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CONCERNING IMPERFECT PARTICIPLES IN THE FORMATION OF THE BULGARIAN PRESENT PERFECT AND THE NON-WITNESSING OF ITS THIRD-PERSON FORMS

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ОТНОСНО ИМПЕРФЕКТНИТЕ ПРИЧАСТИЯ В ОБРАЗУВАНЕТО НА БЪЛГАРСКИЯ СЕГАШЕН ПЕРФЕКТ И НЕСВИДЕТЕЛСТВЕНОСТТА НА ТРЕТОЛИЧНИТЕ МУ ФОРМИ

Bulgarian linguistic publications describe (non-)witnessing of the perfect in different and controversial terms. Many do not tackle the issue, some claim that the perfect is neutral as to witnessing. Prevalent is the view that three major separate values, grammaticalized, underlie the *sam+/-l* (i.e., *be+past active participle*) forms: perfect, inferential, re-narrative. But if these are three homonymous grammemes and the perfect is neutral as to witnessing, it will turn out that perfects counter inferentials and re-narratives with this specific property absent in the latter two – because they are strictly non-witnessed. Such a thesis would be defective, however, because third-person present perfect forms, much more frequent, are non-witnessed, with no exception at all. They are non-witnessed also when formed from imperfect participles. Non-third-person perfect forms are subject to further study. But the status of third-person perfect forms as non-witnessed must be incorporated into Bulgarian grammars, because the absence of this major characteristic discredits them.

Key words: *non-witnessing; witnessing; present perfect; aorist participles; imperfect participles*

В лингвистичната българистика (не)свидетелствеността на сегашния перфект се описва по различни и противоречиви начини. Мнозина изследователи игнорират въпроса, някои твърдят, че сегашният перфект е неутрален спрямо свидетелствеността. Преобладава становището, че във формите от типа *съм + -л* (т.е. *съм + минало деятелно причастие*) са застъпени три различни основни стойности, граматикализирани: перфект, инференциал, ренаратив. Но ако това са три омонимични грамеми, а перфектът е неутрален спрямо свидетелствеността, излиза, че перфектът противостои на инференциалите и ренаративите с това специфично свойство, което отсъства при вторите две – тъй като те са строго несвидетелски. Подобна теза обаче би била дефектна, защото третоличните форми на сегашния перфект, които са много по-фреквентни, са несвидетелски – без каквото и да било изключение. Те са несвидетелски и тогава, когато са образувани от имперфектни причастия. Нетретоличните форми на сегашния перфект подлежат на допълнителни проучвания. Но статутът на третоличните форми като несвидетелски трябва да бъде вписан в българските граматики, тъй като липсата в тях на тази много важна характеристика ги дискредитира.

Ключови думи: *несвидетелственост; свидетелственост; сегашен перфект; аористни причастия; имперфектни причастия*

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Introduction

This paper mainly deals with the encoding of the value non-witnessing in Modern Bulgarian through the periphrastic verb forms *sam+/-l* ‘be+/-l (past active participle)’,¹ henceforward *sam+/-l* forms. These forms represent different grammatical entities, some of them named (the) present perfect (henceforward PP), others inferentials and re-narratives, the latter two standardly taken to be homonymous with PPs. The *sam+/-l* re-narrative is less frequent, as in its representative form the auxiliary is omitted. Other values of *sam+/-l* forms, such as dubitative, admirative, etc., also exist but these fall outside the present study. Two recent proposals concerning PP in Bulgarian are also discussed: (i) on how it is formed, viz., that it is formed from imperfect participles too (Kabakčiev 2020b; 2020c); (ii) on the *raison d’être* of the Bulgarian PP – also in cross-language terms (Kabakčiev 2020a; 2020d).

Non-witnessing of PP forms in Bulgarian studies

There are three monographs published so far on Bulgarian PP (Marovska 2005; Dimitrova 2020; Hristov 2020).² The first one points out that from the very beginning of the 20th century non-witnessing and witnessing in Old Bulgarian were associated with PP and non-perfect forms, respectively (Marovska 2005: 18). PPs are generally regarded as non-witnessed and the historical review reveals that Bulgarian grammars registered *sam+/-l* forms as non-witnessed as early as in the late 19th century (Marovska 2005: 37). The author labels PPs “non-witnessed aorists” (Marovska 2005: 24), an inappropriate term (see below), and does not discuss imperfects as forms equally witnessed, because she adheres to the understanding, prevalent in Bulgarian studies, that PPs are formed from aorist participles only, not from imperfect ones.³ She sidesteps the contradiction in viewing PPs as non-witnessed aorists. If the aorist is witnessed (it undoubtedly is), then PPs cannot be non-witnessed aorists because they ought to counter aorists with some other feature, say, “perfectness”. But the problem is that in linguistics there is no acceptable definition proposed so far of what perfectness is. As for third-person *sam+/-l* forms, Marovska (2005) pays little attention to them and does not classify them as witnessed or not.

