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Revisiting the correspondence between the Polish Imperfective Aspect and the French Imparfait in the Distributed Grammar (DG) framework¹

Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to apply the Distributed Grammar (DG) theory which includes both the semantic and the pragmatic (meta-informative) level, to a cross-linguistic, comparative analysis of the use of certain aspect forms in Polish and French. Although the opposition of simple and complex forms of the French verb is often interpreted as aspectual, the existence of aspect in French usually taken for granted, and the Imparfait tense (IMP) described as “imperfective”, we propose to revisit the correspondence of IMP and the past forms of Polish Imperfective (IPF) verbs. We shall look particularly closely at cases where the IMP is not a translation equivalent of the Polish IPF, trying to explain these differences referring to both systemic and contextual factors. By reference to the theory of Meta-informative Grounding (MIG), we explain the corresponding uses of the IMP and the IPF by the *ontological* grounding of situations considered as *generic*, *general*, *potential* or *habitual*. The other uses of the IPF which do not correspond to the IMP in French can be explained by what we call *cognitive* and *communicative* grounding, in other words by the fact that the situation is pictured as *known* to both the speaker and the hearer or as already mentioned (*anaphoric usage*). Some other non-corresponding uses of the IPF result from its unmarked character in the Slavic Aspect opposition. Such uses of the IPF (which we call *neutral*) are motivated by the speaker’s intention to (1) “avoid” a specific meaning carried out by the Perfective (PF), or (2) state nothing but the simple occurring of a situation,² or (3) underline the fact that the speaker was certainly not involved in the situation described by the verb.

Keywords:

verbal aspect, imperfective, semantics, pragmatics, MIC theory

Streszczenie

Raz jeszcze o relacji między polskim aspektem niedokonanym i francuskim imperfectum w ramach Gramatyki Rozproszonej (franc. grammaire répartie)

Artykuł stanowi próbę pokazania, w jaki sposób teoria MIC (Meta-Informative Centering, teoria centrów uwagi) znajduje zastosowanie w porównawczym opisie użyć polskich form aspektu i francuskich form czasu. Analiza dotyczy wypadków trudnych, interpretowanych tradycyjnie jako nietypowe, tj. występowania polskich czasowników niedokonanych w kontekstach „zarezer-

¹ The Distributed Grammar (DG) theory integrates earlier local theories: Associative Semantics (AS), Meta-Informative Centering (MIC) and Meta-Informative Grounding (MIG). More information and downloadable papers can be found at <http://celta.paris-sorbonne.fr/anasem/indexASMIC.html>

² This use of the Imperfective is well known in Russian aspectology (Forsyth 1970: 171).

wowanych” teoretycznie dla czasowników dokonanych, por. *Nie czytałem tej książki, Jadłeś obiad?* Proponowane przez nas ujęcie, uwzględniające czynniki semantyczne i pragmatyczne (opozycje typu Old/New, Known/Unknown i Anaphoric/Cataphoric) pozwala nie tylko wyjaśnić takie użycia polskiego imperfectum, lecz także skonfrontować je z użyciami francuskich form imparfait oraz innych czasów gramatycznych.

Slowa klucze:

aspekt czasownika, imperfectum, semantyka, pragmatyka, teoria MIC

1. Universal concepts, systemic differences and contextual uses

The traditional clear-cut distinction between “aspectual” and “temporal” languages, often used for comparative studies of Slavic and Romance languages, such as Polish and French, has been long since revised, or rather smoothed and moderated in favor of a more universalist approach. Modern comparative studies (Kuryłowicz 1972, Karolak 1997, Ciszewska 2003) tend to lean towards a theory postulating the general existence of aspect (as a universal concept) in various language families, in spite of its different surface markings in particular languages.

It is still necessary, however, to bear in mind that the existence of conceptual universals does not erase some important morphological, syntactic and semantic features of Slavic and Romance languages that were the basis for the “aspectual” vs. “temporal” opposition. In the case of Polish and French,³ the two features accounting for the crucial systemic differences between the two languages may be summed up to (1) the obligation and (2) the means.

1.1. The obligation criterion and the means of expression

Contrastive linguistics is generally based on the assumption that the most important differences between languages primarily concern the domain of constraints rather than possibilities. In other words, as it is never possible to say everything in the linear structure of an utterance, languages differ mostly by what must be expressed, rather than by what may be said. In Slavic languages every verb used in an utterance, be it an infinitive, a participle or a personal form, must always bear one (and only one) of the two values of the binary category of aspect (in Polish *dokonany/niedokonany*, which we will hence translate as *Perfective PF/Imperfective IPF*).⁴ This kind of grammatical

³ We will hence limit our analysis to Polish and French, which, in this respect, may be considered quite representative for Slavic and Romance language families in general. However, one must remember that only general principles are common to all languages of a given family but that the choice of morphemes (e.g. prefixes in Slavic) or some particular uses of the language system may differ from one language to another.

⁴ The terminology concerning aspect meanings used by different authors is far from unanimous and may often lead to confusion. We will apply the terms *Perfective (dokonany)* and *Imperfective (niedokonany)* in reference to the two values of the binary grammatical opposition in Polish (the category of aspect dividing all verbs into two disjunctive sets). The term *aspectual meanings* applied to non-Slavic languages will concern the semantic and pragmatic uses which may, in certain contexts, be close to contextual meanings expressed in Polish by verbs of opposite aspects.

constraint has obvious semantic and pragmatic consequences. The speakers are actually obliged to make a choice between the PF or IPF picturing of a situation every time they use a verbal form, which may not be compulsory in languages such as French. As the systemic principles of a language are usually reflected in its structure, Polish provides the speaker with regular and productive means for expressing the category of aspect, namely the prefixes and suffixes, cf. *jechać* (imperf.) – *wyjechać* (perf.); *pisać* (imperf.) – *zapisać* (perf.) – *zapisywać* (imperf.). Although a somewhat similar mechanism may be observed in non-Slavic systems, cf. for ex. Ger. *gehen* – *ausgehen*, Eng. *cover* – *uncover*, Fr. *construire* – *déconstruire*, *voler* – *voleter*, *pleurer* – *pleurnicher*, etc., we must note that the process of prefixation/suffixation in these languages does not imply a change of any grammatical category. In other words, it brings nothing but a lexical modification to the meaning of the verb.

While Polish imposes this aspectual vision, French, on the other hand, insists on the precise expression of the chronology of events. Special forms must be used to indicate that one situation precedes another, be it in the past or in the future. Other forms are “specialized” in expressing simultaneity relating to a past moment. The relative chronology,⁵ both in so-called “reported speech” and in other types of contexts, is expressed with special tense forms such as Imparfait, Plus-que-parfait (PQP), Passé Antérieur (PA), Futur Antérieur (FA), Conditionnel (COND), etc. Polish seems to be much less restrictive in this respect, not to mention the lack of such sophisticated temporal means of expression (the verbal system offers only three tenses, this “poverty” being particularly striking in comparison to the complexity and symmetry of the French system composed of simple and complex verbal forms which enter in various types of temporal, aspectual and modal oppositions).

1.2. Aspectual vs. temporal languages in use

All these facts will obviously affect translation and teaching practice. As no language is able to express (on the surface) all the semantic and pragmatic nuances of a situation, concentrating on certain things will also logically mean that other elements have been left out, either being deductible from the context, or simply not being mentioned at all. To illustrate this “partiality” in both languages, which we consider crucial for comparing aspect uses in Polish and French, let us examine the following examples:

- (1) Wczoraj Ewa **czekała** (IPF) na Marka do 2.00 nad ranem.
(= we do not know whether he came or not)
- (2) Wczoraj Ewa **zaczekała** (PF) na Marka do 2.00 nad ranem.
(= she waited until he came)
- (3) Hier, Eva **a attendu/attendit** Marc jusqu'à 2h du matin.
'Yesterday Ewa has been waiting for Marek until 2.00 a.m.'

⁵ Or, in Reichenbach's terms (1947), the anchoring of an event E which does not concern directly the moment of speaking S, but another point R (called the reference point), expressed in the text using different means.

The Polish sentences (1) and (2), differing by an important result meaning,⁶ can both be translated into French using the same Passé Composé (PC)/Passé Simplé (PS) form. The French utterance may be called “aspectually ambiguous” as nothing is said about the outcome of the situation. Using the PC/PS form, the speaker communicates nothing but the fact that the action no longer persists at the moment of speaking. In other words, in this type of context, clearly indicating a one-time situation and not a habitual one, the external temporal limit (*jusqu'à 2h*) calls for the obligatory use of PS, PC or PQP, regardless of the internal picturing of the action as (in)complete. The Polish speaker, on the other hand, is usually obliged to indicate explicitly, using a proper PF or IPF verb, whether the action has come to its natural end. If for some reason resultativity cannot be expressed, an IPF form (*czekała*) may be used even if the situation described by the verb is no longer valid at the time of speaking. In the analysis that follows, we will show how this difference between the two languages turns out to be decisive for the lack of correspondence between the Polish IPF and the French IMP.

A reverse situation, i.e. a context where the obligatory expression of anteriority in French may lead to some ambiguities, is also possible. In French-Polish translation, the non-existence of verbal forms specialized in expressing anteriority in contemporary Polish⁷ does not necessarily imply considerable difficulties in expressing the chronology of events, as anteriority may simply be deducted from the context or expressed in Polish using other means, see Walkiewicz 2006b. Translating from Polish into French, though, is often quite a difficult task. Let us comment on the example cited in Włodarczyk 1995 which we find quite symptomatic:

- (4) ...na ganek **wyszedł** (PF) ze świecą wysoki mężczyzna. **Otulił się** (PF) burką przed nocnym mokrym chłodem. (Konwicki, Kompleks Polski, p. 32)
- (5) ...un homme de haute taille **est apparu** sur le perron. Il **s'était enveloppé** d'une cape pour se protéger de la fraîcheur mouillée de la nuit. (transl. Włodarczyk H., p. 41).
- 'A tall man holding a candle came out into the porch. He had wrapped himself with a cape against the cold humidity of the night.'

