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"Aspekt" vs. "Aktionsart" in German Verbs: Towards Solving the Riddle

After Jacob Grimm 1824 initially used the terms perfective and imperfective to describe the German verb pair **jagen** / **erjagen**, two lines of research formed regarding “aspect” in German verbs: the first examined the external structures of the language but did not distinguish perfectivity / imperfectivity from the categories *Grenzbezogenheit* / *Nichtgrenzbezogenheit* (Schleicher 1854, Streitberg 1889, Wilmanns 1896, Brugmann 1903, Paul 1920, Behaghel 1924, Leiss 1992 etc.); the second considered the aspectual meaning of verb pairs like *jagen* / *erjagen* to be *nichtgrenzbezogen* and *grenzbezogen* respectively (Tobler 1865, Herbig 1896, Delbrück 1897, Pedersen 1901, Koschmieder 1929, Andersson 1972 etc.). At times, both groups have failed to define terms and categories unambiguously, resulting in both confusing observations and terminology.

This paper identifies the most frequent definitional problems in German aspectology: (a) failure to distinguish between perfective / imperfective and *grenzbezogen* / *nichtgrenzbezogen*; (b) examination of the aspectual **expression** without consideration of its aspectual **meaning**; (c) differentiation of *Aspekt* and *Aktionsart* only by the degree of grammaticalization vs. lexicalization; (d) failure to distinguish between three aspectually relevant levels (lexical, syntagmatic, syntactic).

Taking into account Slavic and English aspectological research (Comrie 1976, Maslov 1985, Bondarko 1987, Verkuyl 1993 etc.) I suggest unambiguous definitions of these categories so as to stabilize terminology referring to them. Four factors are essential for this: (I) distinguishing aspectual **means of expression** from the aspectual **meanings**; (II) distinguishing 4 hierarchical levels of aspectological categories (semantic, morphological, lexico-grammatical, lexico-semantic); (III) distinguishing language levels in terminology (lexical, syntagmatic, syntactic); (IV) distinguishing between perfective/imperfective and *grenzbezogen* / *nichtgrenzbezogen*.

I further show (1) why it is appropriate to use perfective/imperfective for German only on the syntactic level; (2) why it is critical to distinguish *Hauptaktionsart* [*nichtgrenzbezogen* / *grenzbezogen*] as a lexico-grammatical category from lexico-semantic categories *Aktionsarten* [*inchoativ*, *egressiv*, *effektiv*, *iterativ*, *mutativ*, etc.] in our terminology; and (3) why we should restrict the term *Aspekt* to the grammatical category.