

## Typological peculiarities of Lithuanian verbal morphosyntax

### 1. Introduction

- A non-standard approach: rather than studying features **common** to several neighbouring languages/dialects, I focus on those properties of Lithuanian verbal morphosyntax which are **unique** among the languages of the East Baltic area (including Lithuanian, Latvian, Latgalian, Polish, Belorussian, Russian, Estonian, Livonian, Finnish, Baltic varieties of Yiddish and Romani) or in a broader European context.
- Justification: the study of features characteristic of just one member of a linguistic area not only can be instructive for an adequate typologically oriented description of that language, but also can shed light on the important question about which linguistic traits are more or less prone to areal diffusion or to retention resp. loss in linguistic history.
- Context:
  - studies on the Baltic areal and contact linguistics, e.g. Nepokupny 1964; Sudnik 1975; Stolz 1991; Nau 1996; Dahl, Koptjevskaja-Tamm (eds.) 2001; Wiemer 2002, 2003, 2004a.
  - studies on contact linguistics (Thomason & Kaufman 1988; Thomason 2001; Winford 2003; Matras & Sakel (eds.) 2007) and especially on contact-induced grammaticalization (Heine & Kuteva 2005; Wiemer & Wälchli, to appear).
- Domains studied: verbal morphology, verbal categories and aspects of the morphosyntax of non-finite verbal forms.

### 2. Verbal morphology

#### ● Infixation

- (1) *rikti* ‘make mistakes’: Pst3 *rik-o* ~ Prs3 *ri-n-k-a*.  
*gubti* ‘bend (itr.)’: Pst3 *gub-o* ~ Prs3 *gu-m-b-a*.  
*kristi* ‘fall’: Pst3 *krit-o* ~ Prs3 *kri-n-t-a*.

The class of verbs showing the nasal infix in the Present stem is large and semantically motivated: uncontrolled or low-controlled processes and changes of state (see Stang 1942: 132–133; Arumaa 1957; Temchin 1986; Arkadiev 2006, 2008).

The spread of the infixed verbs is a rather late Baltic innovation, not shared even by their alleged closest relatives, the Slavic languages (for a historical-comparative interpretation see Schmalstieg 2000: 150–156; Gorbachov 2007). Though prominent in some other branches of the Indo-European (e.g. Latin, Ancient Greek, Sanskrit), only in Lithuanian has the nasal infix attained such a degree of productivity and systemic motivation.

In Latvian, not only was the infixing class less productive, but the very morphological process has been replaced by the more “system-congruent” (Wurzel 1987: 65 ff.) vowel alternation (2) (which has also occurred in Lithuanian before non-obstruents, (3)).

- (2) *tapt* ‘become’: Prs1Sg *tuop-u* (~ Lith. *ta-m-p-u*). LATVIAN  
*tikt* ‘reach’: Prs1Sg *tiek-u* (~ Lith. *ti-n-k-u*).
- (3) *birti* ‘pour (itr.)’: Prs3 *byra* /*bi:r-a*/ < \**bi-n-r-a*.  
*dužti* ‘break (itr.)’: Prs3 *dūžta* < \**du-n-ž-st-a*.

② “Mobile” reflexive marker, see Stolz 1989

- (4) a. Prs1Sg *bučiuoj-u*, Prs2Sg *bučiuoj-i*, Prs1Pl *bučiuoja-me* ‘kiss’  
 b. *bučiuoj-uo-si* *bučiuoj-ie-si* *bučiuoja-mê-s* ‘kiss + Rfl’  
 c. Pst1Pl *pa-si-bučiavo-me* (“aspectual” prefix)  
 d. *ne-si-bučiavo-me* (Negative prefix)

➤ Paralleled by the Reflexive marker in Latgalian (Leikuma 2003: 38).

