

Usage of the Methods of Cognitive Linguistics/Grammar in Teaching Czech for Foreigners (with Focus on Verbal Aspect)

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Czech grammar, in particular its verbal aspect, is very difficult for foreign learners of Czech. However, cognitive linguistics offers a profound didactic potential – mainly with respect to its basic concepts and principles – that allow us to clarify the semantic content of multiple linguistic and grammar mechanisms. These help us teach grammar in a less abstract manner, which helps students to understand it more easily. The aim of this article is to show how selected methods of cognitive linguistics and grammar can be applied to Czech language. We will focus primarily on the metaphor of cognitive linguist Laura Janda, who compares perfective verbs in Slavic languages to bounded solid objects and imperfective verbs to fluids. Based on this metaphor and specific characteristics of the given substances that are known to us from our daily empirical experience, we can further analyse more characteristic features of perfective and imperfective verbs and functional aspects of the category of verbal aspect in general. This analysis can be very helpful in teaching Czech for foreigners because language teachers often struggle to find the best way to present this objectively complicated and highly abstract grammatical feature in their classes.

Keywords: cognition, cognitive linguistics, grammar, semantics, Czech, verbal aspect, metaphor

Introduction

Recently, we have observed an increased interest in studying Czech for foreigners related to a higher number of foreign students and foreigners coming to the Czech Republic to look for a job. However, mastering the language is sometimes very difficult, especially for non-Slavic people, if we consider more complex grammar features such as verbal aspect. Our aim should be to look for ways to make the learning process easier. One of the possible alternatives is cognitive linguistics/grammar¹ that, thanks to its nature, aims to use knowledge of general cognitive processes to clarify diverse language features. These characteristics should help us make grammar teaching more approachable and comprehensible, as shown in Section 3. The abovementioned, leading us to combine teaching Czech as a foreign language with the methods of cognitive

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¹We operate primarily with the umbrella term cognitive linguistics and switch to cognitive grammar in cases where solely the level of grammar is in question. The term cognitive grammar is used with regard to the work of Ronald Langacker, who is considered to be a founder of this field of linguistics.

linguistics, serves as an argumentation basis of this article² and might be of use both for students learning Czech and for language teachers.

Inspiration for our qualitative research based on retrieval and search analysis of available textbooks of Czech as a foreign language has been found in key works by important authors in the field of cognitive linguistics such as George Lakoff, Ronald Langacker and others but more importantly in the work of Laura Janda, who as a cognitive linguist deals not only with basic principles of this approach but also focuses on applying these principles to Czech language teaching, specifically in terms of case semantics and to a lesser extent the category of verbal aspect. Taking into account the objective difficulty of verbal aspect and the fact that this field has not been researched thoroughly using the cognitive approach, we would like to focus mainly on this topic. Our basic question was as follows: is it possible to present and explain the Czech verbal aspect through metaphors arising from human experience?

Verbal Aspect

The category of aspect deals with the relation of the action and the flow of time. This grammar feature influences lexical content of a verb and thus operates both on the level of grammar and lexical semantics. The meaning of the verb is determined semantically as a completed action and its result (or with possible completeness in the future), or as an ongoing process that has not been finished in the past, present or future. Here we can see another detailed characteristics, i.e. connection to the category of tense – perfective verbs (as opposed to imperfectives) do not express absolute present. According to Kopečný (1962), the basic aspect is the imperfective (impf.) aspect: these verbal forms do not express if the action has been finished or not (*dělat* ‘impf. to do/to be doing’, *psát* ‘impf. to write/to be writing’).³ As Kopečný claims, the perfective aspect (pf.) (that is marked and bounded) is represented by perfective verbs with a prefix (*udělat* ‘pf. to do’, *napsat* ‘pf. to write’) or rarely a stem suffix *-nou(t)* (*sprchovat se* ‘impf. to take a shower/to be taking a shower’ > *sprchnout se* ‘pf. to take a shower’). The imperfective aspect is realized in a form of a suffix that is joined to the perfective verb, very often the word-formational suffix *-va(t)* (*vydělat* ‘pf. to make money’ > *vydělavat* ‘impf. to make money/to be making money’) or the stem suffix *-ova(t)* (*přivázat* ‘pf. to tie up’ > *přivazovat* ‘impf. to tie up / to be tying up’, *nakoupit* ‘pf. to shop / to buy’ > *nakupovat* ‘impf. to shop / to be shopping’). Suffixation and