The Polish utterance is temporally ambiguous, as the action of wrapping oneself with a cape (*otulił się*) could just as well be anterior or posterior to the action of going outside (*wyszedł*). Our extra-linguistic knowledge does not provide too much help either, since the two versions seem conceivable. With Polish, being based on the aspectual relations, it is possible to leave out the temporal precisions, while concentrating on the perfective vision of both actions. The French translator, however,

⁶ Let us note that the nuance of result or completion is only one of the possible meanings of the perfective aspect, a nuance of interruption, beginning, resuming etc. being also possible, cf. §2.

⁷ Or, in the case of plusquamperfectum (Pol. *czas zaprzeszły*), their slow but inevitable extinction in historical evolution: already becoming quite rare in the beginning of 19th century, cf. Klemensiewicz 1974, they are now practically extinct.

is obliged to indicate the chronology of events and therefore opt explicitly for one of the two temporal orders.⁸

1.3. What may and should be compared: towards a *tertium comparationis*

The Polish “aspectual” nature and the “temporal” character of French make it clear that any simplified parallels between those languages should be strictly avoided. Yet, many authors seem to start from the “natural” assumption (be it expressed explicitly, as in the first passage below, or simply taken for granted as in the fragment that follows) that the category of aspect is part of the French verbal system, and that this aspectual opposition of “accomplished/non-accomplished” is expressed using grammatical means, i.e. the opposition of simple and complex verbal forms. What is more, “achèvement” and “accompl(issement)” are being treated as synonymous,⁹ cf.:

“For the expression of aspect, the verbal system provides the speaker with grammatical means, i.e. the simple and complex forms. (...) Each complex form marks a terminated action (*action achevée*). It describes the accomplished aspect of the action (*l'aspect accompli de l'action*). As opposed to complex forms, each simple form marks an action that is not yet terminated. It describes the non-accomplished aspect of the action.” (J.-C. Chevalier et al. 2002: 328, transl. by A.W.)

“The action may be presented as still in progress (non-accompli) or already terminated (accompli). This opposition is being expressed with the use of simple (*non-accompli*) and complex (*accompli*) [verbal] forms.” (Dubois, Lagane 2004: 124, transl. by A.W.).

Applying these conclusions to comparative Polish-French analysis, we could be tempted to consider the opposition of simple and complex forms in French as an equivalent of the Polish opposition of the IPF and PF. It is of course quite easy to demonstrate, using some very basic examples, that the French simple forms of the verb may just as well be translated into Polish using the IPF forms (which is true, for example, for most PS forms), or that in numerous contexts the Polish IPF forms have a complex form as their translation correspondent in French (Włodarczyk H. 1995, Walkiewicz 2006a and 2010).¹⁰ On the other hand, theories stating the aspectual nature of the PC:IMP opposition are by no means groundless, as there seems to exist some similarities between the uses of the French IMP and the Polish IPF verbs.

Given all this, we believe that any contrastive analysis of the usage of verbal categories needs a more universal linguistic background which could serve as *tertium*

⁸ Based on our knowledge of the world, we chose to use the PQP, assuming that in cold weather one is likely to put on warm clothes before leaving the house. It would be equally feasible, however, to set forward another translation with a succession of PC verbs indicating an opposite chronology of events, cf. ...un homme de haute taille *est apparu* sur le perron. *Il s'est enveloppé* d'une cape (...).

⁹ Interestingly, this wide-spread approach seems to be independent of the authors’ theoretical scope. Passages presenting the opposition of simple and complex verbal forms as the opposition of aspect (the Fr. (*in*)*accompli* being explicitly or implicitly thought of as corresponding to/equalling the (*im*) *perfective* in Slavic languages) can be found in most French grammars, cf. for ex. Riegel et al. 2006.

¹⁰ Similar conclusions were put forward in Kuryłowicz 1972 and Świątkowska 1978.

comparationis. This background (in our case, the DG theory) consists of both semantic and pragmatic universal concepts making it possible to describe Polish and French verb forms in a unified manner.

2. *The category of Aspect in the DG framework*

There exists a long lasting debate concerning the borderline between the semantics and pragmatics of aspect. As a matter of fact, the two domains are always difficult to distinguish from one another but the paradox of verbal aspect consists in that its meaning seems to be completely pragmatic from the very beginning, since aspect is literally the “viewpoint” of the speaker on the situation spoken about.

On the other hand, in structural linguistics, most contextually-bound uses of semantic categories were regarded as belonging to the pragmatic level, taking for granted that systemic meanings, identified as the system of semantic (grammatical and lexical) oppositions characteristic of a given language or family of languages, belongs to “langue”. On the contrary, all uses in context were considered as pertaining to “parole”, thus as belonging to the pragmatic level defined as the “use” of the linguistic system by a speaker in a speech act.

However, the numerous contextually-bound uses of a grammatical category are not all of a pragmatic nature. Many linguists insist on the fact that a general definition of the meaning of the category of aspect (on the level of “langue” or language system) is not sufficient to give account of its numerous uses in context (on the level of “parole” or language use), therefore they opposed the *general* and *particular meanings* (Jakobson 1932 and 1936), the *primary* and *secondary meanings* (Kuryłowicz 1972 and 1977), or the *semantic potential* and *particular meanings* of a grammatical category (Bondarko 1971 and 1976). But it is important to underline that not all particular or secondary meanings are pragmatic, some are semantic.

We consider that the properly pragmatic uses of a category are those directly related to the speech act, its agents (the speaker and the addressee), and the *Old (O)* or *New (N) status* attributed by the speaker to the utterance or to its constituents. In the framework of the Meta-Informative Centering (MIC) theory, the term *information* concerns the semantic content of utterances, while *meta-information* (MI) concerns the presentation of information as it is linearized in utterances and texts, which is made possible by the choice (by the speaker) of a center of attention among the participants of the situation spoken about, and the attribution (by the speaker again) of the *O or N status* to the utterance and its *centers of attention* (Włodarczyk A. & H. 2008).

Let us now briefly recall the semantic and pragmatic theoretical background we developed in our previous publications.

2.1. *The DG Approach to Aspect Semantics*

We consider that aspect belongs to universal semantic categories which can be described by bundles of univocally defined attribute-feature structures. Such attributes and their different values belong to the ontology of human languages. The semantic content of a linguistic expression is a function that is mapping this expression on

ontological concepts. In order to be able to explain the semantic content of various aspectual expressions in different languages, we need a general set of abstract ontological attribute-feature structures from which we can choose a specific subset of semantic feature structures.

More specifically, while analyzing Aspect in Slavic languages, we proposed to regard it as a hypercategory¹¹ (Włodarczyk A. & H. 2001, 2003, 2006) in order to include in this category both what was considered in former studies as “grammatical” aspect on the one hand and “lexical” aspect or *Aktionsart* on the other. The necessity to treat aspect and *Aktionsart* as manifestations of one category was put forward by many linguists in the last quarter of the 20th century¹² (among others, by Karolak 1997). The conception of aspect as a hypercategory is a consequence of the great semantic diversity of the derivational lexical markers that are used as aspect morphemes: prefixes and suffixes. The use of prefixes and suffixes to express aspectual meanings is a potentiality within many Indo-European languages but aspectual semantics developed diversely in different subfamilies. In Latin (as pointed out by Veyrenc in his Russian Grammar 1968), there existed a frequentative suffix (*jacere* → *jactare*) which however did not evolve (transform) into an imperfectivizing morpheme. Likewise, prefixes could be used to express a more precise, more definite in time (hence non durative and non repeated) meaning than that of the simple verb (*jacere* → *ejacere* ‘throw away’). In modern Germanic languages, this sort of evolution concerns the use of prepositions to create verbal affixes, be they prefixed or postfixed or used as so-called verbal particles to create compound verbs. In English, the meanings of verbs with affixes pertain to aspectual semantics (Simon 2006) and we would consider it to be of great utility for teaching Slavic languages to English speakers to undertake a systematic comparison with the so-called *Aktionsart* of Slavic languages. Several contrastive German-Polish studies (Kątny 1994, Czochralski 1975, Czarnecki 1998) showed that the meanings of German verbal infixes are comparable to the various *Aktionsart* meanings expressed by Polish prefixes. Czochralski suggested that the systemic meaning of aspect by contrast to the particular meanings of different prefixed or suffixed verbs could be compared to a phoneme and its phonetic realizations (allophones): different PF verbs derived from one simple IPF verb can be regarded as “allograms” of their IPF partner.¹³ The specificity of Slavic languages among other Indo-European languages consists in that the variety of *Aktionsart* meanings gave rise to a binary grammaticalized opposition of only two abstract meanings (the IPF and PF).

To describe the different uses of aspect forms in Polish we proposed three kinds of semantic features: Situation Type, Situation Analysis and Situation Control (Włodarczyk A. & H. 2001, 2003, and 2006). First, we interpret each contextual use of a verb form by reference to a formalized classification of *situations into states* and *actions*, which

¹¹ This concept (Włodarczyk A. & H. 2003, 2006) could serve as a formal foundation for the notion of «verb clusters» proposed by Laura Janda (2007) to replace the traditional aspectual pair

¹² As concerns the history of the concept of *Aktionsart* in Slavic linguistics, see Włodarczyk H. 1997.

¹³ Likewise, in relation with the concept of hypercategory, we consider (Włodarczyk 2003, 2006) that an aspectual pair is only a particular realization of the more general case of aspectual derivation which consists of an aspect family: one simple IPF verb may have more than one PF partner.

are further divided into *events* and *processes* that are of two sorts: *ordinary* or *refined*, i.e. consisting of repeated quanta of the same process (Włodarczyk A. 2003). Then, aspect uses are described by two types of semantic features: (1) internal aspect, i.e. *the analysis of the situation* into a linear series of *moments* and *stages* and (2) external aspect or *control* features: modification of the flow (*interruption*, *continuation*, *resume*, *intermittence*), *repetition* of the situation, and *composition* of several situations into one situation. We use these features to give account of the numerous contextually-bound semantic usages of the aspect category: features make it possible to typify individual uses (occurrences) into usages (types). Each aspect use can therefore be described by a semantic feature bundle consisting of two parts: situation analysis and situation control. All uses described by the same feature bundle belong to the same usage. The situation type is considered as a condition for the usage of aspect.