- (5) *mozguotī-s* ‘wash oneself’ ~ *nū-sa-mozguot* ‘id. + “aspectual” prefix’ LATGALIAN

In Latvian, the Reflexive marker is stable:

- (6) *mazgātie-s* ‘wash oneself’ ~ *no-mazgātie-s* ‘id. + “aspectual” prefix’ LATVIAN

Cf. variable position clitics in some other European languages:

- (7) *Jean me = le = donne.* ~ *Donne = le = moi!* FRENCH  
 John 1SG.OBJ = 3SG.M.OBJ = give(PRS) give(IMP) = 3SG.M.OBJ = 1SG.IO  
 ‘John gives it to me.’ ‘Give it to me!’
- (8) *Az = ti = gi* *dad-ox.* ~ *Dad-ox = ti = gi.* BULGARIAN  
 1SG.NOM = 2SG.DAT = 3PL.ACC give-AOR.1SG give-AOR.1SG = 2SG.DAT = 3PL.ACC  
 ‘It’s me that gave them to you.’ ‘I gave them to you.’ (Hauge 1999: 193)
- (9) *Levá-lo-a* ~ *Não o = leva-rá* EUROPEAN PORTUGUESE  
 lead-2SG.HON.OBJ-FUT.3SG NEG 2SG.HON.OBJ = lead-FUT.3SG  
 ‘It will lead you.’ ‘It will not lead you.’ (Hutchinson, Lloyd 2003: 47)

### 3. Verbal categories

① Past Habitual, see Geniušienė 1997; Roszko, Roszko 2006.

- (10) a. *Jon-as atvažiav-o pas tėv-us.*  
 John-NOM.SG come-PST to parent-ACC.PL  
 ‘John came to his parents.’
- b. *Jon-as dažnai atvažiou-dav-o pas tėv-us.*  
 John-NOM.SG often come-HAB-PST to parent-ACC.PL  
 ‘John used to often visit his parents.’ (Geniušienė 1997: 231)

Though Past Habitual belongs to the set of cross-linguistically well-attested grams (Dahl 1985: 100–102; Bybee et al. 1994: 154–155), in the languages of Europe it is found only sporadically, cf. Thieroff (2000: 295–297), who lists only English *used to* + V, Yiddish *flegn* + V, and Lithuanian, the latter being the only **affixal** Past Habitual attested in Europe.

➤ In the Samogitian (Žemaitian) dialect of Lithuanian, Past Habitual is expressed periphrastically: *liuobėti* ‘like’ + V (Eckert 1996); this is paralleled by the Latvian construction with the auxiliary *mēgt* ‘like’, which, however, is not limited to the past tense.

- (11) *Tu liuob-i ne-klausy-ti motin-os.* SAMOGITIAN  
 2SG:NOM like-PRS:2SG NEG-listen-INF mother-GEN.SG  
 ‘You used to disobey mother.’ (Eckert 1996: 54)
- (12) *Es mēdz-u lasī-t vakar-os.* LATVIAN  
 1SG:NOM like-PRS:1SG reag-INF evening-LOC.PL  
 ‘I (usually) read in the evening.’

➤ The Lithuanian Past Habitual *-dav* probably shares its origin with the Slavic iterative verbs in *\*-va* (cf. Russian *xodit’* ‘walk’ ~ *xaživat’* ‘walk many times’, Polish *czytać* ‘read’ ~ *czytywać* ‘read repeatedly’), see Stang (1942: 172–174). However, it is only in Lithuanian that the suffix has been fully integrated into the TAM-paradigm. By contrast, the *-va* forms of various Slavic languages show idiosyncratic restrictions w.r.t. lexemes and tenses, and

are never fully productive (even though in the XVI–XVII centuries they have experienced a rise in productivity, see Schuyt 1990: 404–405; Klimonow 2001: 131–132).

➤ It might be the case that the Yiddish *flegn* + V Past Habitual construction has experienced an influence from the Samogitian *liuobėti* + V construction, since both share a rather idiosyncratic feature: they refer to the past temporal domain, though the auxiliary is in the Present tense; on Yiddish see Aronson (1985: 184–185; Gold 1997: 119–121).

- (13) *Ix fleg zog-n.* YIDDISH  
 1SG HAB:PRS:1SG say-INF  
 ‘I used to say.’ (Gold 1997: 119)

② Avertive, see Sližienė 1961; Arkadiev 2010a.

- (14) a. *Aldon-a buv-o be-išein-a-nt-i, bet persigalvoj-o ir sustoj-o.*  
 A.-NOM.SG AUX-PST CNT-leave-PRS-PA-NOM.F but change.mind-PST and stop-PST  
 ‘Aldona was about to leave, but she changed her mind and stopped.’  
 b. *Aš buv-a-u be-dirb-qs, kai netikėtai atvažiav-o draug-as.*  
 1SG:NOM AUX-PST-1SG CNT-work-PRS.PA.NOM.SG.M when unexpectedly arrive-PST friend-NOM.SG  
 ‘I was going to start working, when a friend of mine unexpectedly arrived.’