²The essential part of the article is based on the master’s diploma thesis of one of the authors (see Dosoudilová 2017), in which she carried out an analysis of selected textbooks of Czech for foreigners. The aim of the analysis was to find similarities and discrepancies between the textbooks in terms of presentation of verbal aspect. Furthermore, the author assessed the corresponding definitions, looked for problematic or misleading wordings and stated to what extent methods based on cognitive linguistics and grammar were applied.

³With respect to frequent comments, the completeness is deemed rather subjective than absolute (pf. *poslechnout si* ‘to listen for a bit’ does not mean the same as pf. *vyslechnout* ‘to listen completely’ etc.). The main focus is in this case not on the completeness in time but more likely on the accomplishment of the action, where there was no need to continue with it.

prefixation (alternatively suppletion of a stem or a suffix) results in verbal pairs that differ only in aspect.

Generally speaking, but with regard to the specifics of Czech, the verbal aspect is not a purely grammatical means of a verb, but a means that is closely related to the meaning of a verb. Most Czech verbs occur in two forms, which do not differ in their verbal meaning, but in aspect: *navštívit* – *navštěvovat* ‘to visit’, *dát* – *dávat* ‘to give’. The perfective verb (*navštívit*, *dát*) expresses the action conceived holistically, boundedly, often in its result. However, it never expresses a „story“ taking place in the present, it only has the ability to reflect a story that has already taken place (*koupil si nové auto* ‘he bought a new car’) or that is yet to take place (*koupí si nové auto* ‘he is going to buy a new car’). An imperfective verb (*navštěvovat*, *dávat*), on the other hand, expresses an action boundless, unclosed, an action taking place regardless of its completion or its result, or a repeated action. Imperfective verb also has the ability to express the actual presence (*právě je v autosalonu a kupuje si nové auto* ‘at the moment he is at the car store buying a new car’). The aspect opposite of perfectiveness and imperfectiveness is typical for verbs expressing dynamic events (*vystoupit* – *vystupovat* ‘to get off’, *zavřít* – *zavírat* ‘to close/shut’), static verbs or expressing only simple events (*sedět* ‘impf. to be sitting’, *pracovat* ‘impf. to be working’) do not have their aspect counterpart, so they do not form an aspect pair.

What is characteristic of the Czech verbal aspect are the other specific functions, tied to human experience and communication. In addition to their general meaning (infinity of time), imperfective verbs (imperfectives) can perform the following specific functions: expression of parallel events, updating of events, slowing down of dynamic events (in narratives), signaling of usualness, regularity, repetition of events, expression of ability/incompetence, expression of intention or plan, signaling of authorship. In addition to their general meaning (time limitation, completeness of action), perfective verbs (perfectives) can perform the following specific functions: expression of the time sequence of events, expression of the inability to perform an action, reaction to a stimulus, signaling of momentarity, immediacy, one-time action, expression of the phase of an action, its beginning/end. Those specificities of the Czech verbal aspect must also be taken into account and viewed from a cognitive-linguistic point of view.

Verbal Aspect in Czech for Foreigners

The definition of verbal aspect within the didactics of Czech as a foreign language tends to be simple and comprehensible. Consider the following definition of Poldauf & Šprunk:

Verbs represent actions that are realised in-time. These actions can be expressed with two verbs (verb pairs), e.g. psát – napsat ‘impf. to be writing – pf. to write’, dát – dávat ‘pf. to give – impf. to be giving’. Both verbs have the same meaning and stand for the same action but differ in the quality of aspect. This means that both verbs describe how the action extends over time. [...] Imperfective verbs record the action, perfective verbs take a photo of it. (Poldauf & Šprunk 1968, 212–213)

It is crucial to be aware of and not to neglect the fact that non-Slavic students of Czech often do not know the category of aspect and its function. Thus, it is necessary to start with a comprehensible explanation of this rather specific notion that is complicated especially for foreign learners.

