Is there a Present Perfect in Russian?

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Introduction:

Challenging title: PERFECT (PFCT) controversial as universal category (Bybee 1985, Haspelmath 2007) + Present PFCTs (PPFCT) are language-particular forms, and lacking in Russian. Old Russian used to have elaborate tense system –aorist, imperfect, and periphrastic perfect:

(1) Muža tvoego oubi-x-om’, bjaše bo muž tvoi aki volk vosxiščaja i grabja.
husband your-ACC kill-AOR.1PL for husband your like wolf robbing and plundering
A naši knjazi dobri sut’, iže raspa-l-i sut’ derev’sku zemlju.
but our princes good are who cultivate-PTCP.PL be-AUX.PL dereva land

“We killed your husband, for your husband was like a wolf, robbing and plundering. But our princes are good, who have cultivated the land of Dereva.” (Olga’s Revenge, from the Primary Chronicle, 12th c.)

Active perfect participle (in –l) > “perfective path” of grammaticalization (Bybee et al. 1994), became generalized past for each perfective (PFV) and imperfective (IMPFV) verb. Today: aspectual opposition – one past form for each PFV and IPFV verb. Research question: is there a semantic (covert) category-type PERFECT in Russian (Dahl, 1985)?

1- A few definitions.
2- Russian PFV and IMPFV past forms and PFCT readings: data and problems.
3- Case study for Resultative PPFCT: questions.
4- Wrapping up.
1- Semantic definitions for PFCT:

Semantic aspects: relations that connect the reference time with event time (e) or event state (s):

RT INCLUDES e or s > PERFECTIVE
RT IS INCLUDED in e or s > IMPERFECTIVE
RT Follows (POST) e or s > PERFECT (Klein 1995, Paslawska & von Stechow 2003).

For English, additional condition: (Extended Now) XN relation for PPFCT (Mc Coard 1978). Specifically, four uses (Mc Cawley 1971, Comrie 1976): Universal, Experiential (Existential), Resultative, ‘Hot News’ (recent past) + Stative present (Kiparsky 2002). I will assume that we are dealing with distinct PPFCT types (Michaelis 1994, Kiparsky 2002).

Maslov (1987), “perfektnost” (“perfecthood”) is a

“semantic category ... that is characterized by temporal duality, by the conjunction in one predicative relation, of two temporal planes: preceding and following.” (426).

Cf. PERFECTS (or ANTERIORS) Bybee et al. (1994): “the situation occurs prior to reference time and is relevant to the situation at reference time.” (54).
Two types of “perfektnost”: “explicit” and “implicit”. (Maslov 1987:428). Explicit type: (PFV) passive participle in -n/-t (ex.), Šaxmatov (1941) participle:

(2) Pis’mo **napisa-n -o.** Stol **nakry -t.**
    letter  write-PFV.PTCP table  cover-PFV.PTCP
“The letter is / has been written.” “The table is / has been laid.”

No dedicated morphology for implicit (active) PFCT: no auxiliaries, no present morphology. Verbal aspect strongly morphologized in Russian > analyzing the expression of implicit PFCT = deciding which of PFV or IPFV past form for any given verb has that function.

Disagreements, e.g. among French slavists (e.g., Paillard 1979, Fontaine 1983). Acknowledging absence of PFCT morphology for Russian, von Stechow & Paslawska (2003) use term PERFECT readings (307) – temporal readings only.

2- Russian PFV and IPFV past forms and PPFCT readings: data and problems.

Russian verbal system: aspectual opposition of a PFV and IPFV verb (a morpho-grammatical category), each partner in the opposition has one past form. For Experiential/Existential PPFCT, things are more or less straightforward:
2.1. *Experiential (Universal?)* P PFCT is realized by the IPFV past:

[The Experiential PPFCT is] “obtained when an atelic or an iterative telic verbal predicate is contained in interval $E...$ extending from some past time up to time $R$.” (Kiparsky 2002: 117).

Corre (2014), following (Borer 2005, Lakorczyk 2010): in Russian, (a)telicity is morpho-grammatical feature of VPs, *Situation Aspect* (Smith 1991) is grammaticized (no need for *Viewpoint Aspect* in the grammar), as in Hungarian (Kiss 2006); all PFVs are telic/terminative; IPFV is lack of telicity > IPFV past good candidate for *Exp.* PPFCT.

“Imperfective puzzle” (Vogeleer 2000): all possible readings (habitual, progressive and *General Factual Imperfective* (Comrie 1976). (3a) has *Experiential* meaning; (3b) Habitual meaning.