The Avertive denotes a past situation which was imminent but did not get realized.

This form is recognized in the Lithuanian grammatical tradition as “periphrastic inceptive” (Sližienė 1961) or “continuative” (Sližienė 1995: 227–228; Ambrazas (ed.) 1997: 250–251).

The term “Avertive” was introduced by Kuteva (1998; 2001: Ch. 4) for cross-linguistically fairly well-attested constructions with similar semantics.

In Europe, Avertive is attested in a number of languages (see Kuteva 2001: 79–80), including, besides Lithuanian (not listed by Kuteva), Bulgarian (15) and French (16).

- (15) *Vaza-ta šte-še da se sčup-i.* BULGARIAN  
 vase-DEF.SG.F AUX.FUT-PST:3SG COMP RFL:ACC break-PRS:3SG  
 ‘The vase nearly broke down.’ (Kuteva 2001: 83)  
 (16) *J'ai failli tomb-er.* FRENCH  
 1SG-AUX:PRS:1SG fail:PST:PP fall-INF  
 ‘I nearly fell.’ (ibid.: 80)

➤ Lithuanian represents a hitherto undocumented path of the development of the Avertive, viz. from an incipient Progressive (see e.g. Ambrazas 1990: 180–181). The Progressive formed by the auxiliary *būti* ‘be’ and the Present Active Participle with the prefix *be-* is attested in Old Lithuanian texts and in the Samogitian dialects. Examples like (17) could serve as the basis for the reanalysis of the Progressive forms as implying unexpected termination of the situation.

- (17) *Tawa tarn-as buw-a be-gan-ans aw-is sawa*  
 your servant-NOM.SG AUX-PST CNT-pasture-PRS.PA.NOM.SG.M sheep-ACC.PL own  
*Tiew-o, ir ateij-a Lėw-as.*  
 father-GEN.SG and come-PST lion-NOM.SG  
 ‘Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep, and a lion came...’ (Bretke’s 1579–1590 translation of Luther’s Bible, Sam. 17: 34, cited after Ambrazas 1990: 181)

③ Continuative, see Arkadiev 2010a.

- (18) a. ... *miestel-yje te-be-gyven-o daug našli-ų.*  
 small.town-LOC.SG POS-CNT-live-PST many widow-GEN.PL  
 ‘... many widows still lived in the town.’ (LKT)

- b. *Tada j-is jau ne-be-gyven-o su žmon-a...*  
 then 3-NOM.SG.M already NEG-CNT-live-PST with wife-INS.SG  
 ‘Then he already no more lived together with his wife...’ (LKT)

Virtually non-described forms expressing a situation still (*te-be-*) or no longer (*ne-be-*) holding at reference time. The origins of the prefixes *be-* and *te-* are obscure, cf. Ostrowski 2010.

No other European language expresses the meanings ‘still’ and ‘no more’ morphologically, and I am not aware of any cross-linguistic study of such or similar categories.

#### ④ Restrictive (‘only’), see Arkadiev 2010b.

- (19) *Ši-os scen-os grož-į te-gal-i-m-a*  
 this-GEN.SG.F scene-GEN.SG beauty-ACC.SG RSTR-can-PRS-PP-IP  
*sulygin-ti su gerv-ės skrydž-iu...*  
 compare-INF with crane-GEN.SG flight-INS.SG  
 ‘The beauty of this scene can be compared only to a crane’s flight...’ (Gintaras Beresnevičius, “Apie pagavimą šnipų” (1998), <http://www.tekstai.lt/tekstai>)

The Lithuanian Restrictive marker *te-* is peculiar in that, attaching to the predicate, it takes into its scope some other constituent of the sentence, including even constituents of embedded non-finite clauses, as in (19).