Problems in Teaching Verbal Aspect in Czech for Foreigners

The category of verbal aspect is generally seen as one of the most difficult (see the survey by Kutláková 2015) to learn not only for students whose mother tongue lacks this category and who are not familiar with its function at all. Furthermore, some problems might arise also for Slavic learners who understand it based on their experience in the respected language but from time to time struggle with problems concerning lexical meaning and usage of the given prefixes and suffixes. We share Hrdlička's opinion that if we want foreign speakers to learn the category of aspect successfully,

it is necessary to deal with the category in a concise, complex (it is crucial to provide wide range of base examples) and comprehensible manner with an emphasis on clear and explicit wording [...] with regard to the appropriate usability of the presented information and recommendation for communicative practice. (Hrdlička 2009: 109)

However, Hrdlička adds that sometimes we come across general and simplified (occasionally even inappropriate, misleading or plain wrong) definitions. Apart from inappropriate and misleading simplifications (e.g. perfective verbs = completed, single action x imperfective verbs = repeated, multiple action), he also mentions incomplete, wrong or misleading wording (e.g. verbs of motion are imperfective), wrong examples and inadequate foreign language equivalents, no consideration of the source language of the foreign learner, insufficient explanation of formal relations between imperfectives and perfectives (derivation, stem changes, suppletion pairs) or the meaning of verbal prefixes etc. These deficiencies and others were confirmed and further analysed on selected textbooks of Czech for foreigners (see Dosoudilová 2017).

Based on the presentation analysis of the category of verbal aspect in the most used textbooks and further materials for A1 and A2 levels: *New Czech Step by Step*, *Česky krok za krokem 1*, *Čeština expres 2*, *Čeština expres 3*, *Česky, prosím II.*, *Communicative Czech (Elementary Czech)*, *Čeština pro cizince A1 a A2*, *Mluvme česky: Gramatika, Přehled základní české gramatiky pro zahraniční studenty*, and *Česká čítanka* it has been found that apart from the above mentioned deficiencies the textbooks for foreigners also differ substantially in using basic oppositions and metaphors to explain the function of verbal aspect, for example process x result, incompleteness x completeness, recording x photo, action x action + its end and others. A relatively rare definition of verbal aspect was based on signal verbs and their respective aspectual realizations and meanings. In some of the analysed materials we could observe that the definition of verbal aspect (as for Holá 2010) is incorporated to the definition of future tense (foreign learners usually learn present tense of imperfective verbs and only later, when talking about the future tense, learn the perfective aspect). With respect to this premise,

the category of verbal aspect is wrongly assumed to be a grammatical feature that is primarily bound to the future tense, hence the formal discrepancies between perfectives and imperfectives (form with the auxiliary verb *budu psát x napíšu* ‘impf. I will be writing x pf. I will write’), and its semantic stays in the background. We have also found that in some textbooks more emphasis is put on content/meaning and in others on form/realization, although in this context the authors should always take into account if this category represents a parallel or non-parallel grammatical feature of the learner’s mother tongue. It is also worth mentioning that some of the analysed materials present the category as a system and others encourage the learners explicitly to learn the aspect pairs by rote. Respectively, only some of the materials state the fact that aspect usage is user-specific.

A distinctive feature that is common to almost all of the analysed textbooks is the presentation of verbal prefixes of motion verbs, which is closely related to the topic and often accompanied by elements that are characteristic for cognitive approach (schemes, pictures etc.). Thanks to its comprehensibility, uniformity and approachability, we consider cognitive-linguistic method to be very helpful also while presenting verbal aspect and differences between perfective and imperfective verbs. This method might help us present the given feature clearly and explicitly, eliminate problems stated herein, integrate misleading definitions and in this way facilitate the acquisition process for students of Czech for foreigners and at the same time offer a new viewpoint for defining verbal aspect in Czech.

