

Christina Clasmeier (Ruhr-Universität Bochum), Jan Patrick Zeller (Universität Hamburg)
The processing of aspect mismatches in Russian iterative sentences – an EEG-study

In our talk, we address the state of Russian aspect in or between lexis (aktionsart) and grammar from a psycholinguistic perspective. Our study is inspired by the investigation of Flecken et al. (2015), who conducted an EEG-study on English sentences containing semantic, morpho-syntactical and aspectual violations, e.g. “Right now, Sophie *swims in the pool.” Processing violations of grammatical aspect exhibited a specific pattern, namely an early negativity (250–350 ms) without a clear N400 typical for processing semantic violations or a P600 typical for processing morpho-syntactical violations.

In comparison to English, Russian aspect is closely intertwined with all levels of verbal functions from lexical meaning to morphology and syntax, and Russian is less tolerant to aspectual violations. Thus, the processing of Russian aspect mismatches is expected to show a different pattern. We conducted an EEG study with 14 native Russian speakers processing 160 iterative sentences which were either correct, or contained semantical, morpho-syntactical or aspectual violations (e.g. Каждый вечер отец *заснул на диване. ‘Every evening the father *fell asleep (perfective verb) on the sofa.’ Regarding the aspectual condition, no early negativity resembling the Flecken et al. study could be observed. However, the aspectual violation resulted in a clear-cut P600. This is likely to show that Russian speakers have to make more effort to reanalyze or repair aspectually incorrect sentences than English speakers.

Literature

Flecken, M.; Walbert, K.; Dijkstra, T. 2015: ‘Right Now, Sophie *Swims in the Pool?!’: Brain Potentials of Grammatical Aspect Processing. In: *Frontiers in Psychology* 6:1764. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2015.01764