Verb-adjacent restrictive markers are widespread in the languages of the world (König 1991: Ch. 2), cf. English adverbial *only* or Mandarin Chinese *zhi*:

- (20) *John only gave a book to Mary.* ENGLISH  
 ‘... only gave/only a book/only to Mary ...’
- (21) *Wo zhi xie shu.* MANDARIN CHINESE  
 1SG RSTR write book  
 ‘Only I write books/I write only books’, etc. (König 1991: 18)

➤ However, affixal restrictive markers are very rare (König 1991: 20), and the only hitherto known direct counterpart to the Lithuanian verbal prefix *te-* comes from Bininj Gunwok (Gunwingguan family, Northern Australia, Evans 1995):

- (22) *A-djal-wokdi gun-djehmi.* BININJ GUN-WOK  
 1SG-RSTR-speak language.name  
 ‘I speak only Gun-djehmi.’ (Evans 1995: 250)

## 4. Verbal Morphosyntax

### ① Evidential “passive”

- (23) *Girdėj-a-u, j-o miest-e nam-as stat-o-m-a.*  
 hear-PST-1SG 3-GEN.SG.M town-LOC.SG house-NOM.SG build-PRS-PP-IP  
 ‘I heard, he is building a house in the town.’ (Ambrazas (ed.) 1997: 281)

Impersonal passives of different kinds as such are characteristic of several languages of the region (cf. Wiemer to appear), including Polish, Ukrainian and especially the Northern Russian dialects (see Lavine 1999; Wiemer 2004b).

- (24) *U lisic-y unese-n-o kuročk-a.* NORTH RUSSIAN  
 at vixen-GEN.SG carry.away-PST.PP-IP hen-NOM.SG  
 ‘The vixen has carried away a/the hen.’ (Wiemer to appear, ex. 39)

Marking of evidentiality by means of non-finite verb forms is not a peculiarity of Lithuanian, either, but a feature it shares with Latvian and Estonian, as well as with the languages of the Balkan area, see Wälchli 2000, Wiemer 2006, Holvoet 2007, Kehayov 2008.

➤ However, Lithuanian evidential “passive” stands out in that:

- it combines two independently attested features (impersonal passive and grammaticalized evidentiality) into a morpho-syntactico-semantic bundle unique to Lithuanian;
- it shows no compatibility restrictions w.r.t. predicates, being formed even from the genuine “personal” passive (see Timberlake 1982; Lavine 2006, 2010; Holvoet 2007: 96–104).

- (25) a. *J-o bū-t-a ilgai muš-t-o.*  
 3-GEN.SG.M AUX-PST.PP-IP long beat-PST.PP-GEN.SG.M  
 ‘He has evidently been lengthily beaten.’ (Holvoet 2007: 98)
- b. *J-is buv-o ilgai muš-t-as.*  
 3-NOM.SG.M AUX-PST long beat-PST.PP-NOM.SG.M  
 ‘He has been lengthily beaten.’

Such “recursive passives” are quite rare cross-linguistically (cf. an impersonal passive able to apply to a personal passive in Irish, Noonan 1994; however, there the two constructions show different morphology).

## ② Case marking of objects in infinitival clauses

- (26) *J-am ne-patik-o [laukel-is ar-ti].*  
 3-DAT.SG.M NEG-like-PST field-NOM.SG plough-INF  
 ‘He did not like to plough the field.’ (Ambrasas (ed.) 1997: 638)
- (27) *iššov-ė [žmon-ėms pagąsdin-ti].*  
 shoot-PST people-DAT.PL frighten-INF  
 ‘(he) fired to scare the people.’ (ibid.: 557)
- (28) *išvažiav-o [keli-o taisy-ti].*  
 drive.out-PST road-GEN.SG repair-INF  
 ‘(they) went to repair the road.’ [ibid.]

Of the three constructions where instead of the “canonical” Accusative the direct object of the embedded infinitive is marked by some other case, only the Nominative construction in (26) finds direct counterparts in the languages of the region, see Timberlake 1974, Ambrasas 2001.