Cognitive Linguistics

Cognitive linguistics is a transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approach that started to emerge when “old” questions concerning the form, meaning and coherence of linguistic and extralinguistic knowledge have been revisited in the 1970s. Having the relationship between language and human mind as its main focus, this approach deals generally also with motivation of linguistic features, analyses metaphorical language, relativizes the notion of arbitrariness and other elementary conceptual oppositions such as langue – parole, synchronic – diachronic, semantics – pragmatics, linguistic components – non-linguistic components and common knowledge – encyclopaedic knowledge (Vaňková 1999). Meaning is a key concept in cognitive linguistics (primarily its connotative ability) and we can observe many conceptual overlaps with other theoretical frameworks in the field of semantics. According to Ibarretxe-Antuñano & Valenzuela (2015: 163), this approach assumes that the crucial function of language is communication and the analysis of linguistic mechanisms should focus primarily on semantic and functional aspects. Key concept with respect to our work is the anthropocentric model of conceptualization, represented by the American linguists George Lakoff, Mark Johnson and Marc Turner, within which source meaning is analysed based on

empirical evidence and physical existence of a human.⁴ In this theoretical framework, the key concept is a metaphor that belongs not only to the verbal domain but also in the cognitive system. Based on that, our conceptual system is metaphorical and a metaphor is thus not primarily a linguistic phenomenon but rather a mental one.

*Key Approaches and Terms*⁵

Cognitive Linguistics, it is postulated that our Experience has a formative influence on our speech ability and also our means of expression influence the way our experience is perceived. Any linguistic device (be it on the level of phonology, morphology, syntax or pragmatics) shares the aim to convey MEANING and no linguistic unit or phenomenon is semantically empty. Meaning that is set in shared human experience of physical existence is the result of this experience as it was processed by our senses and cognition.

The aim of cognitive linguistics is to understand the motivation of linguistic phenomena through cognition and also the Motivation for meaning, however in this case the embodiment of meaning is crucial (see anthropocentric model of conceptualization). According to Valenzuela et al. (2015, 27), “*concepts and thoughts are influenced and created based on the structure of our own bodies, own our experience of the world that surrounds us,*” which postulates linguistic research for meaning and its interpretation in human experience and physical existence. This can be done by means of a METAPHOR. A metaphor is a process of semantic transfer, where something known (such as a prototype or a scheme from everyday life) is transferred from a source domain to a target domain that usually represents an abstract concept (such as time, emotions, state of being or an abstract linguistic concept).

We should not omit Categories that are used to organize human knowledge in a structural system of concepts. The given category is then defined by a respective Prototype (created with regard to connotation) that serves as a starting point for organizing other linguistic data with a relation to the prototype. The content and structure of these categories differ from speaker to speaker, resp. language to language, however it is important to state that no information remains isolated and all inputs are categorized and interconnected.

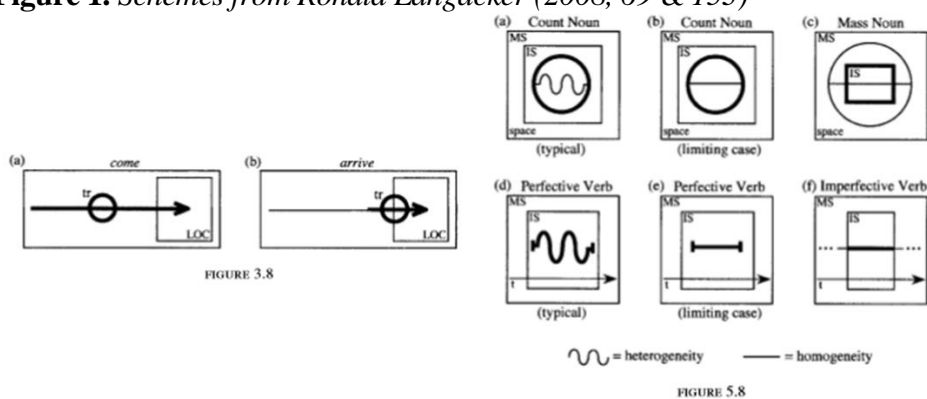
Cognitive Grammar (see Danaher 2007) was developed in 1970s by an American linguist Ronald Langacker as a reaction to the theory of generative grammar by Noam Chomsky that prefers a formal-logic point of view. Langacker claims that this approach excludes the notion of Usage and Figurative Use of Language that are essential for understanding the linguistic structure. Apart from that, he also refuses the generative principle of a language being an autonomous formal system. Grammar is, in his opinion, a non-formal, Symbolic system that consists of concepts and he puts more emphasis on analysing the role of language

⁴The following works are considered pivotal in the field of cognitive linguistics: *Metaphors we live by* by George Lakoff & Mark Johnson (1980) and *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things* by George Lakoff (1987).

