

Title: The Competition of Aspect for *Verba Dicendi* from a Constructional Perspective
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Abstract:

It has been noted that some Russian verbs, especially verbs of communication or speech, choose with no convincing grounds either perfective or imperfective aspect to denote a single past event. The so-called ‘simple-denotational’ or ‘general-factual’ usage of verbs of speech seems to be unconstrained and widely populated in Russian, serving only as an “illocutionary marker” or simply as a ‘copula’. Although there have been discourse-pragmatic approaches to explicate this apparent random choice of aspect, the previous studies treat all verbs of speech as a semantically homogeneous group and focus on the pragmatic features, such as ‘authority’ or ‘consequentiality’ of the given narrated event or its participants in the further development of the discourse. In this study I deal with the most frequent and prototypical verbs of speech, specifically *govorit’(imp)-skazat’(pf)* and argue that semantics and pragmatics of various constructions of these speech verbs are interrelated with distinctive aspectual choices. Main focus is on the construction consisting of a main clause with *govorit’/skazat’* verbs in conjunction with a complement clause led by the conjunction *chto*, namely, the construction with finite complement clause. My argument is that this construction entails a specific cognitive structure: the ‘subject of conceptualization(SC)’ and ‘object of conceptualization(OC)’ are inseparably integrated and the SC’s epistemic, evaluative, evidential stance is marked by the aspectual choice of the speech verbs, which differentiates this finite complement construction from the *o / pro* phrasal adjunct construction. Thus I argue that distinct aspectual distribution is due to the speaker’s stance toward the verbal material in the complement clause and the lack of this stance marking in the adjunct construction, where general-factual imperfective aspect can better be attested. The cognitive coordination grammatically assisted by finite complement construction, and discourse-pragmatic functions of Russian aspect in correlation with semantics of individual verbs and constructions represent another token of ‘intersubjectivity’ and ‘argumentativity’, which is widely embedded and well exploited in language.