(3a) *Ja uže kosi-l travu*

I already mow-IPFV.PST lawn  
“I’ve already mowed the lawn.” (I have the experience)

(3b) *šesti let ezdil verxom na lošadi i doil korovu. Kosil travu.*

from six years ride-IPFV.PST horse and milk-IPFV.PST cow. Mow-IPFV.PST lawn.  
“From the age of six I rode/used to ride a horse and milked/used to milk our cow. I also mowed/used to mow the lawn.” > HABITUAL (RNC)
The IPFV past can also have *Universal* reading (4), but there are exceptions (5):

(4) “А вы хотели бы одного человека убить?”
    and you at least one man kill-PFV.PST

“Нет, я никого не убил.”
    no I no-one not kill-PFV.PST

“And did you ever kill a man?”
“No, I’ve never killed anyone.” (RNC)

(5) Увидиш’, завтра он прикажет тебя расстрелять, а исполнить приказ, кроме меня, некому…
    you’ll see, tomorrow he will.order you shoot and carry.out order except me no-one

Я уже ещё никого в своей жизни не убил.
    I PART yet no-one in my life not kill-PFV.PST

“You’ll see, tomorrow he will order your execution, and there’ll be nobody except me to carry out
the order. The thing is, I(’ve) never killed anyone in my whole life.” (Kurkov)

Polyfunctionality of IPFV morphology often noted; Bondarko (1971):
“The imperfective aspect has no positive semantic feature that it would constantly express” (237),
unmarked member of the aspectual opposition.
But for our present purposes, IPFV past form = *Experiential* PPFCT, is a robust generalization.

Real problem is:
2.2. Resultative P PFCT = PFV or IPFV past?

Resultative PPFCT concerns telic, change of state VPs (accomplishments and achievements). “Resultative reading arises when the change of state ... is temporally located between time E and time R” (Kiparsky 2002: 119). Not only temporal dimension, also discourse-pragmatic: change of state is speakers’ intended discourse topic (Inoue 1979, Portner 2003).

(6) I'm so sorry I didn't acknowledge receipt of this earlier. I have received the PDF of corrections attached to your email, and the hard copy of your corrections arrived this morning. (p. o.)

The resultant state set up by PPFCT temporally precedes S PAST event; but PPFCT provides explanation / confirmation of discourse topic at issue.

> discussion of a few contexts of use, in particular wh-questions: English PPFCT encodes Result State.

2.2.1. Excursus: what is a Result State (RS)?
Alternatively, Perfect State (Nishiyama & Koenig 2004).
Existence of a RS for English Resultative PPFCT visible in constraints on wh- questions:

(7) Where have you hidden my watch?
Who has made this terrible mess? (Michaelis 1994, Kiparsky 2002)
What has happened?
What have you just done?
What have you lost now? (p. o.)
(8) *Who’s painted this picture? > who painted?
*Who’s built this tower? > who built?
*Where have you found my watch? > where did you find?
*Where has he died? > Where did he die?

- PPFCT happy in questions if speaker seeks further information about explicit present RS (ex. 7), wh-word specifies it, it is the topic at issue in discourse. (Inoue 1979) In (7), RS: “whereabouts of watch, obvious mess, object missing”. Michaelis (1994), Kiparsky (2002): Resultative PPFCT cannot be used to further describe (‘elaborate upon’) pragmatically presupposed event (Kiparsky, 143) > RS is part of assertion of PPFCT.

- In (8), speaker refers to single presupposed act (ex. 8); e.g., where watch was found has no bearing on current RS.

**RESULT STATE: Res.** PPFCTs occur when some current state is understood as a direct (visual, auditory, knowledge source, etc.) consequence of previous event(s), and provides clarification to speaker’s intended discourse topic. (Portner 2003).
2.2.2. Resultative PPFCT and associated RS in Russian?

For most authors (Maslov 1987, Bondarko 1971, Hulanicki 1973, Leinonen 1982, Paslawska & von Stechow 2003), past PFV verb (ex. 9, 10a) is best candidate, esp. with telic VPs.

Past PFV expresses the “perceptible presence of an effect already produced” (Forsyth 1970: 76).

(9) I ved’ znaet, čem eë prel’stit’: tabakerku ej podar-i-l
   and PART. he-knows with-what her seduce: snuff-box to-her give-PFV.PST.3SG
   “He knows how to seduce her: he has given her a snuff-box.” (Turgenev)

(10a) Ja uže s-kosí-l travu.
   I already mow-PFV.PST lawn
   “I’ve already mowed the lawn.” (implied: “the lawn looks nice now.”)