⁵See Janda 2004.

in the cognitive process than on discovering “deep” grammatical structures or language universals. Langacker assumes that there is no principal difference between syntax and lexical inventory because grammar consists of a set of symbolic units (morphemes, words and grammatical constructions). These units result from everyday Language Use and practice as a product of two cognitive processes – Abstraction and Schematization, which is a type of abstraction that produces a language unit that is much less detailed (specific) than its realization, i.e. actual expressions, namely a schema (for representation see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Schemes from Ronald Langacker (2008, 69 & 153)



We could summarize that in cognitive grammar, the critical cognitive process is the process of metaphorization based on human experience and language use. Grammar is claimed to be symbolic, as Noriko Matsumoto puts it in her study:

Cognitive grammar assumes cognitive semantics and builds a model of grammar which is consistent with the assumptions and findings of research in cognitive semantics. In addition to this, the two guiding principles of cognitive grammar are (i) the symbolic thesis, and (ii) the usage-based thesis. (Matsumoto 2017, 118)

Cognitive Semantics works with the concept of *schemes* that are regarded as a basis of human cognition. These are

mental structures that are extracted from repetitive interaction with the environment. In this sense, humans are able to deduce one structure that is common for more than one physical experience of motion, be it for objects in space or humans themselves. These homogenous and clearly different pieces of experience share one concept, which is called an abstract “scheme”. (Valenzuela et al. 2015, 26)

Thanks to these schemes we are enabled to think and we find them in speech. It is thus natural and highly useful to apply this principle not only in teaching language for native speakers but also in foreign language teaching.

Cognitive Linguistics and Language Acquisition

If we decide to use the methods of cognitive linguistics in teaching, we should consider all of the above-mentioned principles and the cognitive function of

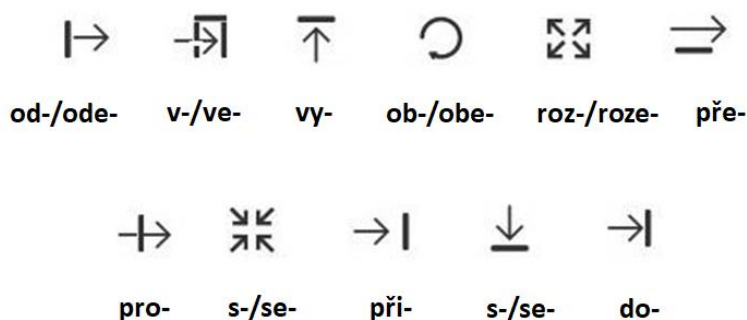
language itself. As Pacovská (2012) puts it, language is a part of our understanding of the world and cognitive processes help us take a grasp of many processes in language.

In teaching it is also crucial to point out the possible semantic base of linguistic and grammatical mechanisms that allows us to “clarify a high number of linguistic phenomena (from polysemy to the usage of certain grammatical constructions) in a natural and relevant manner.” (Ibarretxe-Antuñano & Valenzuela 2015, 163) Furthermore, we should emphasize human experience, connotation potential of the given word meaning and also the interconnection of language and the extralinguistic reality.

A vital principle of human cognition that is reflected in language use are schemes (as in Figure 2) and metaphors, whose usage in language teaching is of great use (see above). These structures

are singled out from the set of characteristics for different pieces of experience of the human locomotor system. Actions such as getting from one point to another, throwing a ball, feeding a baby or slapping someone in the face incorporate an object in a given position from where it moves along a given trajectory and eventually reaches another position. This structure has a source-path-goal scheme. Having derived this structure from rather diverse experience with physical and actual movement, we can apply it to more abstract examples. (Ibarretxe-Antuñano & Valenzuela 2015, 164–165)

Figure 2. Schematic Representation of Verbal Prefixes of Movement



Source: Dosoudilová 2017.