- (29) *Visvairāk viņ-ai patīk [lasīt Bībel-e].* LATVIAN  
 most.of.all 3-DAT.SG.F like:PRS:3 read-INF Bible-NOM.SG  
 ‘Most of all she likes to read the Bible.’ (Holvoet 1993: 157)
- (30) *Mei-l tuleb vaheaeg teh-a.* ESTONIAN  
 1PL-ADESS must break(NOM.SG) make-INF  
 ‘We should make a break.’ (Klaas 1996: 45)
- (31) *Xoč-u [pi-t’ xolodn-aja vod-a].* NORTH RUSSIAN  
 want-PRS:1SG drink-INF cold-ACC.SG.F water-ACC.SG  
 ‘I want to drink cold water.’ (Larin 1963: 91)

➤ The Dative + Infinitive (27) and Genitive + Infinitive (28) constructions have no counterparts in modern European languages, including Latvian. On their syntax and origins see Ambrasas 1981, 1987, Schmalstieg 1987: 174–179, 214–220, Franks & Lavine 2006.

➤ Constructions similar to the Lithuanian Dative + Infinitive have been sporadically attested in some ancient Slavic languages, cf. (32), but did not develop any further and gradually fell out of use.

- (32) *kúpi-chu pol-e pútnik-óm hrěs-ti.* OLD CZECH  
 buy-AOR:1SG field-NOM/ACC.SG traveller-DAT.PL bury-INF  
 ‘I bought a field in order to bury travelers.’ (Ambrasas 1981: 18)

## 5. Conclusions and prospects

- ❶ The verbal system of Lithuanian possesses a number of features not found in any of the neighbouring languages; some of these features are rare in the more general European and even global context.
- ❷ These unique features of Lithuanian include several grammatical categories well-established in the system of the language, such as Past Habitual, Avertive, Continuative, and Restrictive.
- ❸ For some of the features in question, e.g. infixation, evidential passive and non-canonical marking of objects of infinitives, indirect parallels are found either in the neighbouring languages or in the earlier stages thereof. However, in all these cases Lithuanian shows a more advanced stage of development of the respective features:
  - infixation: Lithuanian has re-used and generalized the archaic Indo-European trait, having integrated it into a considerably restructured system of verbal paradigmatics;
  - with the impersonal passive, Lithuanian has coupled a morphosyntactic pattern common to the languages of the region with special semantics (inferential evidential), and has also generalized its use to the ultimate degree, giving rise to the typologically rare “recursive” passive;
  - with the infinitive clauses, Lithuanian has reanalyzed and extended the constructions which have been available to its genetic relatives as an Indo-European heritage (see Ambrazas 1981, 1987); however, neither in Latvian, nor in the Slavic languages did these constructions survive.
- ❹ The last point (especially taken together with the paths of development of participial constructions in the Baltic and Slavic languages, see Ambrazas 1990) suggests that in closely related languages, despite their being in a prolonged contact, similar structural traits may evolve in diametrically opposed directions: while the Baltic languages (all or just Lithuanian) have generalized and extended some of the morphosyntactic patterns of the common “Balto-Slavic” heritage, the Slavic languages have gradually lost them.
- ❺ W.r.t. the peculiar grammatical categories of Lithuanian, it is legitimate to ask why none of them has spread to the neighbouring languages, especially Slavic, via language contact.
  - the answer w.r.t. the Slavic standard languages most probably lies in the particularities of the sociolinguistic situation in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Russian/Soviet Empire (see Wiemer 2003);
  - the answer w.r.t. the Slavic dialects and other minority languages in Lithuania (e.g. Yiddish and Romani) is not so obvious, since Lithuanian influences on the grammatical structure of these linguistic varieties have been documented, see e.g. Lekomceva 1972, Sudnik 1974, Jacobs 2001, Wiemer 2004a, Ananjeva 2008.
- ❻ The Lithuanian data discussed above is instructive for areal and contact linguistics in that it suggests some (possibly non-trivial) insights into the limits of areal diffusion in morphosyntax, as well as into the interplay between convergence and divergence of languages in contact.

## Abbreviations

ACC – accusative, ADESS – adessive, AOR – aorist, AUX – auxiliary, CNT – continuative, COMP – complementizer, DAT – dative, DEF – definite, F – feminine, FUT – future, GEN – genitive, HAB – habitual, HON – honorific, IMP – imperative, INF – infinitive, INS – instrumental, IO – indirect object, IP – impersonal, LOC – locative, M – masculine, NEG – negation, NOM – nominative, OBJ – object, PA – active participle, PL – plural, POS – positive, PP – passive participle, PRS – present tense, PST – past tense, RFL – reflexive, RSTR – restrictive, SG – singular

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