Aspect Usage = { Situation Analysis, Situation Control } condition: Situation Type

As an example, the “resultative” meaning of the PF aspect can be considered as a semantic contextual usage: it is possible to describe it as the emphasis put, in an appropriate context, on the *after* stage of an *ordinary process* having reached its *finish* moment.

(6) **Wysprzedałem** wszystkie bilety.

‘I have sold out all the tickets.’ or ‘I have now no tickets left.’

In example (6), the *after* stage is the state when there are no tickets left, the *process* is that of selling tickets. Likewise, other contextual meanings related with the semantic features of the aspect category (the *internal analysis* and the external *control* features) belong to the semantics of the category.

In order to test the above mentioned features, we are now conducting an experiment at CELTA Sorbonne which consists of describing aspect uses in Polish with the SEMANA software¹⁴ comprising a database builder and computational data analysis tools (formal concept analysis, rough set analysis, statistic data analysis). The computer-aided method of acquisition of semantic knowledge (Włodarczyk A. 2007 and 2009) consists of collecting numerous contextual uses of a grammatical category and describing each of them by a feature bundle. The *interactive* method makes it possible to add or remove from the database builder a feature or one of its values, when it appears necessary for the relevant description of the corpus of examples. The linguist continues to describe more and more samples until no new configuration of features is added; when this is achieved, the “general” meaning of the category will be defined as the common core of features used to describe the different uses. Usages are obtained when reducing all identical uses to only one by deleting duplicates. This method is currently being applied to the description of context uses of PF and IPF verbs in Polish in order to experimentally discover the configuration of features which characterize, respectively, the PF and the IPF aspect (Włodarczyk

¹⁴ Information about interactive linguistics and the SEMANA software can be found at <http://celta.paris-sorbonne.fr/anensem/indexIL.html>.

H. 2009). Each configuration characteristic of one of the two Aspects consists in a core and a periphery. The core should correspond to the most typical and frequent usages, the periphery to less frequent and less typical usages. Moreover, our first results make it possible to understand that the features that are shared by both IPF and PF usages can give account for what is called the “concurrence of aspects” (cf. Włodarczyk 1997: 211).

2.2. *The pragmatic usages of verbal aspect in the scope of the Meta-informative Centering Theory*

As was already pointed out, we admit that the properly pragmatic usages of the aspect category are related to the meta-informative old or new (*MI O* or *N*) status. In Polish and Russian, the relation between verbal Aspect and *MI status* can be observed in the contextual uses of IPF and PF verbs. Namely, PF verbs are more frequently used in a *N* context and IPF verbs in an *O* context (Włodarczyk H. 1997). It must be added (cf. table 1) that the *O* and *N* status are grounded not only in discourse (*anaphoric/cataphoric uses*) and the shared knowledge of the speech act agents (*known/unknown uses*), which will be further discussed in §5.2, but also in the reference to the represented world (language ontology) opposing such notions as *generic* vs. *specific*, *general* vs. *particular*, *potential* vs. *actual*, *habitual* vs. *occasional*.

Tab. 1. „Grounding of Old and New meta-informative status”
(Włodarczyk A. and H., 2011, to appear)

Information Storage	Type of grounding	Grounding of Old status		Grounding of New status	
Intermediate memory	Communication	anaphoric		cataphoric	
	Beliefs (cognitive)	known		unknown	
Permanent memory (World's mental image)	Ontology (referential)	Σ	generic	II	specific
			general		particular
			potential		actual
			habitual		occasional

Let us first concentrate and comment on the latter. As shown in Table 1, some pragmatic usages are grounded in ontology; such usages are referential, as they oppose situations seen as types to situations seen as occurrences or tokens (cf. table 2). The opposition of types and occurrences concerns both situations and their participants, above all those playing an active role, expressed in most utterances by the subject of the verb. The singular or plural form of the subject noun denoting the active participant and its determination (definiteness) in the utterance are indices leading to the interpretation of situation as types or tokens.

Tab. 2. Ontology-based informative motivation of aboutness

Situation Types (Σ)	Situation Occurrences (Π)
generic > general	specific > particular
potential > habitual	actual > occasional

The relation between genericity and generality is a degree relation; in a *generic* situation all elements of a class (of situations and participants) are concerned whereas only most elements of a class are representative of a *general* situation. It should be stressed that the *potential* meaning should not be identified with the modal meaning of possibility (*possible* vs. *necessary*): we understand it as the ability of a participant to play a role in a situation. The relation between potentiality and habituality is causal: a participant who is used to playing a role in a situation is supposed to be, at the same time, able to play this role. In some utterances, the speakers point at the indeterminate number of iterated situations they could or can observe. In other utterances, they speak about the conclusion they could draw from this observation about the ability of the agent(s) taking part in the iterated situations. From a habitual situation, we may infer a potentiality and when this potentiality concerns the whole class of entities referred to by a noun, it may lead to a generic interpretation as in the example (7) hereafter. The oppositions presented in Table 2 can be illustrated by utterances containing IPF and PF verbs.

A. Generic > general vs. specific > particular

A *generic* situation expressed by an IPF verb form

- (7) Polski żołnierz **umiera** (IPF) z honorem.
 ‘A Polish soldier dies with honor.’

A *general* situation expressed by an IPF verb form

- (8) Polscy żołnierze **umierają** (IPF) z honorem
 ‘Polish soldiers die with honor.’
- (9) Francuzi **jedzą** (IPF) ser.
 ‘French people eat cheese.’

A *specific* and a *particular* situation expressed by a PF verb form

- (10) Wczoraj **zginął** (PF) w Afganistanie kolejny polski żołnierz.
 ‘Yesterday, another Polish soldier was killed in Afghanistan.’
- (11) Nasza japońska przyjaciółka **zjadła** (PF) wczoraj pierwszy raz kawałek francuskiego sera.
 ‘Yesterday, our Japanese friend had a piece of French cheese for the first time.’

B. Habitual vs. occasional

A *habitual* situation expressed by an IPF verb form

- (12) Dzieci **odrabiają** (IPF) lekcje codziennie po południu.
 ‘The children do their homework every afternoon.’

An *occasional* situation expressed by a PF verb form

- (13) Wczoraj syn sam **odrobił** (PF) lekcje.
 ‘Yesterday our son did his homework all by himself.’

C. Potential vs. actual

A *potential* situation expressed by an IPF verb form

- (14) Dzieci z mojej klasy dobrze śpiewają (IPF) i pięknie rysują (IPF).

‘The children of my class can sing well and draw beautifully.’

An *actual* situation expressed by a PF verb form

- (15) Nasz syn narysował (PF) piękną laurkę z okazji Dnia Matki.

‘Our son drew a beautiful card for Mother’s Day.’

The four above mentioned oppositions serve as grounding for the *O* or *N MI status* but, themselves, they concern the ontology of the situations referred to; in other words: the semantics of the situations. Hence, we can better understand why it is so difficult to draw a sharp border between semantics and pragmatics since the MI level itself is partly motivated by the informative level.

As the IPF is the unmarked member of the Aspect opposition, the usages of IPF verb forms are extremely context-dependent and clearly distinct. On the other hand, since the PF is the marked member of the Aspect opposition, its usages are not so much context-dependent. In most contexts, the four values (or two of them) co-appear, such as the specific and particular value in (10)–(11), although one of them may be underlined by the context, for instance by an adjunct.

The strictly pragmatic usages of Aspect are grounded in discourse: *anaphoric/cataphoric* and *known/unknown*. Examples of PF verbs with *cataphoric* and *unknown* meaning can be found at the beginning of communicative exchanges and at the incipit of stories, as shown in utterances (16) and (17) hereafter.

- (16) **Przyjechał** (PF) kiedyś do mnie mój daleki kuzyn, misjonarz. (S. Mrożek, *Z gawęd wuja*, p. 123)

‘Once a cousin of mine came to see me, he was a missionary.’

- (17) Na początku zimy **przyjechała** (PF) z Dorpatu z Estonii babka Dilbinowa

i pokój, który zajęła, bardzo nęcił Tomasza. (Cz. Miłosz, *Dolina Issy*, p. 61)

‘At the beginning of winter grandmother Dilbinow arrived from Dorpat in Estonia and the room she occupied was very tempting to Tomasz.’

Examples of IPF verbs with *anaphoric* and *known* meaning are given in §5.2 where we discuss the problem of their correspondence with French tense forms.¹⁵ These meanings make it possible to give account of usages of the IPF which are generally regarded as “untypical” and do not correspond to the usages of the French IMP. Let us emphasize that only IPF verb forms appear with *anaphoric* or *known* meanings whereas the PF verb forms are used exclusively in *N* contexts with *cataphoric* and/or *unknown* status.

We summarize in the following table the pragmatic usages of Aspect verb forms in Slavic languages.

¹⁵ The anaphoric and known meaning make it possible to give account of usages of the IPF aspect also in the Imperative and Infinitive mood, cf. Włodarczyk H. 1997.

Tab. 3. Pragmatic usages of Perfective and Imperfective Aspect forms in Slavic languages

Type of Grounding of MI Status	IPF Aspect in OLD MI context	PF Aspect in NEW MI context
Communicative	Anaphoric	Cataphoric
Cognitive	Known	Unknown
	Situations seen as types	Situations seen as tokens
Ontological (Referential)	Σ generic general potential habitual	Π specific particular actual occasional

Nevertheless, it must be added that the use of PF and IPF verb forms in opposite contexts (i.e. the PF appearing in *O* contexts and the IPF in *N*ones) is also possible, although less frequent. On the one hand, in *O* MI context, the PF verb expressing an individual occurrence of a situation (an item or a token) is used metaphorically as a prototype representing the whole set of similar situations. On the other hand, IPF verbs can be used to point at items instead of types of situations: such IPF verbs express *particular*, *actual* and *occasional* situations but without the specific semantic features added by PF morphemes (such as prefixes and the *-nq-* suffix). These usages of the Polish IPF, which also do not correspond to the usages of the French IMP, will be discussed in detail in §5 as well.