In general, this approach tries to avoid memorising grammatical definitions and patterns in language without understanding it and instead works with patterns, structures and constructions anchored in language usage. It emphasizes principles of language as we know them and are natural for us based on human experience and general cognitive processes, such as usage of schemes, metaphors or categorization. These processes explain how the outside world manifests itself in our language through processes of structuralization and conceptualization. The cognitive approach seems to be very useful for language teaching, although for now it is not a part of Czech didactic tradition (among the few representatives of this approach are Jasňa Pacovská, Svatava Škodová, Laura Janda or Iлона Starý Kořánová). Applying the methods of cognitive grammar to Slavic languages is an

approach that apart from Laura Janda (semantics of prefixes and cases, aspect and animateness) is promoted also by Tore Nessel (morphology), Alan Cienki (case and preposition semantics), Ewa Dabrowska (case and prefix semantics and also language acquisition), Steven Dickey (aspect), David Danaher (habitual verbs in Czech) and others.

Metaphorical Meaning of Aspect and its Characteristics

According to Laura Janda (2004)⁶, the best way to explain the difference between perfectives and imperfectives and thus to make this category more transparent for students is a metaphor because it presents formal characteristics of the given verbs based on their own experience. With regard to her research in cognitive linguistics, Janda considers metaphors accompanied by pictures, schemes or practical examples of use very helpful. She proposes two types of metaphor used for aspect verbs: a metaphor of a fluid substances (e.g. sand, water) in case of imperfectives and a metaphor of a concrete solid objects (e.g. rock, billiard ball) for perfectives.

The abovementioned concepts might be used as a prototypical (source) meaning and a source domain for semantic features of imperfectives and perfectives. As for aspect, students generally consider it an abstract category and we find the use of metaphors very useful. However, even after applying metaphors to presentation, this category might still not be fully transparent for some students. We shall focus on further characteristics and several individual features of this concept.

We support Janda's claim that it will not help students much if they are presented with basic characteristics of perfectives and imperfectives using abstract terms and concepts such as boundedness, totality, sequencing vs. simultaneity etc. Moreover, using technical terms violates the principles of cognitive linguistics that endeavours to be comprehensible and accessible for non-linguists as well. Therefore Janda proposes that we might use characteristic properties of fluids and solids instead, which can also be presented to the students during the class (possibly with a practical demonstration) to make the problematics easier to understand.

With all these in mind, we proposed the following concepts for Czech:

1) *Inherent Features:*

- a. **Edges** – A discrete solid object (a stone) has clear, firm edges, however a fluid substance lacks these. This property corresponds to the boundedness

⁶We are referring to Janda's 2004 work *A metaphor in search of a source domain: the categories of Slavic aspect*, where this concept is introduced in connection to aspect in modern Russian. Using this metaphor in the context of aspect in Czech, we do not translate directly and try to avoid adopting all of the findings without due consideration. Moreover, we try to adjust Janda's method and provide simple examples to use it in teaching Czech, analysing Czech aspect verbs and also when presenting this category in foreign language teaching.

of perfectives (*napsat* ‘pf. to write’) and not-boundedness of imperfectives (*psát* ‘impf. to write/to be writing’). We claim that to define the edges of actions we can use time frames (*od–do* ‘from–until’, *zítra* ‘tomorrow’, *odpoledne* ‘in the afternoon’ or phase verbs) that might be visualized as containers. When putting the sand in the container, it is bound to it (*psát od rána až do večera* ‘impf. to write / to be writing from the morning until the evening’ is bound as opposed to *psát* ‘impf. to write/to be writing’).