In her dissertation on Bulgarian PPs, Dimitrova (2020: 15) does not propose a solution as to whether they effectuate non-witnessing, and if yes to what degree, but recalls an old conjecture in Yanakiev (1962) that PPs manifest “uncertainty of witnessing”. Cf. sentence (1a) with a PP manifesting “uncertainty of witnessing”, while in (1b) the pluperfect stands for a witnessed situation:⁴

- (1)a. Vanya *e chela* knigata do sutrinta
(literally, henceforward lit.) ‘Vanya has read the book until the morning’
b. Vanya *beshe chela* knigata do sutrinta
‘Vanya had read the book until the morning’

In a monograph on *have* and *be* perfects in English and Bulgarian diachronically, devoted mainly to the Bulgarian phenomenon, Hristov (2020) concludes that PPs in both Middle Bulgarian and Old Bulgarian were used for non-witnessing (Hristov 2020: 6–7, 257, 270, 280). However, non-witnessing in Middle Bulgarian could also be effectuated through the aorist, something rather untypical of the aorist in Modern Bulgarian (Hristov 2020: 280, 286, 294–297).

When discussing *sam+/-l* forms, most Bulgarian grammars from the last decades (Andrejczin et al. 1977: 240–243; Bulgarian Academy grammar 1985: 318–325; Maslov 1982; Georgiev 1991; Pashov 2013: 153–156) do not even mention non-witnessing, a very important feature despite its negative

¹Although witnessing and non-witnessing are well-known phenomena in Bulgarian studies, an anonymous reviewer insists that they should not be left without a detailed and viable definition in the paper. The insistence is reasonable because these phenomena are not exotic in the world of languages but are still understudied and not fully and properly conceptualized. Aikhenvald’s definitions based on her pioneering work on many languages ought to suffice here. According to her, witnessing “can refer to any appropriate sense, be it seeing, hearing or smelling”, while non-witnessing “may imply that the speaker heard about the action from some secondary source, or made inferences about it, or participated in it directly but was not in control” (Aikhenvald’s 2004: 24).

²To the author’s knowledge.

³Here and elsewhere (Kabakčiev 2020b; 2020c), this thesis is regarded as completely wrong.

⁴This paper deals with PP only. The pluperfect, the future perfect, etc. are beyond the scope of the study.

nature, and a grammaticalized one too – and this is strange against the circumstance that older grammars discuss it in detail. Exceptions are few: Rå Hauge (1999: 112) and Nitsolova (2008: 299) view PPs as unmarked for witnessing. According to Nitsolova, PPs express witnessing in certain cases only and generally encode non-witnessing; the overall lack of witnessing in PPs is the reason why it underlies the inferential, i.e., homonymy is observed between inferentials (again called inferential aorists) and PPs. Whether third-person *sam+-l* forms should be regarded as non-witnessed, something rarely discussed elsewhere, Nitsolova does not take a stand.

The overview of other Bulgarian publications (not grammars) shows the following. Stankov (1969) regards PP as either witnessed or not, using examples with different forms for person and number: *Doshal sam predi chas* (lit.) ‘I have come an hour ago’ – witnessing, and *Tya e doshla predi okolo chas* (lit.) ‘She has come about an hour ago’ – non-witnessing. According to the author, the information transferred is the same and the choice between the two forms is based on the speaker’s wish to present the situation as “located in time” or with no connection to the present (Stankov 1969: 88). Conversely, according to Ivanchev (1988: 124), aorists and imperfects are witnessed, and non-witnessing is effectuated by PPs, re-narratives and inferentials, the latter two being moods. The idea of an independent nature of PPs is rejected by Ivanchev (1988: 126–128), he classifies them within the group of inferentials. Witnessing and non-witnessing are analyzed in detail by Gerdzhikov (1984), who proposes that *sam+-l* forms with imperfect participles, e.g., *chetyal e* (lit.) ‘he has read’ (regarded as PPs in this article), should be classified as re-narratives (Gerdzhikov 1984: 12), and that the thesis of the non-modal nature of re-narratives, upheld by some Bulgarianists (mainly Kutsarov 2007), should be discarded (Gerdzhikov 1984: 53, 65–66). The understanding here is that categorizing re-narration as a non-modal category would hamper not only the study of Bulgarian but also the study of tensed forms in cross-language terms: a taxonomy of re-narrative forms would be difficult to construct due to the contradiction with the widely recognized thesis that verb forms across languages generate precisely TAM (tense-aspect-mood) paradigms.

Publications on (non-)witnessing in Bulgarian in recent times are few. A rare “dissident voice”, along with older similar voices such as Kostov (1939) and Popov (1941) and newer ones such as Rå Hauge (1999: 112) and Lindstedt (1985: 273) – all of whom treat PPs as formed from imperfect participles too, Todorova (2010: 72–79) points out that PP is often non-witnessed, while inferentials are always non-witnessed, something typical of certain uses of PP and the re-narrative too. This thesis fits in well with the understanding here that PPs comprise forms with both aorist and imperfect participles and that the opposite idea, that *sam+-l* forms with imperfect participles are not PPs, is defective.

Tarpomanova (2014) treats evidentiality as encoding the information source, i.e., epistemology (Tarpomanova 2014: 7–8, 24–25), following Aikhenvald’s (2004) understanding that evidentiality is an instantiation of epistemic modality (Tarpomanova 2014: 25). Like Gerdzhikov, she rejects the idea of re-narratives as non-modal forms (Tarpomanova 2014: 15). She notes that while dropping the auxiliary *sam* ‘be’ encodes re-narration morphologically, there are cases when the auxiliary is not dropped and these re-narratives then coincide with inferentials (Tarpomanova 2014: 36–38). This matches the thesis maintained here (also in Kabakčiev 2020b; 2020c; Todorova 2010) of PPs as formed from imperfect participles too and capable of effectuating both inferentiality and re-narration.

A recent publication dealing with (non-)witnessing and recognizing it as present in Modern Bulgarian is Stoychev (2019). What is strange is that (non-)witnessing is regarded by him on an equal footing with evidentiality. Evidentiality is a generic term with a much larger scope than (non-)witnessing and including it – something extensively argued in both local (Aleksova 2004; Tarpomanova 2014; Moskova 2020) and cross-language studies (e.g., Pietrandrea 2005). The assumption in the present paper is that evidentiality is part of epistemological modality, the latter dealing with notions such as necessity, imperativity, probability, doubt, knowledge, optativity, credibility, surprise (admirativity), assumption, certainty, belief, subjectivity, cancelability, etc., and that in Bulgarian a fairly representative number of these notions have a formal, grammatical expression.

Many detailed studies of PPs, re-narratives, inferentials, dubitatives, admiratives, etc. in Bulgarian within the broader notions of TAM have been carried out by Aleksova (2004; 2017), who regards evidentiality as belonging to epistemic modality, thus siding with those Bulgarianists for whom both re-

narratives and inferentials belong to the TAM paradigm. This makes Bulgarian much easier to compare with other languages around the world, whatever their genealogy. Some of Aleksova's theses regarding non-witnessing and PPs are, however, hard to reconcile with certain standard interpretations of language data. She treats forms with aorist participles such as *e zaminal* (lit.) 'has left' as not simply inferential but as "inferential aorists" (Aleksova 2004: 7; 2017: 143–144), a notion in mass circulation (Gerdzhikov 1984: 232; Kutsarov 1994: 86–87, 143–146; Marovska 2005: 24; Nitsolova 2008: 299; Chakarova 2012: 5) – as already pointed out above. This generates a problem, as witnessing is a major property of the aorist, and non-witnessing – of the inferential. Hence, the so-called inferential aorist actually stands for "non-witnessed witnessing", an oxymoron. Aleksova (2017: 144) defines inferential *sam+/-l* forms containing aorist participles as homonymous with indicative PPs. However, taking into account their contextual replaceability and the defective notion inferential aorist, they could "equally logically" be termed perfect aorists. Thankfully, such a term does not exist, for now. Of course, terminology is an intricate affair, because there are terms such as aorist and imperfect re-narratives, i.e., re-narratives formed from aorist and imperfect participles (Tarpomanova 2014: 90), as well as aorist and imperfect PPs, i.e., PPs formed from aorist and imperfect participles (Tarpomanova 2014: 42).

An adequate description of the aorist would be that *it cannot be inferential*, as in Modern Bulgarian it generates no association with accompanying circumstances. But apart from the fact that the Bulgarian aorist, being strictly witnessed, is incompatible with inferentiality, third-person aorist PPs and their homonymous inferentials are non-witnessed forms, featuring grammatical values that are non-coercible into witnessing.⁵ It is worth pointing out here, however, that while in most languages the aorist is non-inferential, in many it is *not* a witnessed form – unlike in Bulgarian. For example, the aorist is not witnessed in Modern Greek (Greek being the language that gave birth to the term aorist), French, Spanish and many other languages. It is not witnessed even in Albanian, despite the similarity of the evidential systems of Albanian and Bulgarian (Tarpomanova 2014: 65).

On the *raison d'être* of the perfect

In modern linguistics, unlike in traditional Bulgarian studies, verb forms of the auxiliaries *be* or *have* plus a past participle (active morphologically or semantically) are termed PPs (McCoard 1978; Comrie 1985; Dahl 1985; Bybee 1994; Hristov 2020).⁶ The corresponding term in traditional Bulgarian linguistics is only "perfect", despite covering PP only. Hence, it is inadequate, as "perfect" ought to embrace all perfects: pluperfect, future perfect, future-in-the-past perfect. In present-day English linguistics, standardly used as a model for cross-language comparisons, the most frequent term to refer to what the perfect signifies is "current relevance". In Bulgarian studies the term almost exclusively used is "resultativeness". It is not only inadequate, it is intrinsically wrong, for reasons explained below.

Indeed, there are many Bulgarian sentences with PPs that encode resultativeness:

- (2)a. Deteto *e schupilo* prozoretsa
'The child has broken the window'
b. Drevnite gartsi *sa izmislili* demokratsiyata
(lit.) 'The ancient Greeks have invented democracy'

The results are: the window is now broken, the world enjoys democracy today. Note, however, that resultativeness in (2) is *not at all* due to some "semantics" of the perfect. It is a consequence of the use of verb forms known as accomplishments (Vendler 1957) – in this case Bulgarian perfective verbs. Accomplishments, including Slavic perfective verbs, encode temporal boundedness plus a pragmatic result, an achieved telos (see Kabakčiev 2000; 2019; Dimitrova & Kabakčiev 2021: 196–197). Authors upholding the inadequate term resultativeness fail to explain what resultativeness there is – or could be – in sentences containing PPs such as (3a,b):

- (3)a. Vinagi *sam pil* bira i *sam ya obichal*

⁵Note that, in contrast to grammaticalized values, default values – such as, e.g., "witnessed" in the English preterit, can easily be changed into non-witnessed (Kabakčiev 2020a: 135).

⁶PPs are periphrastic verb forms but Bulgarianists almost always label them "morphological", an inadequate term. Morphology deals with words or parts of words (stems, roots, affixes), not with phrases.

- ‘I have always drunk beer and have always loved it’
 b. Zapadat vinagi *se e zastapval* za choveshkite prava
 ‘The West has always advocated for human rights’

The sentences in (3) contain two PPs with the participles *obichal* ‘loved’ and *zastapval* ‘advocated’. They are ambivalent between aorist and imperfect. If regarded as aorist participles homonymous with imperfect ones, they can by no means be labelled “imperfect only” and banned from PPs following the thesis upheld by most Bulgarianists that *sam+-l* strings with imperfect participles are simply not PPs. It is worth emphasizing here that the two participles in (3) are derived from verbs in the third conjugation – encompassing a large number of lexemes. This circumstance reveals one of the numerous aspects of the defective thesis that imperfect participles do not form PPs. If a large number of verbs, those in the third conjugation, are formally unmarked for the aorist-imperfect contrast, how does anyone know if – and when and how – such a verb would actually explicate an aorist or an imperfect value? Indeed, some sentences/contexts can be found or constructed in which a third-conjugation participle will explicate an aorist reading in one case and an imperfect one in another. But such sentences and contexts are, first, infrequent in real-world texts. Second, they are often hard to interpret, as will be seen below – a circumstance further compromising the prevailing insistence that imperfect participles do not form PPs.

It begs the question now what, actually, is the argumentation of the advocates of the idea that imperfect participles do not form PPs. And here comes something really shocking. There is no argumentation whatsoever, just a bare statement: imperfect participles do not form PPs. A negative fact is asserted. Let us, therefore, address law theory. There is a postulate there that negative facts are, as a rule, not subject to proof, with certain specific exceptions like, i.e., DNA paternity testing which can rule out fatherhood. Or, honestly phrased, in the enormous majority of cases *negative facts cannot be proved*. Hence, there is, simply, *no argumentation whatsoever* for the widely claimed thesis that imperfect participles do not form PPs.

But, in any case, this leads to a major issue: *what is the raison d’être of the perfect?* As already argued elsewhere (Kabakčiev 2020a; 2020d), the perfect has no immanent semantics necessary for human communication through natural language. It has only functional features – conditioned by language structure. The explanation of sentences such as (3) above is very simple: they feature no resultativeness whatsoever. They contain PPs depicting the following two situations: (i) the speaker always drank beer and loved it; (ii) the West always advocated for human rights and continues to do so. There is no “result” and no “current relevance” of a past situation – such that would divert the essence of the proposition and signalize a status quo different from the one in the past. Thus, laid out as a rule,

though valid for some cases – but for completely different reasons, not related to the essence of the perfect, the notion “resultativeness” is of no use at all for the description of PPs in Bulgarian and other languages.

In the radically new conception mentioned above (Kabakčiev 2020a; 2020d), in a sentence such as (2a’), with a preterit verb form, the speaker, the situation and the participants are in the past. In (2a), with a PP, the situation is also in the past but the speaker and the participants are not in the past. Hence, PP encodes non-witnessing. Why? Because both speaker and participants are not where the situation is. The speaker and the participants are in the present but the situation is in the past – and this very clear circumstance can be said to underlie the very essence of PP:

- (2)a. Deteto *e schupilo* prozoretsa
 ‘The child has broken the window’
 a’. Deteto *schupi* prozoretsa
 ‘The child broke the window’

Recall that not only resultativeness, all the other notions purporting to reveal “the semantics of the perfect” by labelling it current relevance, extended now, etc., have been subjected to vast criticism, and many linguists are convinced that the perfect is a mystery (Klein 1992; Pancheva & von Stechow 2004; Higginbotham 2009: 160).

As for Bulgarian, here as well as in Kabakčiev (2020a) it is argued that PPs are grammatically marked for non-witnessing. Most examples in Kabakčiev (2020a) feature third-person forms. But the

possibility for non-third-person PPs to be witnessed or not is also discussed, as in sentences such as (3a) above. Compare also (4) in Kabakčiev (2020a: 135), where (4a) and (4b) are translation equivalents:

(4)a. *Poseshaval sam* Uestminsterstkoto abatstvo

b. I *have visited* Westminster Abbey

c. I *visited* Westminster Abbey

In contrast to the English sentence (4c) with a preterit verb form in which witnessing is easily explicated (that is, signalled/explicated but not grammatically encoded),⁷ in (4a)-(4b) the speaker is somehow distanced from his/her own visit of Westminster Abbey. It is as if s/he granted somebody else the right to describe the visit. As regards Bulgarian, this distancing was discussed by Gerdzhikov (1984: 17), who termed it “transposition”, i.e., a metaphorical use in contradiction to the general and systematically conditioned meaning of a category.

The overview here of many relatively recent Bulgarian grammars showed that most of them are either silent on whether *sam+ -l* forms are non-witnessed, or argue that PPs are neutral as regards this value. As for Bulgarian studies in general, although there are different views, it can be generalized that Modern Bulgarian features a distinction between witnessing and non-witnessing and that this distinction is systematic. There seems to exist also an *assumption* that PPs ought to have a unified semantic value for person and number. But if such an assumption exists, it is wrong, and if something is certain, it is that third-person Bulgarian PPs are always non-witnessed, with no exception at all – whether formed from aorist or imperfect participles, see (1a), (2a,b), (3) and examples below.

Let us now analyze sentences (5), extracted from the Internet and featuring first-person PPs, often interpreted as allowing a witnessed reading:

(5)a. Vinagi, oshte ot petgodishna vazrast, *sam znaela*, che shte bada lekar

‘Always, since as early as a five-year old, I have known I will be a doctor’

b. Kato uchennik iskah da stana lekar – *ne sam znael*, che shte stana artist

(lit.) ‘As a pupil I wanted to be a doctor – I have not known I will become an actor’

Such sentences with first-person PPs tend to suggest that they must be personally witnessed. But is this necessarily the case? Clearly, the speaker in (5a) knew for a long period, and even up to the present, that one day she would be a doctor. But does she remember that as a five-year old she knew she would be a doctor? Of course not, or not necessarily. Probably her parents told her that at five she thought she would be a doctor. Therefore, sentence (5a) cannot be read as strictly encoding witnessing through the PP form. What is more, used in (5b) is again a first-person form, *ne sam znael* (lit.) ‘I have not known’, but it does not encode witnessing. It definitely encodes non-witnessing. The speaker not only did not witness the situation, the existence of the situation is negated. And if a situation did not take place, it can by no means be witnessed. All this indicates that: (i) first-person PP forms are subject to further study; (ii) they can certainly *not* be defined as essentially witnessed.

Perfect or inferential, and on how the perfect is formed

Almost uncontested in Bulgarian studies is the idea that imperfect participles do not form PPs. But it was definitively negated in two recent publications (Kabakčiev 2020b; 2020c) through the use of a particular model of compositional aspect (Kabakčiev 2000; 2019). The falsehood of the thesis that PPs are not formed from imperfect participles is easily proved by constructing grammatical (6) and non-grammatical (7) sentences fitting the semantico-syntactic schema *Dokato se e sluchvalo X, se e sluchilo/sluchvalo Y* (lit.) ‘While X has been happening, Y has happened/has been happening’. The use of *sam+ -l* forms for encoding an activity or state Vendlerian situation through imperfect participles is obligatory here, see (6):

(6)a. Momcheto *e spyalo*, kogato mayka mu *e vlyazla* v stayata

(lit.) ‘The boy has been sleeping, when his mother has entered the room’

⁷The difference between explicating/signalling semantic values and their encoding/signifying/denoting, i.e., in grammatical terms, is discussed in Kabakčiev (2019: 203).

b. Sluzhitelite *sa raboteli* efektivno, kogato rabotodatelite *sa im plashtali* redovno
 ‘Employees have worked efficiently when employers have paid them regularly’

Conversely, the use of forms encoding accomplishments and episodes – which means aorist participles in Bulgarian with perfective and imperfective verbs respectively, is absolutely incorrect, cf. (7) vs (6):⁸

(7)a. *Momcheto *e spyalo*, kogato mayka mu *e vlyazla* v stayata

(lit.) ‘The boy has slept, when his mother has entered the room’

b. *Sluzhitelite *sa rabotili* efektivno, kogato rabotodatelite *sa im plashtali* redovno
 ‘Employees have worked efficiently when employers have paid them regularly’

These sentences further reveal the problem in trying to define a possible PP semantics. Most Bulgarian publications insist that PPs “express resultativeness”. Hence, obviously, if PP must express resultativeness, it is natural for the supporters of the “resultativeness meaning” to try to throw all imperfect participles out of the playground – because they, due to their Vendlerian activity/state feature, will always impart or tend to impart temporal non-boundedness. In other words, if imperfect participles participate in the formation of PPs, the resultativeness of PPs will become subject to doubt and will endanger the defective thesis. What is “the resultativeness” of *e spyalo* ‘has been sleeping’ and *sa raboteli* ‘have worked’ in (6)? There is no result, no resultativeness. The agents are engaged in activities – sleeping and working, respectively. These activities have no endpoints and no initial points too, hence no result can be identified. Because there is no place on the time axis at which some result can materialize.

The adherents of the idea that there are no PPs with imperfect participles always try to insist that *e spyalo* ‘has been sleeping’ and *sa raboteli* ‘have worked’ are not PPs but inferentials. But this argument is vacuous, because such sentences can equally well explicate inference or re-narration. Why should inference be preferred to re-narration? There is no reason for that. And if such sentences with imperfect *sam+-l* forms are re-narrated, they can very easily also be regarded as PPs: re-narration is a possible and legitimate feature of both aorist and imperfect PPs, as argued by Todorova (2010: 76). Note that the grammaticality of (6) and the non-grammaticality of (7) are preserved when a reverse transformation is applied: from sentences with *sam+-l* forms (PPs) to sentences with preterit forms:

(8)a. Momcheto *speshe*, kogato mayka mu *vleze* v stayata

‘The boy was sleeping, when his mother entered the room’

b. Sluzhitelite *raboteha* efektivno, kogato rabotodatelite *im plashtaha* redovno

‘Employees worked efficiently when their employers paid them regularly’

The status quo is preserved when sentences (8) are coerced into (9), and the non-grammaticality of (7) matches the non-grammaticality of (9):

(9)a. *Momcheto *spa*, kogato mayka mu *vleze* v stayata

(lit.) ‘The boy slept when his mother entered the room’

b. *Sluzhitelite *rabotiha* efektivno, kogato rabotodatelite *im plashtaha* redovno

‘Employees worked efficiently when employers paid them regularly’

The question why the imperfective aorist *spa* ‘slept’ is incompatible with the perfective aorist *vleze* ‘entered’ will not be discussed here, as it is beyond the gist of the issue.

Another aspect of the use of PPs in Bulgarian ignored by Bulgarianists in their claim that imperfect participles do not form PPs is the necessity for every TAM form to be able to signify Vendlerian states with generic participants, as in (10). The examples (10) were extracted from the Internet – refuting arguments by Bulgarianists (including personal communication) that *sam+-l* forms with imperfect participles are non-existent. They are very far from non-existent:

(10)a. Mravkite *sa se bieli* pomezhdur si predi milioni godini

(lit.) ‘The ants have fought each other millions of years ago’

b. Gladiatorite *sa se bieli* s divi zhivotni

(lit.) ‘The gladiators have fought wild animals’

⁸ On the episode Vendlerian situation, see Kabakčiev (2000: 279–307), Dimitrova and Kabakčiev (2021: 196–199).

c. Drevnite gartsii *sa se bili* vav falangova formatsiya
(lit.) ‘The Ancient Greeks have fought in a phalanx formation’

Analyzing such sentences with generic meanings, it cannot be claimed that the imperfect perfect can – or must – be replaced by an aorist perfect, “the correct form”, as claimed by some authors (Marovska 2005: 83). The outcome of such a “correct replacement” is non-grammaticality:

(11)a. *Mravkite *sa se bili* pomezhdu si predi milioni godini
(lit.) ‘The ants have fought each other millions of years ago’

б. *Gladiatorite *sa se bili* s divi zhiivotni
(lit.) ‘The gladiators have fought wild animals’

v. *Drevnite gartsii *sa se bili* vav falangova formatsiya
(lit.) ‘The Ancient Greeks have fought in a phalanx formation’

The sentences in (11) are absolutely non-grammatical when they refer to ants, gladiators and ancient Greeks as generic entities. This is because aorist participles encode the Vendlerian episode situation – a temporally bounded one but with no telos achieved (Kabakčiev 2000: 279–307; Dimitrova & Kabakčiev 2021: 196–199). Indeed, the sentences in (11) with aorist participles *could* be read as grammatical – but if and only if the subjects are non-generic entities. This is possible in Bulgarian, where, in contrast to English, plural nominals with a definite article (*mravkite* ‘the ants’, *gladiatorite* ‘the gladiators’, etc.) can refer either to generic entities (*ants*, *gladiators*, etc.) or to specific representatives (*the ants*, *the gladiators*, etc.) of the genera.

Conclusion

The analysis here and in previous studies (Kabakčiev 2020a; 2020d) supports the following thesis, for the time being provisional. The *raison d’être* of the present perfect in Bulgarian is the same as in many other languages: PP is *not* needed to encode notions such as resultativeness or current relevance. It exercises other functions, structural ones. Native speakers of “perfect-less” languages feel no need to express resultativeness or current relevance, they understand each other perfectly with no perfects. As already established (Kabakčiev 2020a; 2020d), the perfect does serve to signal non-witnessing in other languages, not only Bulgarian, and in Bulgarian it encodes it grammatically with its third-person forms – that are much more prevalent in real-world language use than non-third-person ones.

The analysis here re-confirms the important conclusion already made on the basis of a compositional aspect approach in Kabakčiev (2020b; 2020c) that Bulgarian PPs are formed from imperfect participles too. These participles share the same features with aorist participles *vis-à-vis* (non-)witnessing and must not be expelled from the playground of the present perfect, because the *raison d’être* of the present perfect is not resultativeness – therefore imperfect participles are fully compatible.

Bottom line, third-person forms of the Bulgarian present perfect, whether derived from aorist or imperfect participles, are invariably non-witnessed, and this definitive fact must be incorporated into all Bulgarian grammars. Otherwise its absence will continue to discredit not only grammars but Bulgarian studies in general.

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