3. *The French Imparfait as a possible equivalent of the Polish Imperfective*

The IMP, often described as an “imperfective” form (Martin 1985, Kleiber 2003) and treated (be it explicit or implicit) as corresponding to the Slavic past forms of the IPF verb, is clearly one of the most complex and multi-functional verbal forms of French, entering into different types of temporal, aspectual, modal and stylistic relations with other forms such as PRES, PC, PS, PQP and COND. Although we reject any simplified comparisons of verbal forms whose systemic meaning and contextual functions may differ considerably from one language to another, it is clear that there exists some common ground for French IMP and Polish Past IPF. Let us briefly comment on those commonly assumed characteristics.

3.1. *Imparfait as an “imperfective” form*

Most authors describing the IMP as “imperfective” agree that the IMP may be regarded as picturing the situation from a reference point situated inside the ongoing situation, and therefore opposed to the “global” and “transitional” perspective of the PS and PC. With the IMP, the speaker is expressing the so-called “secent” meaning, stating that part of the process has already been realized while another (virtual) part is yet to

come (cf. Martin 1985, Caudal et al. 2003), and refrains from indicating its *starting* and *finishing moment* or result. To some extent, and keeping in mind some important differences between the PRES and the IMP, the latter may be considered as a sort of “present in the past”, moving the reader into the middle of a situation taking place before the speech moment or simultaneously to a past moment. Kuryłowicz (1972) compares the use of *imperfectum* to a camera blow-up, stating that the ‘linear’ (non-global) character of these forms makes the reader ‘live the past’ and concentrate on a past situation the way they would experience the present. These systemic values of the IMP also account for its frequent use in contexts belonging to Weinrich’s “*arrière-plan*” (descriptions, comments, explanations, etc., see Weinrich 1973).

Looking at the examples below, we find that most of these features may just as well be attributed to Polish IPF forms used in utterances like (18) which we interpret as the neutralized use of the IPF aspect in N-type contexts (*actual, particular or specific*). The use of IPF makes it possible to avoid expressing the nuance of completion or result which would be conveyed by the PF. In (18) and (19), both the IPF and the IMP forms are used to place the reader inside the past situation which is pictured in progress, without its final limits and without marking the transition from an *internal* to an *after phase* of the process. In both cases, the IMP/IPF need an external time reference point indicated by another verb (*widziałem/lai vu*) and/or some other temporal expression (*kiedyś/un jour*),¹⁶ cf.

- (18) **Widziałem** (PF) kiedyś na Żelaznej zbiegówisko. Ludzie **tłoczyli się** (IPF) na ulicy dookoła beczki – zwyczajnej drewnianej beczki, na której **stał** (IPF) Żyd. **Był** (IPF) stary, niski i miał długą brodę. Przy nim **stało** (IPF) dwóch niemieckich oficerów. (Dwóch pięknego, rosyjskich mężczyzn przy małym, zgarbionym Żydzie). I ci Niemcy wielkimi krawieckimi nożyczami **obcinali** (IPF) Żydowi po kawałczku jego długą brodę, zaśmiewając się do rozpuku. Tłum, który ich **otaczał** (IPF), też **się śmiał** (IPF). Bo to **było** (IPF) naprawdę śmieszne: mały człowiek na drewnianej beczce z coraz krótszą brodą, ginącą pod krawieckimi nożyczami. Jak gag filmowy. Nie **było** (IPF) jeszcze getta, więc w tej scenie nie **czuło się** (IPF) grozy (...). (H. Krall, Zdążyć przed Panem Bogiem, p. 38)
- (19) Un jour, dit-il, j'**ai vu** (PC) un attrouement rue Zelazna. Les gens se **pressaient** (IMP) autour d'un tonneau – un simple tonneau en bois –, sur lequel **se tenait** (IMP) un Juif. Il **était** (IMP) vieux, petit et barbu. Près de lui **s'agitaient** (IMP) deux officiers allemands. (Deux hommes grands et beaux à côté de ce petit Juif voûté). Avec de gros ciseaux de tailleur, ils lui **coupaien** (IMP) la longue barbe par mèches, en se tordant de rire. La foule qui **s'agglutinait** (IMP) autour **riait** (IMP) aussi. En effet, la situation **était** (IMP) très comique : un petit bonhomme hissé sur le tonneau, avec sa barbe

¹⁶ This need for an external reference point is usually referred to as the anaphoric nature of IMP, cf. §5. For more detailed studies on this subject, cf. Świątkowska 1978, Tasmowski-De Ryck 1985, Kleiber 2003.

de plus en plus courte, disparaissant à grands coups de ciseaux. C'**était** (IMP) comme un gag au cinéma. Le ghetto n'**existait** pas (IMP) encore, la scène ne **semblait** (IMP) donc pas terrifiante. (Prendre le bon Dieu de vitesse, transl. by P. Li and M. Ochab, p. 48–49)

Such *actual* usages of the IPF denoting an ongoing process or state without indicating its limit or result are very frequent in Polish. We can see that the systemic meaning of IMP seems to correspond to one of the neutralized, contextual meanings of the IPF used in reference to a *N* situation. In §4, we will demonstrate how the IMP is also a regular equivalent of the Polish IPF in most *O*-type utterances, as the semantic features of IMP may comply with the *generic*, *general*, *potential* and *habitual* context.

3.2. The problem of “neutrality”: the privative oppositions of IMP/PC in French and PF/IPF in Polish

In their study of the different values of IMP, Caudal et al. (2003) point to the fact that the indeterminate or “inconsistent” character of these forms¹⁷ makes it possible for them to appear both in assertive and non-assertive (hypothetical) utterances (*Si j'étais riche, je m'achèterais une belle maison*), as well as in some “modal” contexts (the so-called imparfait hypocoristique: *Alors, on était sage ce matin?*, imparfait de politesse: *Qu'est-ce qui vous fallait, madame?*, etc.). According to these authors, even though it is not entirely aspectually-neutral, preserving its secant and non-transitional systemic meaning we described above, the IMP still appears to be the “less marked” member of the IMP/PS opposition. In contrast with the PS, clearly excluding any non-global or non-assertive uses, the IMP does not block the “global” or “perfective” meaning of the context, namely in so-called narrative uses (*imparfait de rupture, imparfait pittoresque*): *Une demi-heure plus tard, il se déshabillait pour se mettre au lit* (Green cited in Grevisse 2001).

The modern studies of IMP (Tasmowski-De Ryck 1985, Caudal et al. 2003, Bres 2003, Riegel et al. 2006) tend to explain the variety of its possible contextual uses (including the so-called imparfait “de rupture”, “hypocoristique”, “modal”, etc.) by some coherent systemic properties of these forms. Many authors insist on the fact that it is not the IMP as such that may be qualified as “hypocoristic”, “habitual”, etc. It is rather the somewhat neutral or “undetermined” nature of these forms that makes it possible for them to co-occur with certain elements of the co(n)text which trigger a habitual or hypocoristic reading, cf. Świątkowska 1978, Tasmowski-de Ryck 1985, Grevisse 2001.

This neutrality could actually be regarded as a common feature of the French IMP and the Polish IPF aspect, the latter often considered as the unmarked member of the aspectual opposition. However, a different approach is also possible. The IMP is part of such a complex tense system that there is no agreement between linguists as to its marked or unmarked character, and as to the general existence of privative oppositions among the past forms of French. As a matter of fact, the IMP may be considered as

¹⁷ What the authors refer to as “inconsistent” (Fr. inconséquent) is neutrality in regard to assertion.

entering more than one opposition, not only a temporal one (“past/present”) or an aspectual one (“accompli/inaccompli”) but also a modal one (“indicatif/conditionnel/subjonctif”). The numerous contextual uses of past forms make it difficult to determine what should be considered as their general or primary meaning. Following Kuryłowicz 1972 and focusing only on temporal and aspectual uses (leaving aside modal ones), it is possible to consider that in French, the marked form among the past simple forms is that of the Imparfait whose primary function is transferring into the past the point of view of the present form in its actual use, i.e. referring to a currently lasting state or ongoing process (see §3.2.). It is this meaning which is expressed by the use of the progressive form in English translation.

- (20) Pierre **lisait** (IMP) quand je suis entré.
 ‘Peter was reading when I entered.’

We will see below how this systemic feature of the IMP makes it impossible to use these forms in several “global” contexts typical for the neutralized use of the Polish IPF.

Still following Kuryłowicz 1972, the aorist form (the PS in classical French, often replaced by the PC¹⁸ in modern French) may thus be regarded as unmarked as it can express both global or limited situations (21) and ongoing, non-limited ones (22). The very large scope of meaning of the French PC is attested by its various usages in different contexts and is reflected by the various translations of the PC into English, cf. simple past in (21) and present perfect continuous in (22).

- (21) Pierre **a terminé** (PC) son mémoire il y a une semaine.
 ‘Peter finished his thesis a week ago.’
- (22) Pierre **a travaillé** (PC) toute l’année.
 ‘Peter has been working all year.’¹⁹

Assuming such interpretation of the French temporal system will actually allow us to explain several important differences in the contextual use of the IMP and the Polish IPF (see §3.3 and 5).

The problem of privative oppositions seems to be somewhat less controversial in Slavic languages where many linguists tend to describe the IPF aspect as the unmarked member. In our interpretation of the functioning of the Polish IPF aspect, we make a similar assumption and consider that a) the various pragmatic and semantic meanings of the IPF used in the context must be distinguished from its systemic meaning, and b) it is this systemic meaning (its unmarked character, or neutrality in respect to the various meanings of the PF hypercategory) that accounts for the use of the IPF in such a variety of contexts. Let us underline that this kind of approach differs from some traditional interpretations of the IPF forms as carrying (as their systemic meaning) the sense of “incomplete” or “habitual” situations, etc. To us, all such nuances

¹⁸ When used as a substitute of the PS, the PC seems to have lost the anteriority meaning of compound tense forms.

¹⁹ The possibility to translate the French PC into English by both Simple Past and Past Progressive forms can be considered as a hint to its “unmarked” character.

are contextually-bound, whereas the systemic meaning of the IPF could be described as aspectually neutral. Thus, we claim that the main reason for using the IPF in *NMI* contexts is actually the intention of the speaker to refrain from expressing what would have been said with a PF verb, cf. §5.

3.3. Avoiding premature comparisons

We have seen in §3.1. and 3.2. that the Polish IPF and the French IMP do seem to present some similar systemic features which may explain both the widely-assumed interpretation of IMP as an “imperfective” form and the fact that these forms are actually a regular equivalent of the Polish IPF in contexts such as (18)–(19). Yet, we must not forget that what is considered as the **primary, systemic** meaning of the IMP in (19) is treated in our approach of Slavic Aspect as **one of the very frequent but nevertheless secondary, contextual and neutralized** uses of the Polish IPF.

Moreover, if neither the IMP nor the IPF block the occurrence of a “global” context, their so-called untypical uses in utterances presenting complete, terminated events from the past do not coincide in the two languages. We will show in §5 that the IPF will be used in many contexts excluding the use of IMP in French.

- (23) **Czytałeś** (IPF) kiedyś “Ulisses” Joyce'a?
- (24) **As-tu jamais lu** (PC) “l'Ulysse” de Joyce?
‘Have you ever read Joyce's “Ulysses”?’
- (25) **Dzwoniłem** (IPF) trzy razy, ale nikt nie **odbierał** (IPF).
- (26) **J'ai téléphoné** (PC) trois fois mais personne n'a **répondu** (PC).
‘I called three times but nobody answered.’

The IMP, on the other hand, might appear in contexts where it could not be rendered in translation by the Polish IPF, mainly as so-called IMP *de rupture*. It is clear that an IPF form in (28) would not have the same effect as the French IMP: instead of transferring the reader inside the ongoing past situation as in (27), it would rather create a somewhat strange impression of unfinished actions:

- (27) Maigret s'adressa à Lapointe. – Conduis-le au Dépôt, puis va te coucher.
Il **ouvrait** (IMP) son placard pour prendre son pardessus et son chapeau, puis, se ravisant, il **tendait** (IMP) la main au gros homme au visage rouge. – Ce n'est pas notre faute, vieux. (G. Simenon, Maigret et les témoins récalcitrants, p. 17)
 - (28) Maigret powiedział do Lapointe'a: – Zaprowadź go do aresztu, a sam idź się przespac.
- Otworzył** (PF) szafę, wyjął płaszcz i kapelusz, po czym z uśmiechem **uścisnął** (PF) dłoń grubasa o rumianej twarzy. – To nie nasza wina, stary. (Maigret i oporni świadkowie, transl. by K. Witwicka, p. 12)

Finally, as opposed to the very common use of the Polish IPF in informal contexts like (23)–(25), the French IMP *de rupture* (27) is a much less frequent, stylistic

procedure belonging to literary or journalistic language. Different authors point to the fact that the IMP in such contexts does not only draw the reader's attention to the action described, but is also an important element responsible for text cohesion, serving as a sort of binding for closing a paragraph picturing a sequence of events expressed with the PS (it is no accident that IMP *de rupture* is most likely to appear at the beginning or at the end of a paragraph):

- (29) Quelques minutes plus tard, mon père partit, portant un cache-nez et deux souliers noirs. Le soir, il revint sans écharpe ni pardessus. – Tiens, c'est vrai, dit-il. Je les ai oubliés dans la grotte (...). Toute la soirée mon père toussait, le lendemain il fut pris de fièvre et je dus appeler le médecin. Pauvre papa, il n'avait jamais eu de chance! C'était une congestion pulmonaire. Quatre jours après, il **mourut** (PS).

Commenting on example (29) (a French translation of A. Christie's *The Man in the Brown Suit*), Tasmowski-de Ryck (1985: 67) states that the use of a PS (*mourut*) seems to be a sort of mistranslation, detaching the situation (dying) from the preceding sequence of events which lead to it. According to the author, this type of context calls for the more "natural" use of an IMP. Let us note that this is definitely not the case in Polish. An IPF (*umierał*) used as a correspondent of the IMP (*mourait*) would clearly have an unwanted secant meaning, *umierał* having the sense of "being in agony" rather than "having died".

Therefore, we may conclude that the occurrence of the Polish IPF in so-called global contexts is triggered by different factors (and different motivations of the speaker) than the "untypical" uses of the French IMP. In the following sections, we shall apply the DG theoretical framework to a thorough analysis of different possible uses of the Polish IPF,²⁰ concentrating both on the cases where they coincide with those of the French IMP, and on contexts where the IPF is regularly rendered in French by other (mostly PC) forms. We will try to explain these similarities and differences, referring to both the systemic values of the two languages and a variety of semantic and pragmatic factors playing an important role in the context.

4. The Ontological Grounding of Imperfective/Imparfait Uses in an Old Meta-informative context

We have stated in §2 that the IPF forms are more likely to appear in *O*-type contexts. If the use of the IPF is ontologically-motivated (cf. table 1), it will concern the *generic>general* and *potential>habitual* meanings (as opposed to the *specific>particular* and *actual>occasional* ones). It is also in these kinds of contexts that the Polish IPF verbs seem to regularly correspond to the French IMP.

²⁰ Assuming the Polish language as our starting point means leaving out several so-called stylistic and modal uses of the French IMP and concentrating on its temporal/aspectual uses. However, some interesting convergence may already be observed e.g. in modal contexts such as *Je voulais vous demander un service!* **Chciałem pana prosić o przystającę!** /I wanted to ask you for a favor, etc.

4.1. The generic and general meaning

In both languages, the *generic* meaning is most typically expressed using the present, cf.

- (30) Pies **jest** ssakiem.
- (31) Le chien **est** un mammifère.
- (32) Woda **wrze** w 100 C.
- (33) L'eau **bout** à 100 degrés.

It is possible, however, to conceive past contexts of this kind, e.g. describing an extinct species (*generic* value) as in (34)–(35). The *general* value is even more likely to appear in past contexts, when the speaker refers to a general feature or property of some entity (/ies) which held true for a period of time anterior to the point of speaking (in the example (36) below, referring to a typical “career” of country teachers graduating from *école supérieure primaire* in the 1950's):²¹

- (34) Les dinosaures **mangeaient** (IMP) pratiquement tous des feuilles d'arbre, de l'herbe ou de petits fruits sauvages.
- (35) Prawie wszystkie dinozaury **jadły** (IPF) liście drzew, trawę lub małe dzikie owoce.
- (36) Après quelques années d'apostolat laïque dans la neige des hameaux perdus, le jeune instituteur **glissait** (IMP) à mi-pente jusqu'aux villages, où il **épousait** (IMP) au passage l'institutrice ou la postière. Puis il **traversait** (IMP) plusieurs de ces bourgades dont les rues sont encore en pente, et chacune de ces haltes **était** (IMP) marquée par la naissance d'un enfant. Au troisième ou au quatrième, il **arrivait** (IMP) dans les sous-préfectures de la plaine, après quoi il **faisait** (IMP) enfin son entrée au chef-lieu (...) Il **enseignait** (IMP) alors dans une école à huit ou dix classes, et dirigeait le cours supérieur, parfois le cours complémentaire. On **fêtait** (IMP) un jour, solennellement, ses palmes académiques: trois ans plus tard, il “**prenait** (IMP) sa retraite”, c'est-à-dire que le règlement la lui imposait. Alors, souriant de plaisir, il **disait** (IMP): “Je vais enfin pouvoir planter mes choux!”. Sur quoi, il **se couchait** (IMP), et il **mourait** (IMP). (M.Pagnol, La gloire de mon père, p. 22)
- (37) Po kilku latach laickiego apostolstwa w zagubionych w śniegu osiedlach młody nauczyciel **zsuwał się** (IPF) po stoku do wsi, żeniąc się po drodze z nauczycielką lub panienką z poczty. Potem **wędrował** (IPF) przez różne miejscowości o stromych jeszcze ulicach, a każdy z tych przystanków **znaczyły** (IPF) narodziny dziecka. Na trzecim czy czwartym **trafiął** (IPF) na równiny, po czym **wkraczał** (IPF) wreszcie do miasta powiatowego (...) **Uczył** (IPF) wtedy w ósmio- czy dziesięcioklasowej szkole, **prowadził** (IPF) lekcje w klasach najwyższych, a czasem zajęcia dodatkowe. Uroczyście **fetowano** (IPF) jego palmy akademickie: trzy lata później **przechodził** (IPF) na emeryturę,

²¹ As we stated above, the use of the definite article and the singular (*le jeune instituteur*) also plays a role in picturing situation types (Σ) as opposed to situation occurrences (Π).

to znaczy regulamin mu to nakazywał. Wtedy, uśmiechnięty i zadowolony, **powiadał** (IPF): “Nareszcie będę mógł sadzić kapustę!”. Po czym **kładł się** (IPF) i **umierał** (IPF). (Mój dzielny tata, transl. by M. Ochab, p. 18).

It is important to note that in such contexts the substitution of the IPF with a PF form, as well as replacing IMP with PC leads to a similar change in semantic and pragmatic meaning, i.e. assumes the passage from a *generic/general* context to a *specific/particular* one in both languages, cf. (34) vs. (38) and (35) vs. (39):

- (38) Les dinosaures **ont mangé** (PC) pratiquement tous des feuilles d’arbre, de l’herbe ou de petits fruits sauvages.
- (39) Prawie wszystkie dinozaury **zjadły** (PF) liście drzew, trawę lub małe dzikie owoce.

It is clear that in (38)–(39) we are no longer talking about a general feature that can be attributed to most or all members of a species, but rather about a specific, one-time situation.

4.2. The potential and the habitual meaning

Both in Polish and French, *potentiality* and *habituality* referring to a period of time anterior to the point of speaking are most typically expressed using the IPF/IMP forms. As we indicated above, a *potential* situation is viewed as non-actualized, referring to certain features and skills of the concerned entities (more specifically, to their ability to play a role in certain situations). Apart from the most typical present (or rather, atemporal or omnitemporal) uses, cf. (40)–(41), this type of context may refer to the past, as in (42)–(47).