- b. **Shape** – A discrete solid object has an inherent shape and may vary in width, e.g. it can be “cut” into very thin slices. The variable width of discrete solid corresponds to different types of perfectives that usually have variable durations, which can be observed in case of some verbal moods such as ingressesives and semelfactives (the duration of the action is clearly different in case of *bodnout* ‘pf. to stab’ or *zakřičet* ‘pf. to give a cry’ and *uvařit* ‘pf. to cook’). A fluid (imperfective), however, does not have any shape but lacking structural integrity it must have a width. These substances tend to be omnipresent, similarly to the air and the ocean, which is to be defined as “spreadedness”. In this case, we can also use the time frame as container metaphor that is filled with the fluid in its full shape.
- c. **Integrity** – Each discrete solid object is a unique individual that cannot be further divided and to which no other subjects can be added without a change (i.e. half a chair is not a chair and a chair put on top of another chair is not a chair) – unlike the fluid, which is uniform. If we mix two piles of sand, it forms one whole. We can also compare verbs such as *najedl se* ‘pf. he had a meal’ (one meal, one time, concrete time; when adding another *najedl se*, it corresponds to a different action that cannot be joined with the previous one) and *jedl* ‘impf. he was eating / he was having a meal’ (we can further divide the action into individual parts or add other actions).
- d. **Countability** – Discrete solid objects are countable and inherently quantified, whereas fluid substances are uncountable masses that can fill space and can only be quantified by imposing measures. Similarly, actions expressed by perfectives can be quantified (*uvařit* ‘pf. to cook’ = one action) but actions expressed by imperfectives do not share this quality (how many activities does the verb *vařit* ‘impf. to cook/to be cooking’ contain?), unless measurement is imposed.
- e. **Streamability** – Discrete solid objects do not occur in streams (perfectives), whereas fluids do (e.g. like a river; we consider verbs such as *psát* ‘impf. to write’, *myslet* ‘impf. to think’ streamable because they express processes). Also, some verbs might inherently denote a direction as well, for example imperfective verbs of motion.
- f. **Penetrability** – Discrete solid object is not penetrable, one cannot dive into it and although it may have internal structure, it is not accessible without breaking the object. On the other hand, fluids are penetrable and its internal structure can be explored easily. (In Janda’s wording: exploring the mood of action).

- g. **Conversion** – Discrete solid objects can be converted into fluid substances and vice versa. These conversions can be achieved either via adjustments in viewpoint or via “actual” physical transformation. Janda states several viewpoint adjustments, e.g. a distant group of solid objects seen as fluids (a series of repeated actions that are deemed one continuous action: *dát, dát, dát* ‘pf. to give’ > *dávat* ‘impf. to give / to be giving’), looking closely at a single particle of a fluid substance and recognizing it as a discrete solid object (semelfactives describing instantaneous actions: *bodat* ‘impf. to stab/to be stabbing’ > *bodnout* ‘pf. to stab / to stab once’). Physical transformations include the pulverization of a discrete solid into a fluid substance (single actions vs. process), the hardening of a fluid substance into a discrete solid, and the packaging of a fluid substance in a firm container (for example using a prefix *po-*; *hrát si* ‘impf. to play a game / play with toys’ > *pohrát si* ‘pf. to play a game for a bit / play with toys for a bit’).

2) *Interactional properties (of individual entities/actions/verbs):*

This part is, in our opinion, very important because it influences discourse. The relationship between imperfectives and perfectives and their usage is not discussed at all – or at least not thoroughly – in textbooks of Czech for foreigners, though from the above mentioned reason it should be, and by presenting it with these practical examples, students would be able to see more clearly how perfectives and imperfectives work together. Interactional properties include:

- h) **Compatibility** – If a discrete solid object occupies a certain location, another discrete solid object cannot be made to occupy the same location (no two actions expressed by perfectives can occur simultaneously, only in a sequence, e.g. *uklidit* ‘pf. to clean’ and then *uvařit* ‘pf. to cook’). If a fluid is put in a location, more fluid can be added and these two substances can coexist (two fluids or two piles of sand can mix up and similarly, two actions expressed by imperfectives can overlap, e.g. *uklízet* ‘impf. to clean / to be cleaning’ and *vařit* ‘impf. to cook / to be cooking’). A discrete solid object expressed by a perfective can be embedded in a fluid that is expressed by an imperfective (*když jsem uklízela, zazvonil telefon* ‘when I was cleaning the house – impf., the phone rang – pf.’).
- i) **Dynamicity** – Janda compares a series of discrete solid objects to paving stones, enabling swift progress along a path. Wading through a fluid substance is, by contrast, arduous and retards movement. This characteristic relates to the use of both verb types: perfective verbs enable a fast progress in action, story or narration (*oblékla se, naličila se, učesala a šla na večeři* ‘pf. she dressed up, put on make up, did her hair and went to a dinner’), whereas imperfectives are used in descriptive parts and slow down the flow of action (*oblékala se, líčila a česala a poté šla na večeři* ‘impf. she was dressing up, putting on her make up and doing her hair and then she went to a dinner’).

- j) **Saliency** – Janda adds another characteristic property that focuses on a general perception of the scene. In a scene containing both discrete solid objects and fluid substances, the former enjoy a privilege of saliency, acting as clearly delineated figures against a diffuse background, like shells (perfectives: profile) on a sandy beach (imperfectives: background). This feature, as in Russian, is in Czech applied to make certain actions more prominent/salient: Czech perfectives are used to describe situations that are in the foreground of the narration (profile) and the imperfectives for situations in the background (base).
- k) **Contiguity** – A discrete solid object can serve as a barrier, on one side of which a fluid substance can be dammed up. This property relates the fact that phase verbs such as *začít* ‘pf. to start’, *přestat* ‘to stop/quit’ (and also imperfective pendants *začínat* ‘impf. to start/to be starting’, *přestávat* ‘impf. to be stopping/quitting’) can coordinate with imperfectives. We claim that phasing property of such verbs (action of activity with a certain progress) is necessarily constituted using a combination with an imperfective verb (*začal kouřit* ‘pf. he started to smoke’, *přestala cvičit* ‘pf. she quit exercising’).

3) Interactional properties (with respect to humans):

- l) **Graspability** – As we know from our experience, a discrete solid object can be grasped and manipulated but a fluid substance, by contrast, merely slips through one’s fingers. Janda assumes that this property influences a relative satisfaction of graspability that is provided by Russian perfectives as opposed to imperfectives. For our purposes, discussing this property with respect to Czech aspect is not necessary.
- m) **Texture** – Janda argues that if matter is propelled at a human being, a discrete solid object is potentially dangerous, whereas a fluid substance is likely to make a gentler impact. The verbal equivalent of a propelling force is imperative, and in certain polite social circumstances, a perfective is just too harsh and an imperfective is preferred (in Russian).
- n) **Implied presence** – Given the fact that matter can be converted from one type to the other or is a result of such conversion, the presence of one type of matter might imply the presence of the other. Janda mentions an odour left by an onion or water that is left behind a melted ice cube. These examples imply that solid objects such as an onion or an ice cube were originally present. In this way, we assume it is possible to explain the students that all perfective verbs that resulted from a process imply a previous action that was expressed using an imperfective verb (*napsat* ‘pf. to write’ implies *psát* ‘impf. to write / to be writing’, i.e. one cannot *napsat* without *psát* that took place earlier).

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to show how we can explain a highly abstract and objectively difficult linguistic category of verbal aspect using the methods of cognitive linguistics such as a metaphor based on our own experience. As we can see (and at the same time in answering our basic question), when presenting the problematics of Czech verbal aspect to foreigners, instead of using theoretical description and difficult terminology, we can (with a practical demonstration in the lesson) describe imperfectives as fluid substances and perfectives as discrete solid objects, whose behaviour and characteristics are familiar to the students from everyday life. The argumentation is based on previous analysis of Czech textbooks for foreigners dealing with verbal aspect and can be used both in theory and pedagogical practice. The authors wanted to emphasize the cognitive approach to linguistics and grammar and promote further research in this field that offers a great potential for a comprehensible and effective teaching and understanding language – not only in Czech for foreigners.

Acknowledgement

This paper was created with the support of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic awarded to the Palacký University in Olomouc (IGA_FF_2019_013).

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Abbreviations

- pf. perfective
impf. imperfective