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## Slavic Linguistics Webinars

# What explains the distribution of perfective present in Slavic languages?

Björn Wiemer – University of Mainz

The Slavic aspect system is based on stem derivation, and this system started developing in Common Slavic times, i.e. prior to the breakup of a comparatively homogeneous dialect continuum. The core distinctions between perfective and imperfective stems have been inherited by all successive varieties, both in terms of the morphological patterns and the functions behind the PFV:IPFV contrast. Simultaneously, several processes have led to inner-Slavic differentiation of tense-aspect systems, two of these processes are particularly outstanding as they condition global areal clines (or even isoglosses) within Slavic. On the one hand, we observe a North-South split in the non-past domain: while South Slavic languages developed future tense morphology which is indifferent for aspect (so that not only ipfv., but also pfv. stems distinguish present and future), North Slavic languages established morphological marking (auxiliaries) of future tense only for ipfv. stems, while banning them from pfv. stems, so that present and future tense remain indistinguishable with pfv. stems. On the other hand, there is a West-East cline when it comes to using present tense of perfective stems (PFV.PRS) for narrative purposes: PFV.PRS in strict narration is amply attested in the western periphery, but is avoided increasingly the more one moves eastward, until it becomes impossible. Importantly, this cline and the aforementioned North-South split run, as it were, orthogonal to each other.

In general, the phenomena are well known, however they have hardly been considered jointly, let alone explained, even though they obviously arose on independent backgrounds. In my talk, I want to show how one can make sense of this weird picture, in order to see the wood for trees, first by giving a comprehensive account of the uses of PFV.PRS all over Slavic and asking what constitutes the unity behind language-specific preferences for pfv. or ipfv. aspect. Second, I try to give an account of insights from diachrony concerning the differentiation of functions in the non-past domain. This account should provide a possibility to construct a plausible scenario behind the relation between PFV.PRS and dedicated morphological future marking in Slavic languages. In both the contemporary and the diachronic perspective, an answer should be given as for how present and future differ – even if both are consistently distinguished morphologically – and which place we assign to PFV.PRS.

### Organising committee:

Daniele Artoni ([daniele.artoni@univr.it](mailto:daniele.artoni@univr.it)), Marco Biasio ([marco.biasio@unimore.it](mailto:marco.biasio@unimore.it)), Jelena Živojinović ([jelena.zivojinovic@uni-graz.at](mailto:jelena.zivojinovic@uni-graz.at))