- (40) Ten długopis dobrze **pisze** (IPF present).
- (41) Ce stylo **écrit** (PRES) bien.
‘This pen writes well.’
- (42) Szkoda, że zgubiłeś ten długopis, dobrze **pisał** (IPF past).
- (43) C'est dommage que tu aies perdu ce stylo, il **écrivait** (IMP) bien.
‘It's a pity you lost that pen, it wrote well.’
- (44) Janek był bardzo zdolny: **grał** (IPF past) na pianinie, **jeździł** (IPF past) na nartach, **piekł** (IPF past) pyszne ciasta i **był** (IPF past) najlepszy w klasie z matematyki.
- (45) Jean était très doué: il **jouait** (IMP) du piano, **faisait** (IMP) du ski, **faisait** (IMP) des gâteaux délicieux et il **était** (IMP) le meilleur dans sa classe en mathématiques.²²
‘Johny was very talented: he could play the piano, ski, bake wonderful cakes and he was the best in maths in his class.’

²² One important sign that we are dealing with the potential meaning is that the situations described are neither simultaneous, nor pictured as necessarily following one another.

- (46) Strzelił do esesmanów Zygmunt. Mieli tylko jeden karabin, a Zygmunt **strzelał** (IPF past) najlepiej, bo zdążył przed wojną odsłużyć wojsko. (Krall, ZPB, 84)
- (47) C'était Zygmunt qui avait tiré sur les SS. Ils n'avaient qu'un seul fusil et Zygmunt **était** (IMP) le meilleur tireur, car il avait fait son service militaire avant la guerre. (PBV, p.107)
- 'It was Zygmunt who shot the SS-men. They only had one gun and Zygmunt was the best shooter, as he had gone through his military service before the war.'

The equivalence between the French IMP and the Polish IPF may also be observed in *habitual* contexts. Looking at the examples below, we can see that the opposition of IMP/PC (*était, venait, travaillait, servait* vs. *est devenue, a su, s'est suicidée*) as well as the opposition of Polish IPF/PF forms (*zdarzało się, bywał, schodził, szedł, pracowała, podawał* vs. *się stało, dowiedziała się, popełnił samobójstwo*) serves as a mark indicating the shift from a regular, *habitual* situation into a non repeated situation which we call *occasional*, cf.:

- (48) Tandis que nous mangions, j'ai demandé à Marie comment ce serveur pouvait être employé dans un café, avant sa mort, puisqu'il était marin. Mais elle ne s'est pas troublée pour si peu: "C'**était** (IMP) évidemment pendant ses permissions. Sitôt à terre, il **venait** (IMP) voir sa maîtresse, qui **travaillait** (IMP) là. Et il **servait** (IMP) avec elle, par amour, les petits verres de vin blanc et les cafés-crème. (...) – Et sa maîtresse, qu'est-elle **devenue** (PC)? – Quand elle **a su** (PC) la fin tragique de son amant, elle **s'est suicidée** (PC), en mangeant une pizza industrielle". (A. Robbe-Grillet, Djinn, p. 47)
- (49) Przy jedzeniu zapytałem Marysię, w jaki sposób ten kelner mógł być przed śmiercią zatrudniony w kawiarni, skoro był marynarzem. Ale ona nic sobie nie robiła z takiej drobnostki: **Zdarzało się** (IPF) to oczywiście wówczas, gdy **bywał** (IPF) na przepustce. Jak tylko **schodził** (IPF) na ląd, **szedł** (IPF) zobaczyć się ze swoją kochanką, która tam pracowała, i wraz z nią, z miłości do niej, **podawał** (IPF) tam szklaneczki białego wina i białą kawę. (...) – A jego kochanka, co **się** z nią **stało** (PF)? – Gdy **dowiedziała się** (PF) o tragicznej śmierci ukochanego, **popełniła** (PF) samobójstwo, zjadając fabryczną pizzę. (A. Robbe-Grillet, Dżinn, transl. by, p. 33)

Although the *generic*, *general*, *habitual* and *potential* are clearly distinct notions in our meta-language, the corresponding motivations for the usages of linguistic morphemes such as the Polish IPF in the *O* context, are not clearly distinct and disjunctive meanings, but rather a continuum referring to different nuances of the *O MI* status. A situation presented as *habitual* may as well be of *general* nature; *potentially* may be expressed referring to the subject's *habitual* actions, etc. (Włodarczyk H. 1997). What we find important, however, is that the framework of this theory offers quite a simple and easily understood set of tools (types of motivations of the MI status), which may help describe and compare the different uses of the Polish IPF aspect

and its French equivalents. Although a large corpus analysis that could confirm our conclusions is still in progress, we consider (based on what we have observed so far) that in ontologically-grounded *generic*, *general*, *potential* and *habitual* contexts the French IMP forms are the most regular and frequent equivalent of the past forms of Polish IPF verbs.

5. The lack of correspondence between the Imperfective and the Imparfait

It is clear that the set of ontologically-grounded contexts mentioned so far is not exhaustive when it comes to different uses of the Polish IPF aspect. Let us now examine some of the remaining contexts which illustrate the important systemic differences between Polish and French. In the examples analyzed below, the Polish IPF forms correspond regularly to the French PC (or, in certain cases, the PS or PQP) and they could very rarely be rendered in translation using the IMP. This lack of IPF-IMP equivalence can be explained in all cases by the systemic meanings we attributed to the IPF aspect and the IMP tense. To be more specific, we consider that the IPF forms, the unmarked member of the aspectual privative opposition, are used in Polish when the occurrence of a PF (usually a prefixed form) would imply an unwanted semantic meaning added by the derivational perfectivizing morpheme (most frequently the “result” meaning, sometimes the interruption or inchoative nuance) and, consequently, would cause a lexical change in the semantics of the verb. In other words, the “untypical” usages of the IPF in *N MI* contexts can systematically be explained in our approach by the intention of the speaker to avoid expressing certain nuances carried out by the PF verb. French, on the other hand, concentrates more on other aspects of the situation pictured by the verb (external time limits, iteration, etc.) which call for the obligatory use of PC, PS or PQP.

5.1. Avoiding the resultative nuance of the PF in ontologically-grounded uses

Apart from the obvious examples of Polish IPF verbs whose PF partners carry a significantly different meaning (cf. *czekać* vs. *poczekać* in ex. (1)–(2), and also verbs like *zdawać egzamin* = *take an exam/subir un examen* vs. *zdać egzamin* = *pass an exam/réussir un examen*; *uczyć się* = *study/étudier* vs. *nauczyć się* = *learn/apprendre*, etc.), the IPF is used in some ontologically-grounded contexts where the different nuances of the PF hypercategory (most often, the result meaning) are to be avoided.

5.1.1. The So-called “Parfait d’existence”: a type of general meaning

The lack of equivalence between the French IMP and the Polish IPF aspect is particularly striking in contexts like (50)–(53) which have been analyzed in detail by Nowakowska (2008) and called “parfait d’existence”.

- (50) **Jadłeś** (kiedyś) ostrysi?
- (51) Est-ce que tu **as** (jamais/déjà) **mangé** des huîtres?
‘Have you ever had oysters?’

- (52) Nie **czytałem** „Ulisses” Joyce'a.
- (53) Je n'**ai** pas **lu** “L'Ulysse” de Joyce.
‘I haven't read Joyce's “Ulysses”.

According to Nowakowska, in these types of examples the speaker is simply referring to the propositional content of the verbal lexeme as such (stating the mere existence or occurrence of a situation), saying nothing about its completion, the number of repetitions, the exact time framing, etc. The moment of speaking may be seen as the right-side limit for the period within which the situation is considered. In other words, examples (52)–(53) could be paraphrased as ‘until the moment of speaking, the situation *s* (reading Joyce's *Ulysses*) has not happened to me’. As a matter of fact, specialists of the French tense system mostly consider that it is this right-hand limit point marked by the moment of speaking that accounts for the use of PC in French, a tense typically employed in any kind of limited or specific contexts which may have some connection to the present.²³ The use of IMP in this type of example would call for a habitual reading (e.g., *Je mangeais des huîtres quand j'étais plus jeune*) or move the reader into the ongoing past (*Je mangeais des huîtres quand Pierre est entré*), in both cases requiring an external time reference point. In our framework (Włodarczyk 1995), we consider that the use of PC (or PS in classical French) can be explained here by its unmarked character of “simple past”, the PC/PS being the less marked past tense form. The Polish PF in (54) and (55), on the other hand, would mark a change from a non-actualized, non-specific situation into a *particular, occasional* or *specific* context. Utterance (54) could for example be pronounced by a speaker who has just discovered that there are no oysters left in the fridge and, in this use, the PF verb refers to a *particular* occurrence of the situation “eat oysters” and points explicitly at the *finish moment* of this situation; (55) may be a student's phrase referring to the homework reading he failed to do, etc. It is this resultative meaning that the speaker is trying to avoid, using the IPF.

- (54) **Zjadłeś** (PF) ostryg?
- (55) Nie **przeczytałem** (PF) „Ulisses” Joyce'a.

In the scope of the DG theory, examples (50)–(53) are interpreted as a subclass of the *general* use. In other words, the *general* meaning we described in §4.1 actually includes two different types of contexts: (1) referring to the general property concerning most elements of a class (*Francuzi jedzą żaby/The French eat frogs*), and (2) stating nothing but the simple occurrence (or lack of occurrence) of a situation which has (or has not) happened to an individual or a group within the time period limited by the moment of speaking (*Nigdy dotąd nie jadłem żab/I have never eaten frogs before*). In the second case, the Polish IPF forms correspond regularly to the French PC.

²³ The same holds true for the use of PC in French sentences containing expressions like *jamais* and *toujours*, cf. *J'ai toujours pensé qu'il était marié*, where the Polish typically uses the IPF: *Zawsze myślałem, że jest żonaty. Jamais/toujours* may in fact be paraphrased here as, respectively, ‘not a single time during the period/covering all the period limited to the right by the moment of speaking’.

5.1.2. The Habitual vs. Iterative meaning

We shall now take a closer look at utterances (56)–(59) which are often considered a subclass (or simply another example) of the habitual meaning. Yet, while the means of expressing *habitual* situations seem to be symmetrical in Polish and French, cf. the IPF and the IMP in (60)–(61), the following examples illustrate the typical use of PC forms as equivalents of the Polish IPF.

- (56) **Dzwonił** (IPF) wielokrotnie, ale nikt nie odbierał.
- (57) Il a **téléphoné** (PC) plusieurs fois mais personne n'a répondu.
‘He called many times but nobody answered.’
- (58) **Zdawał** (IPF) ten egzamin trzy razy.
- (59) Il a **subi** (PC) cet examen trois fois.
‘He took this exam three times.’

As stated in Włodarczyk 1997, these types of utterances should not be identified with the habitual meaning of (60)–(61):

- (60) Kiedy byłem mały, co roku **jeździliśmy** (IPF) nad morze.
- (61) Quand j'étais jeune, nous **allions** (IMP) chaque année au bord de la mer.
‘When I was young, we used to go to the seaside every year.’

If both (56)–(59) and (60)–(61) imply some kind of repetition, it is important to note that they differ by an important semantic nuance. *Habituality* expressed in the latter allows us to view situation *s* pictured by the verb as a sort of general characteristic of the subject *S* during a certain time period *T* (in this case, limited by *quand j'étais jeune/when I was young*), without necessarily specifying the number of repetitions or the completion of the action described. In other words, a situation depicted as *habitual* may be paraphrased as ‘during the period of *T*, one of the general characteristics of *S* was that *s* would happen to them more than once’. Situations (56)–(59), on the other hand, are being presented as iterative and not *habitual*, which means that each of the occurrences of the situation *S* is pictured as a separate, complete event. The number of repetitions may be specified, cf. (58)–(59), or simply marked using expressions like *several times*, *a few times*, etc., see (56)–(57). As opposed to *habitual* utterances, the time period is often not specified here and may be interpreted as ‘until now/by the moment of speaking’, which is also compatible with the typical use of PC in French (cf. Nowakowska 2008).

In languages such as French, *habitual* and *iterative* actions are expressed using distinct verb forms: here, respectively, the IMP and the PC. In Polish, however, IPF verbs are most typically used for expressing both of these semantic values. Nevertheless, it is important to note that in iterative contexts the use of IPF aspect in Polish is often connected with the speaker's intention to avoid (or simply refrain from expressing) the result meaning implied by the use of a PF form. In (61), it is clear that the action has not come to its natural end (the agent did not manage to get connected and talk to their interlocutor). The use of the IPF stresses out this lack of accomplishment. As

nothing is said about the outcome of the exam in (63), the sentence has at least two possible interpretations: (1) the agent tried several times but did not pass the exam, or (2) for some reason or other, they were forced to take it more than once. In the first (and more typical) case, the use of a PF *zdał* would imply an opposite meaning (a successful attempt of passing the exam) and thus it would normally be absurd to take an exam again if the agent has already passed it successfully.

The above examples are another illustration of the fact that, despite some similar contextual uses, the systemic values of the Polish IPF aspect and the French IMP tense remain considerably different. In Polish, the most important (systemic) motivation for using the non-marked IPF is refraining from expressing the semantic nuance added by the prefix to the verb stem. Since the semantic situations we call “ordinary process” are very frequent, this nuance is very frequently that of the natural semantic result of an *action*, in other words, of a telic situation. In French, the systemic value of IMP (making it somewhat correspondent to the present),²⁴ is placing the reader inside the situation in progress.

It is also clear that the traditional distinction between “one-time action” and “repeated action”, often used for explaining the opposition between the PF and IPF aspect in Polish, is in fact not sufficient for analyzing the aspectual phenomena, especially from a contrastive point of view. *Habituality* and *iterativity* are two different concepts, even though in both cases the action is viewed as “repeated”. We have stated above that in French (and some other European languages), this semantic difference is reflected in the use of distinct verbal forms, which leads to the lack of IMP-IPF equivalence in translation. The DG theory accounts for these differences, showing that iterative contexts are natural for expressing the *N occasional/specific MI* values, while the habitual belong to the *O MI* domain.

5.1.3. *The case of static situations*

We shall now comment on another IPF use motivated by the speaker’s intention to avoid the possible meanings carried by the PF. This time, the question concerns a group of verbs designing static situations or states (as opposed to dynamic situations: events and processes, cf. §2), such as *mieszkac* (*live/habiter*), *żyć* (*live/vivre*), *trwać* (*last/durer*), *rządzić* (*reign/régner*), etc. These types of examples seem to cause problems for students of both Polish and French as a foreign language, which is due to the fact that the two languages apply a different systemic principle to expressing a durative situation which is limited in time by some kind of left- and/or right-side context:

- (62) **Mieszkał** w Paryżu od 2006 do 2009 r./przez dwa miesiące/do wczoraj.
(63) Il a **habité** à Paris de 2006 à 2009/pendant deux mois/jusqu’à hier.
‘He has lived in Paris from 2006 to 2009/for two months/until yesterday.’

²⁴ The two situations expressed in *je voyageais souvent à ce moment-là* and *je voyage souvent en ce moment* may, to a certain extent, be considered as symmetric, one referring to an “ongoing” situation at a moment anterior to the point of speaking, while the other describing an “ongoing” situation which is valid in the speaker’s present.

In French, as postulated by Karolak (2008), the aspectual meaning is actually a combination of the meaning carried by the verbal lexeme (in this case, duration) and the one carried by the tense grammeme (in Karolak's terms, the momentary meaning of PC). In utterances like (63), the limitative/momentary meaning turns out to be the dominant component of the aspectual combination, and the situation is interpreted as limited and terminated. In Polish, however, verbs describing static situations have no prefixed PF correspondent which would simply mark the *finish* moment (as in the case of verbs expressing ordinary processes which are telic situations). The PF partners of state verbs (PF families) include mostly lexemes carrying an inchoative meaning (in the terminology proposed in Włodarczyk A. & H. 2006, the *start* moment of a situation, cf. *zamieszczać/start living, move in*) or a meaning we interpret as *interruption in the situation control analysis* (cf. *pomieszczać, potrwać, porządzić/live, last, reign for a certain period of time, without reaching the 'natural' end*). In order to avoid all these additional semantic nuances, the speaker may choose to use a simple IPF form which, in a Slavic language like Polish, may easily be combined with a limitative expression making it clear that the situation no longer takes place. Contexts like (62) are also a good illustration of the fact that the simplified analogy between an “accomplished” (Fr. “accomplie” or “perfective”) and a “terminated” (Fr. “achevée”) action, so often presented in French grammar manuals, may lead to serious misunderstandings. In a Slavic language, a situation may very well be terminated (i.e. no longer persisting at the moment of speaking) but not carried on up to its *finish* point (or ‘telos’) and therefore it must be expressed by an IPF verb.

5.2. The Anaphoric and Known uses of the IPF

As we indicated in §2, the use of IPF verbs may be grounded not only in ontology, but also in communication and in the shared knowledge and beliefs of the communicating agents.²⁵ Thus, the use of an IPF may stem directly from the fact that the situation described by the verb has been mentioned explicitly in the preceding text. In this case, which we refer to as the *anaphoric* usage, the same verbal lexeme is being repeated several times in a text or dialogue first as a PF verb and then as an IPF,²⁶ cf. the following excerpt (64) of a short story by Witold Gombrowicz in which the PF verb *zamknąć* (*to close*) appears in the IPF (*zamykać*) when repeated.

- (64) [...] Pauza. Nagle wybucha nerwowym jęczącym płaczem Cecylia i mówi szlochając:
 – Drzwi, to nie mama, to ja **zamknęłam** (PF). To ja!
 – Nieprawda, córko, to ja kazałam zamknąć drzwi! Dlaczego poniżasz się przed tym człowiekiem? [...]

²⁵ This kind of *cognitive* grounding is sometimes referred to as “anaphoric” by authors postulating that the common interpretation of IMP as (*anaphoric*) tense requiring an external reference point (usually expressed by another verb) is not sufficient for explaining the use of these forms triggered by some sort of common knowledge shared by the speech act participants (Tasmowski-De Ryck 1985, Kleiber 2003). In our approach, we propose to distinguish the *cognitive* grounding from the properly *anaphoric* motivation, the latter being grounded explicitly in the preceding text.

²⁶ For more details about the *anaphoric* use of the IPF see Włodarczyk H. (1997: 187).

- Przepraszam – mówię – zaraz ... Jak to? – (przecież to Antoni **zamknął** (PF) drzwi kredensu)... O jakich drzwiach mowa ?
– Drzwi... drzwi od sypialnego ojczulka... To ja **zamknęłam** (PF)!
Jak to?! Więc i one **zamykały** (IPF : anaphoric) drzwi? [...]
– A to może pan mi powie, dlaczego tej nocy zamknął (PF) pan na klucz drzwi kredensu, odcinając służbie dostęp do pokoju ?
– Ja? **Zamknąłem** (PF)?
– A co? może pan nie **zamknął** (PF)? Są świadkowie! To może być udowodnione!
Znów milczenie! Znów konsternacja! Kobiety patrzą z przerażeniem. Wreszcie syn, jakby przypominając sobie coś, oświadcza bezdźwięcznie:
– **Zamknąłem** (PF).
– A dlaczego? Dlaczego pan **zamykał** (IPF: anaphoric)? Czy może z powodu przeciągów? (W. Gombrowicz, Zbrodnia z premedytacją, Bakakaj p. 47–52)
- (65) Une pause. Soudain Cecylia éclate en un sanglot nerveux, plaintif et s'écrie:
– La porte, ce n'est pas maman, c'est moi qui l'**ai fermée** (PC). Moi!
– Mais non, ma fille, c'est moi qui ai fait fermer la porte. Pourquoi t'abasses-tu devant cet individu? [...]
– Excusez-moi – dis-je – voyons... Comment donc? – (c'est bien Antoni qui **a fermé** (PC) la porte du placard)... De quelle porte parlez-vous?
– La porte...la porte de la chambre de notre cher papa...C'est moi qui l'**ai fermée** (PC).
Alors ça! Donc elles aussi, elles **auraient fermé** (COND) la porte? [...]
– Alors vous allez peut-être me dire pourquoi cette nuit-là vous **avez fermé** (PC) à clef la porte du placard, coupant ainsi aux serviteurs l'accès de la chambre?
– Moi? **Fermer** (INF)?
– Eh quoi? Vous n'avez pas fermé peut-être? Il y a des témoins! On peut le prouver!
A nouveau, un silence, la consternation. Les femmes ont un regard atterré. Enfin le fils déclare tout bas comme s'il se rappelait quelque chose:
– Oui, j'ai **fermé** (PC).
– Mais pourquoi? Pourquoi donc **auriez-vous fermé** (COND)? A cause des courants d'air, peut-être? (Transl. by H.W.)

The *anaphoric* use of the IPF in the above text suggests that the narrator (the person conducting the investigation about the death of the father) intends to make explicit reference to the words pronounced by the persons he is interrogating. In the French translation we used the *conditionnel* (COND) to mark this reference to another person's words. The close relation between pragmatic uses and modal uses is obvious here.

Apart from *anaphoric* contexts, the fact that the situation is perceived and described as *known* for both the speaker and interlocutor may also account in Polish for the choice of an IPF form. In such contexts the natural semantic result is often easily inferable from the speech situation (more specifically, from the *after* stage following

the situation described by the IPF verb), even if it is not expressed explicitly by the verbal form. Let us examine the following example:

- (66) Ale tu zimno, **otwierajesz** (IPF) okno?
- (67) Ce qu'il fait froid ici, tu **as ouvert** (PC) la fenêtre?
‘It’s so cold here, have you opened the window?’

In this type of context, the action described by the verb (in our terms, the *ordinary process* of opening the window resulting in a *state* of ‘the window being open’) clearly took place in the past (before the speech reference point) but its resulting state was put to an end by a *terminal*²⁷ moment. And yet, we are talking about a resulting situation – but of a different kind (‘it is cold now’). A somewhat similar example is analyzed by Nowakowska (2008: 159–160):

- (68) Wcale nie – wwrócił Ignacy. – Portmonetka doskonała, sam ja **wybierałem** (IPF). (B. Prus, Lalka I, p. 58)
- (69) Pas du tout – glissa Ignacy – Le portefeuille est formidable, c'est moi-même qui l'**ai choisi** (PC).
‘Not at all, added Ignacy. – The wallet is perfect, I chose it myself.’

According to the author, in utterances of this kind it is no longer the “semantic result” (i.e., the natural result of the action of choosing: ‘something has been chosen’), but rather the “pragmatic result” that is important to the speaker. The term “pragmatic result” which she borrows from D. Apothéloz, refers to expressing some state₂, situation₂ or feature₂ somehow related to the situation₁ described by the IPF verb which allows us to infer that situation₁ had actually taken place before. In this example, Nowakowska states, it might have to do with making an allusion to the excellent quality of the wallet, which implies the exquisite taste of the person who chose it (which, in turn, implies that the action of choosing did take place).

In our theoretical framework (cf. §2), we combine semantics and pragmatics and claim that the pragmatically-grounded uses of the IPF are possible in these contexts thanks to the fact that the situation is presented in the *O MI* context as *known* by the participants of the speech act, making it obvious that it has taken place and reached its result. The “pragmatic result” is nothing else but the semantic stage *after* of the analyzed situation.²⁸ In French (and English) translations of discourse-based uses of the Polish IPF, the *known* value may be rendered by such expressions as: *tu sais bien*, *tu te rappelles/you know, you remember*.

In French, it is the PC tense which is specialized in expressing past situations having an impact on the present, or present states resulting from a past situation. Tasmowski-De Ryck (1985) and Vet (1985) analyze the typical use of PC in contexts like *Tiens! Il a plu* (*Look! It's been raining*) where the occurrence of a past situation *x* (*to*

²⁷ The *terminal* moment puts an end to the *after stage* of a situation, cf. Włodarczyk A. & H. 2003.

²⁸ For a detailed semantic analysis of situations in moments and stages, see Włodarczyk A. & H. 2003.

rain) may be inferred from another situation *y* (for example, the fact that the streets are wet). The authors show that the use of IMP in such contexts would be quite rare and require very specific contextual conditions.

Another type of cognitively-grounded IPF use includes what has been described by Nowakowska (2008: 165–168) as a subclass of the “*parfait d’existence*” (cf. §5.1.1.) called “*parfait d’existence de scénario*”. The author makes a detailed comparison of the general “*parfait d’existence*” category and the specific “*scenario*” case. In the example below, following the typical “*parfait d’existence*” pattern, the question refers to the mere existence of the situation described by the verb in a time period limited to the right by the speech moment, but the number of its possible occurrences is usually limited to one, and the time period considered is quite short (in this case, limited to the clients’ stay in the restaurant).

- (70) Czy panowie już **zamawiali** (IPF)?²⁹
(71) Est-ce que vous **avez déjà commandé** (PC)?
‘Have you ordered?’

We find these observations quite right. However, instead of coining special terms and developing *ad hoc* explanations for different specific examples, we propose to include this particular “*scenario*”³⁰ case in a more general category of *cognitive-grounded, pragmatic* uses of aspect where the situation (in this case, all the usual phases of a restaurant visit, including the “*necessary*” phase of placing an order) is perceived as *known* by its participants.

It is important to point at the fact that the *cognitive* grounding of the O MI status does not correspond automatically in French and Polish.³¹ In French, many uses of the IPF ‘pittoresque’ which seem to be motivated by the *known* character of the situation are nevertheless translated into Polish by a PF verb with an added lexical expression of the *known* status: *jak wiadomo* (*as we know*), *podobno*, *jakoby* (*as they say, supposedly*).

- (72) En juin 1967, Israël **attaquaît** (IMP) l’Egypte et la Syrie.
(73) W czerwcu 1967 r. – jak wiadomo – Izrael **zaatakował** (PF) Egipt i Syrię.
‘As we know, in June 1967 Israel attacked Egypt and Syria.’

Writing about a historic event 30 years later, the journalist does not intend to introduce it as a *N*information but only to remind the readers of a well-known historic fact, thus making it impossible to question whether it was an attack or an act of defense.

The next example illustrates another variation of the IPF use grounded in shared knowledge and beliefs. This time, one of the speakers mentions a situation they have been talking about before. Examples like (74) usually include a speech verb, most

²⁹ Examples (68)–(71) were originally cited by Koschmieder (1934), and then analyzed by Nowakowska (2008: 148).

³⁰ Understood as a “scheme”, in the sense of Piaget (psychology) and Schank & Minsky (artificial intelligence).

³¹ Even in typologically closer languages like Polish and Russian, there are differences in the communicative and cognitive uses of the IPF as *anaphoric* or *known*, cf Włodarczyk H. 1997.

frequently, the verb *mówić*. The expression *mówilem ci/I told you* may refer to a *finished, occasional* situation from the past and the use of the IPF is possible here due to the fact that the information is presented as *known* (or something which should be known) to the interlocutor.

- (74) O czym mówiliśmy? – Że koledzy wyjechali. (...) Po wojnie ci koledzy okazali się dyrektorami japońskich koncernów albo fizykiemi amerykańskich agencji jądrowych, albo profesorami uniwersytetów. To byli bardzo zdolni ludzie, **mówilem** (IPF) ci. (Krall, ZPB, p. 39)

- (75) Que disions-nous au juste? – Que tes amis étaient partis (...) Après la guerre, tous ces amis sont devenus des directeurs de sociétés japonaises, des physiciens dans des laboratoires nucléaires américains ou des professeurs d'université. C'étaient des gens doués, je te l'**ai déjà dit** (PC). (transl. P. Li and M. Ochab, p. 50)

‘What were we saying? – That your friends left. (...) After the war those friends turned out to be directors of Japanese concerns or physicians employed in American nuclear agencies, or university professors. These were very talented people, I told you.’

These types of examples are actually closely related to the IPF *anaphoric* uses grounded directly in communication acts. For this reason, it is very often not easy to draw a sharp border between the *anaphoric* and *known* uses of the IPF.

Finally, let us stress that the systemic value and the semantic and pragmatic contextual meanings of a verb form are usually intertwined, to the extent that it would sometimes be difficult to determine which factor plays a decisive role in the speaker's choices:

- (76) Proszę opowiedzieć, jak pan **zabił** (PF) milicjanta? – Żadnego milicjanta nie **zabijałem** (IPF)!

‘Please, tell us how you killed the policeman? – I didn't kill any policeman!’

In the example above, the second participant of the communication act is rephrasing the question, changing PF verbal aspect for the IPF. Apart from the obvious *anaphoric* grounding (the propositional content of the verb has been mentioned before), this verbal use may be interpreted as ontologically-grounded (the *general* meaning expressed here being ‘in the period marked to the right by this speech moment, I have not performed any such action of killing a policeman’) and motivated by the speaker's intention to avoid the systemic resultative meaning ('having actually killed') carried by the PF past of an *ordinary process* verb.

6. Conclusion

Given the complexity of aspectual phenomena, a comparative study of aspect in languages belonging to different language families must describe very carefully all usages, and account for both semantic and pragmatic factors which turn out to be equally

important for the speaker's choice of a particular verbal form. The DG theory offers a clear and coherent set of universal concepts and analytic tools, which may be applied to comparing the use of seemingly correspondent forms such as the Polish IPF and the French IMP. We have shown that, outside the ontologically-grounded *O*-type contexts (the *generic*, *general*, *potential* and *habitual* meaning), many frequent uses of the IPF, namely those which we interpret as *cognitive*- and *anaphoric*-grounded, do not coincide with those of the French IMP. This is due to the lack of symmetry between the systemic values of these forms.

Moreover, we examined different cases where it is the Polish IPF which is used in *N* contexts, in utterances referring to situations perceived globally, seen as completed and clearly not pictured from a reference point located inside the ongoing process. These so-called "untypical" contextual uses may in fact, at least partly, be explained by the neutral character of the IPF being the unmarked member of the privative aspectual opposition in Polish. As the French PC does not necessarily carry the additional meanings which are proper for the hypercategory of Slavic aspect, its forms appear to be the typical equivalent of the Polish IPF in *cognitive*- and *anaphoric*-grounded contexts, as well as in those *ontologically*-grounded contexts where the nuance added by a PF morpheme is to be avoided.

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