(10b) Potom on prinës vody, skosil travu, vykupalsja v reke.
   then he bring-PFV.PST water, mow-PFV-PST lawn bathed-PFV.PST in river
   “Then he brought some water, mowed the lawn, and had a swim in the river.” (> AORIST)
Some PFV pasts inherently express continuing RS (truth-conditionally equivalent to past participle passive), in frozen phrases (Forsyth 1970), but not only: many examples in which PFV past serves to elaborate upon a RS set up by explicit PFCT passive participle:

(11) *A počemu seno *ubrano *i namok-l-o?*  
but why hay harvest-PASS.PTCP and get wet-PFV.PST  
“But why is the hay harvested and getting wet” (lit.: “has got / got wet”)? (Gor’kij)

(12) *Sloj rudy zalēg očen’ głuboko.*  
deposit ore-GEN lie- PFV.PST very deep  
“The ore deposit lies at a great depth.” (lit.: “has lain/lay”)

(13) *No ja ne budu otvlekat’sja i otvlekat’ vnimanije čitatelej na razgovory o tom, čto komissija ne sdelala. Sosredotočim vnimanie na tom, čto ona sdelala, - a sdelano soyse nemalo.  
not do-PFV.PST Let us focus attention on what it do-PFV.PST and do-PVF.PTCP quite a lot  
*(Novaja Gazeta, 27/10/15).*
"But I will not divert the reader’s attention away from what the commission has not done. Let us concentrate on what it has achieved – and quite a lot has been achieved."


*A teper’ sledstviju nado dokazat’, čto ego ubil kto-to iz dvux zaderžannyx. » (NG)*

"What does politics have to do with that? A common crime has been committed. A man has been killed. That’s all there is to it. And now the investigation has to demonstrate that he was killed by one of the two detainees."

> PFV PFCT passive participles encode explicit RS (« achievements of the commission, killing of a man »); following PFV past elaborates upon the RS.

Cf. Forsyth: “*all the elements of the situation are presented with almost equal force – the nature of the action, its result, and who carried it out.*” (1970: 90)

Problem: But *IPFV past* can also give rise to resultative PPFCT readings.
General Factual Imperfective (Forsyth 1970, Comrie 1976, Glovinskaja 1981, 1989; Padučeva 1996) may have another interpretation – resultative (change of state + it persists at R,S); two functions for GFI (Padučeva 1996) - contrastive function (16) or reminder that action did take place (15, 17).

(15) Ja uže *kosi-l* travu.
   I already mow-IPFV.PST lawn
   “I (’ve) already mowed the lawn!” (implied: “so I don’t have to / don’t ask me to, do it again.”)

(16) Ty *OTKRYVA-L* okno, ili ono samo otvorilos’?
   you open-IMPFV.PST window or it itself open-PFV.PST.REFL
   “Did you open the window, or did it open by itself?” (Maslov example)

(17) Zarina molčit i plačet. Mexrinico ne plačet, ona rydaet nad *kolybel’ju, kotoruju eë syn
delal sam dlja eë dolgoždannogo vnuka i kotoruju ona nikak ne možet vystavit’ iz komnaty.
   Zarina is silent and she’s crying. Mexrinico is not crying, she is sobbing over the cradle that her son did/has done himself for her long-awaited grandson, and which she cannot bring herself to move out of the room.”
I vse ètu vaši rossijskie SMI èti slova podxvatili i, navernoe, 90% rossijan dumajut, and probably 90% Russians think
dažе esli Nadja ne ubivala reportërov v dannom konkretnom slučae, to ved’ vsë-ravno even if Nadia not kill-IPVF.PST reporters in the given concrete case then PART despite that
ubivala po-ljubomu kogo-to drugogo.
kill-IPFV.PST randomly someone else

“And all your Russian mass media took up her words and now, probably 90% of Russians think
that even if Nadia has not killed the reporters in the present case, well, she may well have killed
someone else, at random.” (NG, 27/10/15)

> All three IPFV pasts truth-conditionally equivalent to PFV pasts.

(16), speaker seeks confirmation for contrast (“did you open it or not?”);

(17), action of building the cradle is completed ; case of “past temporal frame context”,
“framepast” use of IPFV past (Dahl 1985): action is completed, but remote from current RS
(sadness of grandmother whose grandson has just been killed by police brutality).

(18), single event (killing of reporters), but IPFV past does not elaborate upon current RS
(discourse topic: efforts of lawyers to find out the truth, disinformation; cp. with ex. 14, PFV
directly relevant to RS).

> Existence of some current state with IPFV past, but not RS as defined before (not directly
elaborating upon discourse topic).

3- Case study for Russian Resultative PPFCT: questions.

PFV vs. IPFV past opposition visible in wh- questions; Resultative P PFCT reading (with single-event telic VPs) > both forms imply visible resultant state (situation relevant at R, S).

[at a picnic, someone was in charge of getting the coffee: speaker wants to know who bought it]
(19) [U nas vsë est’, po-moemu.] Kto kupil kofe?
who buy-PVF.PST coffee
“We’ve got everything, I think. Who bought the coffee?” / “Qui a acheté le café?”

