since we cannot accept the escape clause of mental frames, it still remains quite mysterious, why (4) should be considered "non-actual".

Kučera (1981) comes nearest to the truth in his analysis of Czech iteratives. According to him they denote repeated actions or actions in a distant past. (4) with its subject that denotes a practically immobile object thus gets the latter interpretation, while (7) gets the former one.

(7) *Stával tam voják.* 'A soldier used to stand (iter. there).'

The iterative verbs cannot therefore be used in the "actual" meaning, which we can translate from Kučera's terminology as the impossibility of combining an iterative verb with a single exact point of time generally:

(8) \**Zrovna teď mi psává dopis.* 'Just now he write (iter.) a letter to me.'

(9) \**Když jsem vešel do pokoje, Petr hrával na klavír* 'When I entered the room, Peter played (iter.) the piano'

(10) \**Budu vás čekávat v sedm hodin večer.* 'I shall expect/wait for (iter.) you at seven p.m.'

When the meaning of a distant past is the only sensible interpretation owing to the semantics of the given sentence, Kučera claims that time adverbials which denote recent time period are impossible:

(11) \**Až do včerejška jsem ji míval rád.* 'Until yesterday I loved (iter.) her.'

(As we shall see, this is not the whole truth.) Kučera's theoretical conclusion is the following: iteratives express either a distant past or quantified states. This is hardly satisfactory.

(12) *Maminka sedává na pavlači.* 'Mummy sits (iter.) on the porch.'

To say that (12) has the truth value "True at the moment of speech" (but what is asserted is not an activity at the moment of speech but rather a state in the sense of Vendler (1967)), is merely a paraphrase of "non-actuality" in the fashionable Vendlerian terminology. It is not quite a felicitous paraphrase, either. According to Vendler (1967), verbs expressing a state do not have progressive forms in English. Thus verbs as *love*, *hate*, *know* etc. are normally used to express states. But consequently both, e.g. *milovat* and the iterative *milovávat* 'to love' are verbs of state. Kučera does not explain what a quantified state is supposed to be, which is rather disappointing. The English ing-test does not work for Kučera's quantified states:

(13) *Maminka často sedává na pavlači.*

(13) may be translated as "Mummy is often sitting on the porch.", while (14) does not allow the progressive form in the English equivalent:

(14) *Občas znává správné odpovědi.* \*'At times he is knowing the correct answers.'

Pöldauf (1964, 49) made an interesting remark in passing on the nature of iteratives - they are not suitable for characterization purposes. This cannot be taken at its face value; (15) does characterize the person as a regular visitor.

(15) *Chodívá tam každý den.* 'He goes (iter.) there every day.'

However, it is true that all iteratives are marked by the feature AC, i.e. they are not suitable for propositions that assert something with a high degree of relevance and salience at the moment of speech. Kopečný (1962, 20) noticed the inappropriateness of the iterative verb in (16):

(16) A: *Chodí Váš syn do školy?* B: \**Chodívá.* 'Does your son attend school? (lit.) He attends (iter.).'

His conclusion that iteratives express irregular and sporadic actions was however false, not being generally valid. This is witnessed by our (15). (Havránek - Jedlička (1960, 228) reached exactly the opposite conclusion from other specific examples, viz. that iteratives are used for frequent and regularly repeated actions!) On the other hand, it is true that the asterisk-marked answer of (16) says something like "He cannot be characterized as a school-attender" or "I would not dare to claim that he

The feature -AC carried by the iterative verbs makes them utterly unsuitable in predications expressing a genuine relevant property of the subject's referent. We must use the +H marked but +/-AC unmarked verb of motion if we want to say that a child is capable of walking, we cannot use the +H and -AC marked iterative verb:

(24) *Ona chodí.* (lit.) 'She walks', i.e. 'She can walk.'  
definitely not

(25) \**Ona chodívá.* (iterative)

Even the eternal truths cannot be expressed via an iterative verb, which should have been possible if the concept of mental frames had any relevance:

(26) *Dvakrát dvě jsou čtyři.* 'Two times two is four.'

or

(27) *Dvakrát dvě budou čtyři.* (lit.) 'Two times two will be four.',

but definitely not

(28) \**Dvakrát dvě bývají čtyři.*

with the iterative verb. There is a semantic difference between (26) and (27). (27) has an additional meaning of uncertainty, which is absent from (26). (28) is thoroughly wrong. On the other hand, when the verb is to express a genuinely untypical, occasional property, a similar sentence becomes possible. Somewhen in the fifties a Hungarian film was shown in Czechoslovakia under the title of (29):

(29) *Dvakrát dvě je někdy pět.* 'Two times two is at times five'  
In this case a corresponding iterative verb can be used:

(30) *Dvakrát dvě bývá někdy pět.*

What is expressed by (30) is exactly that 'being five' is not a typical, always valid property of 'two times two'.

For the sake of brevity I refrain from commenting on the iterative verbs in Slovak, apart from saying that the situation is quite similar to the use and meaning of Czech iteratives. The situation in Polish deserves however at least some comment.

There is a great deal of uncertainty and individual and dialectal variation in the use of Polish iteratives. Some informants consider them archaic or marked stylistically as belonging to the poetic or "solemn" style. This

is at school now", which does equal (more or less) "He does not attend school regularly" in this context. (5), which must carry the -AC feature, gets then the above-mentioned interpretation. Similarly, (4) is used in the non-characterizing sense, it is irrelevant now, it was a long time ago. Notice the possibility of using past tense iteratives accompanied by time adverbials that mean 'recently' and similar expressions:

- (17) *Ještě včera tu s námi sedával.* 'As long as yesterday he sat (iter.) here with us.'

Contrary to Kučera's analysis, this is a perfectly correct sentence, which can be used to express something like "He is not with us any more, he has died suddenly / left us suddenly, his sitting here cannot be considered as characterizing him now, it is merely a memory."

The future tense is normally closely connected with Now. A statement on what an entity will be, will do etc. does present an actual characterization of the entity. Iteratives are therefore very rare in the future tense and always seem to require quite a special context. (Kopečný asserts that they are thoroughly ordinary. It is however symptomatic, that he, who otherwise uses exceptions, is forced to construct an example sentence of dubious value to support his claim.) Here is one example of such a special context:

- (18) *Zas bude psávat anonymní dopisy.* 'He will write (iter.) anonymous letters again.'

(18) is a perfectly correct sentence, which indicates "He wrote anonymous letters, he does not write them now, but he will write them again."

It should be added that there is no doubt that the "luxurious" iterative verbs, being substitutable by their unmarked imperfective counterparts, often take on an extra expressive function. This is especially so in such instances, where the iterative verbs are not to be expected too often - such as in the future tense of our example (18). To be sure one will be able to convey the emotional value, one can always use the expanded forms of iterative verbs, formed by an extra infix -va-, which may be reduplicated. Thus *psával* 'he wrote', iter., *psávával* (with the long vowel in the basic iterative infix), *psávávával* etc. 'he used to write a very, very long time ago'; *mívá* 'he has', iter., *mívává*, *mívávává* etc. 'he has once in a great while', etc. While the expressive infix is used in the past tense to emphasize the faraway past it has the

definite connotation of a more sporadic action in the present and the future tense.

Certain expressions are more or less incompatible with the -AC feature, either generally or in the present and the future tense, which are naturally more apt to express actual characterizations relevant for the time of speech. *Jen* 'only' is such a modifier that gives the meaning of a predication an "absolute" validity, relevant for the time of speech:

- (19) ?? *Petr kouřívá jen doutníky.* / ?? *Petr bude kouřivat jen doutníky.* 'Peter smokes (iter.) only cigars.' / 'Peter will smoke (iter.) only cigars.'
- (20) ? *Petr kouříval jen doutníky.* 'Peter smoked (iter.) only cigars.'

The last sentence sounds a great deal better than (19), but it is of a dubious acceptability. All three sentences assert that Peter is/was/will only be a cigar-smoker and do make a sort of absolute characterization that must be somehow relevant even at the moment of speech. *Vždy* is hardly compatible with the present tense, either:

- (21) ? *Vždy psává krásné verše.* 'He always writes (iter.) beautiful poetry.'

However, the less a sentence should be interpreted as containing an exceptionless 'always', the more it is compatible with iteratives:

- (22) *Vždy když přijdu, sedává u televize.* 'Every time come, he sits (iter.) in front of the TV.'
- (23) *Vždy v sobotu sedává v hospodě.* (lit.) 'Always on Saturday he sits (iter.) in a pub.'

We may thus conclude that not all iterative verb are necessarily marked +H - cf. *stávat* ('stand', iter.) or *mívat* ('have', iter.), which are marked (+/-)H, while most other iteratives are +H. The semantic feature common to all Czech iteratives is -AC, while all other verbs, perfectives, imperfectives, and even the so-called indefinite verbs of motion are unmarked, i.e. +/-AC. The feature + is most common among the iterative verbs, but there are other verbs, such as the so-called distributive verbs which are perfective verbs marked +H, and the so-called indefinite verbs of motion, which are also +H marked. As to a specimen of a feature matrix with all the five features that have been mentioned in this paper, see Appendix A.

judgement is not however common to all speakers and there is even a variation as regards the evaluation of concrete examples. Some examples may be accepted without any restrictions of style by all speakers, some are considered stylistically neutral by a majority or by a minority of informants. I shall limit the comparison to the Polish translations of the relevant Czech examples I have used before. The Polish equivalents were kept as close to the Czech sentences as possible. Some translations were not possible at all, owing to the lack of a corresponding Polish verb, or the lack of the iterative form.

- (1b) *\*Pięć razy pisywał list.*
- (2b) *\*Dwa razy chodził do kina.*
- (3b) *Chodził wokół stołu dwukrotnie.*

(This sentence was accepted by some informants after I had changed the word-order from the original *Dwukrotnie chodził* ... It was interpreted in the same way as sentence (3).)

As to the use of *chodzić* combined with an exact number of times, it is wholly impossible for some informants, some accept it when the motion verb is combined with an infinitive of purpose (*Dwukrotnie chodził do kościoła żeby spotkać się z księdzem.*), some are willing to use *chodzić* in the "Russian way".

- (4b) *Stawał tu dwupiętrowy dom.*

Some informants accepted (4b) with some hesitation, some insisted on the absurd interpretation of a house that moves.

- (5b) *Księgarnia miewa tę książkę na wystawie.*

(5b) has been mostly interpreted as "has now and then".

- (7b) *Stawał tam żołnierz.*

- (8b) *\*Właśnie teraz pisuje list.*

- (9b) *\*Kiedy wszedłem do pokoju, Piotr grywał na pianinie.*

- (16b) *\*Chadza. (but OK Chodzi.)*

- (17b) *Jeszcze wczoraj tu z nami siadywał.*

- (18b) *Będzie znowu pisywać anonimowe listy.*

- (21b) *\*Zawsze pisuje ładne wiersze.*

- (22b) *Zawsze kiedy przychodzę, siada przed telewizorem.*

Also in Polish (24b) is correct, while (25b) cannot be used in the sense of 'She can walk':

(24b) *Ona chodzi.*

(25b) \**Ona chadza.*

As to the eternal truths, the same argument is valid for Polish:

(26b) *Dwa razy dwa jest cztery.*

(27b) *Dwa razy dwa będzie cztery.*

Again, the future tense of (27b) carries the additional meaning of doubt, uncertainty. (28b) is quite out of question:

(28b) \**Dwa razy dwa bywa cztery.*

Both (29b) and (30b) are possible in Polish, when an untypical property is talked about:

(29b) *Dwa razy dwa jest pięć.*

(30b) *Dwa razy dwa bywa czasami pięć.*

We may thus draw the following conclusion: there is no doubt that as long as the unmarked member of a semantic opposition is primarily interpreted as thoroughly unmarked, i.e. capable of substituting almost any instance of the marked member of the opposition, the marked member of the opposition is an endangered species. It is more redundant than may be tolerated in the long run. There are two ways out of this dilemma. The unmarked member of the opposition may be reinterpreted as to its primary meaning and be used chiefly as if it were negatively marked in relation to the marked member of the opposition. The other possibility is a more profound reorganization of the language system, so that the marked member of the semantic opposition takes on some new functions and, consequently, no longer is so freely substitutable by the unmarked member, which equals a change of a privative opposition into an equipollent one (in the structuralist classical sense of those terms). The Russian iteratives are already beyond any hope of salvation as a third aspect. The Czech iterative aspect may still survive, the question is whether the Polish iteratives have already passed the point of no return on the way to oblivion as a third aspect. The answer to this question would demand a much more exhaustive study than this paper may provide.

## Appendix A

The following feature matrix for some Czech verbs is intended to illustrate the five semantic features used in this paper. It is quite representative as regards the difference between the imperfective and the iterative aspect, but, of course, it cannot be used as a recipe for the choice between the perfective and the imperfective aspect. Several additional features are needed for that purpose, which will be presented in Bílý (1985).

	M	H	AS	T	AC
<i>vládnout</i> 'govern', 'rule'	-	+/-	+/-	+ /(-)	+/-
<i>psát</i> 'write'	(+)/(-)	+/-	+/-	+ /(-)	+/-
<i>psávat</i> 'write'	(+)/(-)	+	(+)/-	(+)/(-)	-
<i>napsat</i> 'write'	(+)/(-)	+/-	(+)/-	(+)/-	+/-
<i>stávat</i> 'stand'	(+)/-	(+/-)	(+)/-	(+)/-	-
<i>chodit</i> 'go, walk'	(+)/(-)	+	+/-	+ /(-)	+/-
<i>chodívat</i> 'go, walk'	(+)/(-)	+	(+)/-	(+)/(-)	-
<i>jít</i> 'go, walk'	(+)/(-)	+/-	+/-	+ /(-)	+/-
<i>pootvírat</i> 'open (sg. one by one)'	(+)/(-)	+	(+)/-	(+)/(-)	+/-
<i>zaspát</i> 'oversleep'	-	+/-	(+)/-	(+)/(-)	+/-
<i>zakopnout</i> 'stumble'	+	+/-	(+)/-	(+)/-	+/-



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