[same situation, but this time the speaker expects a follow-up]
(20) Kto pokupal kofe? V kakom magazine ty ego pokupala?
who buy-IPFV.PST coffee in what shop you it buy-IPFV.PST
“Who bought the coffee? What shop did you buy it in?” (Israeli 1998:63)
(19): genuine request for information; RS is “getting all the food ready”.
(20): IPFV pokupal possible because speaker exhibits “emulative interest - pragmatically” (Israeli 73) > object of purchase in sight; presupposes set of people who are potential buyers, does not insist on act of purchase (in the presupposition) but on the follow-up (where, how, etc., it was purchased). Speaker’s goals foremost.

If distance between speakers judged too wide, then IPFV past is unlikely:
[I see someone – a stranger - wearing a nice coat]

(21a) ??Gde vy pokupali èto pal’to?

(21b) Gde vy kupili èto pal’to?

Abundant literature on near-synonymous minimal pairs (kto stroil/postroil, kto pisal/napisal, etc.):

(22) — A kto stroil ètot dom? — sprosil on, kogda my vo vremja progulki proxodili mimo and who build-IPFV.PST this house
tol’ko èto vystroennogo kinoteatra “Gornjak”. — Nu, tut ponadobilis’ljudi raznyx profesij: i kamenščikí, i montažniki, i stoljary... — Da ja ne pro èto, — dosadlivo otmaxnulsja Edik, — but I not about this angrily dismissed Edik
ja sprašivaju, kto stroil: zèkaski ili japoski?
I ask who build-IPFV.PST prisoners or Japapese
“And who built this house?” – he asked, while we were walking past the newly built theater house ‘Gorniak’. “Well, they brought in people of different trades: masons, assemblers, carpenters… “That’s not what I’m asking you,” Edik replied dismissively, “I’m asking who did it: prisoners or the Japanese?”

“Italy is not only in Italy. Italy is also in our genes. Just look at this: Borovickaya tower. Who built this all Russian-looking tower? The Italian architect Solari. And look, right in front of us – Beklemishevskaya tower. Who designed it?”

IPFV (22): two speakers at cross purposes - first one restricts his interest to one aspect of situation only, is it prisoners or the Japanese who built it (not interested in all “elements of the situation”); other speaker seeks information on RS (“vystroennyj kinoteatr”).

PFV (23): speaker provides maximal information about the construction (RS being discussed: “the towers”), because that is exactly the information expected in this discourse context.
4- Wrapping up.

Initial question: is there a PPFCT in Russian? No simple answer because it has no active PFCT morphology. But we have shown that:

- *Exp.* PPFCT category in Russian: yes! (IMPFV past form, in one of its readings);
- *Result.* PPFCT category: yes and no.

> Both PFV and IPFV past forms qualify. Existence of objective extant current state does not influence choice.
> But PFV past serves to directly elaborate upon speaker’s *Result State*, understood as current state of affairs which is consequence of previous events that gave rise to it. With IPFV past, speaker chooses another type of *RS* (follow-up, additional comment, other topic, etc.) But more data are necessary, as well as more precise definition of *RS*.

- Any definition of *RS* has to take into account important morphogrammatical difference between English and Russian:
> English *Resultative* PPFCT is **distinct construction**, with unique grammatical restrictions that do not concern other (PFCT) types. *Resultative* PPFCT is construction which can force resultant state upon VP that is not necessarily telic; it coerces any VP that enters the construction. (+ cf. *wh*-questions)

(24) [We expect host to be receiving us:] *I’ve knocked* (Michaelis 1994: 131)
(25) "*I’ve pushed the cart more than that far already.‘"
Russian: (a)telicity is morpho-grammatical feature of Russian VPs (Situation Aspect grammaticized) > any result state depends not on grammatical operator (= have V-en), but on Aktionsart of VPs, with very elaborate system of aspectual prefixes (preverbs). PFV past is “naturally” resultative.

- Most definitions of P PFCTs based on temporal relations. Aspectologists have insisted that discourse-pragmatic factors have to be taken into account (speaker’s presuppositions and goals):

“The total meaning of a sentence is a very complex phenomenon involving not only lexical denotation, grammatical meaning, syntax and word order, but also human, emotional response to a real situation, and the pattern of intonation which gives expression to this response.” (Bondarko 1971: 88)

Pragmatic notions such as “factual or emotional statements”, “semantic balance”, “expressional emphasis”. (Forsyth 1970).

Cf. conception of grammar evoked before + Verb forms are the product of diachronic and idiosyncratic developments and as a consequence, display strong language-specific features. Cf. Bybee & al. (1984): even if we observe “similar discourse functions” for given forms expressing a similar notion (e.g., PFCT), the diachronic source is still felt in these forms.
References:


