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**Grammaticalization by semantic
enrichment:
from progressive to proximative to
avertive in Lithuanian**

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Introducing the avertive

- Kuteva (1998, 2001: Ch. 4):
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- French: *J'ai **failli** tomber.*
'I almost fell.'

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Avertive is a “semantically elaborate” gram combining meanings from three different domains:

- temporal (pastness),
- aspectual (imminence),
- modal (counterfactuality).

Introducing the avertive

- Kuteva et al. (2019):
Avertive belongs to a broader domain of “non-realisation” including such meanings as *apprehensional*, *frustrated initiation*, *frustrated completion*, and *incosequential*.

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- Kuteva et al (2019: 852):
 - *apprehensional*: non-realisation of an undesirable situation;
 - *frustrated initiation*: non-realisation of initial stage of past situation;
 - *frustrated completion*: non-realisation of the final stage of past situation;
 - *inconsequential*: non-realisation of expected result of past situation.

Introducing the avertive

- Kuteva et al (2019: 852):
 - *avertive*: non-realisation of once imminent past situation **viewed as a whole**.

Introducing the avertive

- Avertive vs. frustrated initiation:
 - seem to imply each other:
 - non-realisation of the initial phase > non-realisation of the event;
 - non-realisation of the complete event > non-realisation of the initial phase

Introducing the avertive

- Avertive vs. frustrated initiation:
 - seem to imply each other:
 - non-realisation of the initial phase > non-realisation of the event;
 - non-realisation of the complete event > non-realisation of the initial phase
 - seem to primarily differ in event types they apply to:
 - avertive ~ punctual events without internal phases;
 - frustrated initiation ~ durative events

Introducing the avertive

- For my purposes, the distinction between “avertive proper” and “frustrated initiation” does not appear relevant, and so I will speak of the avertive as combining with both punctual and durative events and expressing their imminence and non-occurrence.

Introducing the avertive

- Kabardian, Kuban dialect (own fieldwork data):

(1) *zurjet tje-x^we pe-t-a*

Zurjet PVB-fall PVB-stand-PST

‘Zurjet **almost fell.**’ (punctual, avertive)

PST - past tense
PVB - preverb

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‘Zurjet **almost fell.**’ (punctual, avertive)

(2) *zurjet haž’əbe-ḱ^weda-m haləḅ^w*

Zurjet flour-rotten-OBL bread

x-jə-ḡə-č’

pe-t-a

PVB-3SG.ERG-make-out PVB-stand-PST

‘Zurjet **almost started making** bread from rotten flour.’ (durative, frustrated initiation)

ERG - ergative
OBL - oblique case
PST - past tense
PVB - preverb
SG - singular

Avertive vs. proximative

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Avertive vs. proximative

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 - avertive should be distinguished from **proximative**.
- Heine (1994: 36):
 - proximative expresses “a temporal phase located close to the initial boundary of the situation described by the main verb”, i.e. mere imminence of a situation.

Avertive vs. proximative

- Kuteva et al. (2019: 860):
 - the semantics of the avertive subsumes the semantics of the proximative

	avertive	proximative
imminence	+	+
pastness	+	
counterfactuality	+	

Avertive vs. proximative

- Koasati (Muskogean, Louisiana, USA)

(3) *ca-támm-á:pi-t* avertive

1SG.P-fall-AVR-PST

'I almost fell.' (Kimball 1991: 196)

AVR - avertive

P - patient

PST - past tense

SG - singular

Avertive vs. proximative

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(3) *ca-támm-á:pi-t* avertive

1SG.P-fall-AVR-PST

'I almost fell.' (Kimball 1991: 196)

(4) *falank-á:hi-má:m* proximative

awaken(SG)-INTENT-DUBIT

'He is ready to awaken.' (Kimball 1991: 183)

AVR - avertive

DUBIT - dubitative

INTENT - intentional

P - patient

PST - past tense

SG - singular

Avertive vs. proximative

- Proximative is not restricted to the past:

Gyeli (Bantu A.80, Cameroun; Grimm 2015: 317):

(5) *mè múà wè nà nzà*

1SG PROX die COM hunger

'I'm about to die from hunger.'

COM - comitative

PROX - proximative

SG - singular

Avertive vs. proximative

- Proximative does not imply non-realisation of the event:

English (BNC)

(6) *I looked at the paper, and realised that a new comedy show **was about to start** on Channel 4.*

Avertive vs. proximative

- However, in past tense contexts proximatives often give rise to an avertive interpretation implying that the event did not occur:

- English (BNC):

(7) *For a whole month my parents were convinced I **was about to die**.*

[the author obviously did not die]

Grammaticalisation of avertives

- Kuteva (1998: 138-145) identifies the following grammaticalisation path leading to avertive, which she calls “the Past Volition chain”:

I

PAST

VOLITION /

INTENTION

(Kuteva 1998: 142)

Grammaticalisation of avertives

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I		II
PAST		COUNTERFACTUAL
VOLITION /	>	and/or
INTENTION		HYPOTHETICAL

(Kuteva 1998: 142)

Grammaticalisation of avertives

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(Kuteva 1998: 142)

Grammaticalisation of avertives

- Bulgarian (Maslov 1981: 260)

(8) *štjax*

da

padna

AUX.PST.1SG

SBJ.PTCL

fall.PRS.1SG

‘I almost fell.’

AUX - auxiliary

SBJ.PCTL - subjunctive particle

PRS - present tense

SG - singular

PST - past tense

Grammaticalisation of avertives

- The Modern Bulgarian avertive construction *štjax da V* goes back to the construction with the verb *xotěti* ‘want’ with the infinitive whose primary meaning in Old Bulgarian (Old Church Slavonic) was volition and intention (see, however, Kozlov 2014 and the Appendix).

Grammaticalisation of avertives

- In fact, the Modern Bulgarian construction has all three main meanings distinguished by Kuteva:
 - past volition (9);
 - counterfactual (10);
 - avertive (8).

Grammaticalisation of avertives

- Bulgarian (Kuteva 1998: 144): past volition

(9) *Tja ne **šteše** da*
she NEG want.IPF.3SG SBJ.PTCL
izleze s nego
go.out.PRS.3SG with him
‘She **did** not **want** to go out with him.’

IPF - past imperfective

NEG - negation

PRS - present

SBJ.PCTL - subjunctive particle

SG - singular

Grammaticalisation of avertives

- Bulgarian (Kuteva 1998: 144): counterfactual

(10) **Šteše** *da* *se*
want.IPF.2SG SBJ.PTCL REFL

izplašiš.

frighten.PRS.2SG

‘You **would have been** frightened.’

Grammaticalisation of avertives

- Semantic changes along the Past Volition chain (Kuteva 1998: 139):

Stage	Type of event schema	Contextual attributes
1. Past Volition/ Intention	Person X wanted to do Y	Y refers to a dynamic situation
2. Counterfactual	X was going to undergo Y but Y does not take place	Y is a potential but unrealised event
3. Avertive	X was about to undergo Y but Y does not take place	X was close to entering situation Y but Y does not take place

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From avertive to proximative?

- Kuteva (1998: 145-148) suggests that avertive may further develop into proximative by semantic bleaching, losing the meaning components of pastness and counterfactuality.

From avertive to proximative?

- Kuteva (1998: 46):

Avertive

imminence

pastness

counterfactuality

From avertive to proximative?

- Kuteva (1998: 46):

Avertive

Proximative

imminence

imminence

pastness

→

∅

counterfactuality

∅

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- Direct empirical evidence for the development from avertive to proximative as outlined by Kuteva is rather scarce.
- The Modern Bulgarian *štjax da V* construction admittedly has some proximative uses like (11).
- However, their exact chronological relation to the avertive use is unclear (see Kozlov 2014).

From avertive to proximative?

- Modern Bulgarian (Kuteva 1998: 147):
proximative

(11) *Kogato Milena šteše da*
when Milena want.IPF.3SG SBJ.PTCL
ulovi druga ulica, tja vidja...
catch.PRS.3SG other street she see.AOR.3SG

‘When Milena **was** just **about to turn** into another street, she saw...’

NB from Kuteva’s exposition it remains unclear whether the event of turning to another street actually took place or not.

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 - avertive can develop from past proximative via conventionalisation of the counterfactual implicature;
 - empirical evidence: Lithuanian (cf. Arkadiev 2011, 2019).

Introducing the Lithuanian avertive

- Auxiliary 'be' in the past tense
 - agrees with the subject in person and number
- Present active participle of the lexical verb with the continuative prefix *be-*
 - agrees with the subject in gender and number (and nominative case)

Introducing the Lithuanian avertive

(12) *Buv-au* *be-nu-krent-a-nt-i*

be-PST.1SG CNT-PVB-fall-PRS-PA-NOM.SG.F

‘I almost fell.’

CNT - continuative

F - feminine

NOM - nominative

PA - active participle

PRS - present tense

PST - past tense

PVB - preverb

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- The so-called “inceptive” or “continuative” “compound tense” of traditional grammar (Slišienė 1961, 1995; Ambrazas ed. 2006: 250-251, 321-323).

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- In my previous work (Arkadiev 2011), I argued that the construction is an instance of avertive.

Introducing the Lithuanian avertive

- The so-called “inceptive” or “continuative” “compound tense” of traditional grammar (Slišienė 1961, 1995; Ambrazas ed. 2006: 250-251, 321-323).
- In my previous work (Arkadiev 2011), I argued that the construction is an instance of avertive.
- In fact, this was not entirely correct (Alexandrova 2016, Arkadiev 2019).

Semantics

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 - frustrated completion (14);
 - past proximative (15);
 - past progressive (16).

Semantics

- Frustrated initiation (LtTenTen14):

(13) *Jau **buv-o-me be-pa-tik-i**,*

already be-PST-1PL CNT-PVB-believe-PRS.PA.NOM.PL.M

kad daugiau neturėsime tokių vyriausybių...

‘We already **started believing** that we would no longer have such governments...’

CNT - continuative

M - masculine

NOM - nominative

PA - active participle

PL -plural

PRS - present tense

PST - past tense

PVB - preverb

Semantics

- Frustrated completion (LtTenTen14):

(14) *Jau buv-o be-lip-aš*

already be-PST.3 CNT-climb-PRS.PA.NOM.SG.M

*ant žemės, bet užkliuvo už akmens ir
pliumptelėjo į ledinį vandenį.*

‘He **was** already **climbing** ashore, but
stumbled over a stone and plopped back into
ice-cold water.’

CNT - continuative
M - masculine
NOM - nominative

PA - active participle
PRS - present tense
PST - past tense

SG - singular

Semantics

- Past proximative (LtTenTen14):

(15) *Jis įsimylėjo merginą,*

kur-i

buv-o be-iš-vyk-sta-nt-i

which-NOM.SG.F

be-PST.3 CNT-PVB-go-PRS-PA.NOM.SG.F

į Ameriką, vedė ir išvažiavo.

‘He fell in love with a girl who **was about to leave** for America, married her and left [with her for America].’

CNT - continuative

PRS - present tense

F - feminine

PST - past tense

NOM - nominative

PVB - preverb

PA - active participle

SG - singular

Semantics

- Past progressive (LtTenTen14):

(16) *O saulè jau*

buv-o

be-PST.3

be-kyl-a-nt-i...

CNT-rise-PRS-PA-NOM.SG.F

‘And the sun **was** already **rising...**’

CNT - continuative

F - feminine

NOM - nominative

PA - active participle

PRS - present tense

PST - past tense

SG - singular

Semantics

- The interpretation of the construction is partly determined by the type of the event described by the predicate and partly depends on broader context.

Semantics

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Semantics

- The meaning of *frustrated completion* is mainly attested with durative telic (accomplishment) predicates.
- The *avertive* meaning, by contrast, favours punctual and atelic (stative and activity) predicates.
 - However, the distribution is not categorical, some verbs being compatible with both meanings (Arkadiev 2019: 91-92).

Role of context

- The choice between the counterfactual and the non-counterfactual (proximative and progressive) interpretations largely depends on the context.

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 - concessive/adversative clauses (17);
 - temporal clauses expressing events interrupting the situation (18);
 - occurrence in a temporal clause describing background to an interrupting event (19).

Role of context

- Concessive clause (LtTenTen14):

(17) *J-i* *buv-o* *be-atsigau-na-nt-i*,
she-NOM be-PST.3 CNT-recover-PRS-PA-NOM.SG.F

tačiau, *su-žinoj-us-i*
however PVB-know-PST.PA-NOM.SG.F

apie galutinį sukilimo pralaimėjimą, atkrito ir mirė.

‘She **was recovering**, however when she learned about the final defeat of the uprising, she relapsed and died.’

Role of context

- Interruption by a temporal clause (LtTenTen14):

(18) *jau buv-o be-baigi-aš*
already be-PST.3 CNT-finish-PRS.PA.NOM.SG.M
neakivaizdin-ę pedagogin-ę mokykl-a,
extramural-ACC.SG.F pedagogical-ACC.SG.F school-ACC.SG
kai gav-o šaukim-a
when get-PST.3 call-ACC.SG
per dvi dienas išvažiuoti.

‘He **was** already **finishing** a correspondence pedagogical school when he got a call to leave in two days.’

Role of context

- Interruption by a main clause (LtTenTen14):

(19) *Kai jau buv-o be-kiš-aš*
when already be-PST.3 CNT-poke-PRS.PA.NOM.SG.M
laišką į voką,
kažk-as pa-beld-ė į dur-is...
someone-NOM PVB-knock-PST.3 in door-ACC.PL

‘When he **was** already **putting** the letter into an envelope, someone knocked at the door...’

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- In the absence of contextual cues unequivocally signalling that the situation did not occur, the construction can be interpreted as non-counterfactual.
- “Minimal pairs” with the same lexical verb are frequently found, see (20) vs. (21).

Role of context

- Avertive (LtTenTen14):

(20) *Parduotuvės savininkas jau*

buv-o** **be-duod-ąs

be-PST.3 CNT-give-PRS.PA.NOM.SG.M

jam gražos, kai staiga pastebėjo...

‘The shop owner **was** already **going to give** him change when he suddenly noticed [that something was wrong with the banknotes].’

Role of context

- Progressive (LtTenTen14):

(21) *Mane surado žemesniajame aukšte, kur aš*

*jau **buv-au** **be-duod-a-nt-i***

already be-PST.1SG CNT-give-PRS-PA-NOM.SG.F

interview vietinės televizijos žinioms...

‘They found me on the ground floor, where I **was** already **giving** an interview to the local TV news...’

Avertive by implicature?

- All this suggests that the avertive interpretation of the Lithuanian construction arises via a counterfactual implicature rather than is part of the encoded meaning.

Avertive by implicature?

- Past proximatives naturally give rise to counterfactual implicatures (see Ziegeler 2000):

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(22) a. *I was about to fall.*

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(22) a. *I was about to fall.*
b. *I fell.*

Avertive by implicature?

- Past proximatives naturally give rise to counterfactual implicatures (see Ziegeler 2000):

(22) a. *I was about to fall.*
b. *I fell.*

- Hearing (22a) instead of (22b), the addressee infers that (22b) is not true, since otherwise the speaker would have used the stronger statement.

Avertive by implicature?

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Avertive by implicature?

- The counterfactual implicature associated with the Lithuanian construction is on the way to conventionalisation:
 - when elicited in isolation, the construction is interpreted as avertive by default (Arkadiev 2011);
 - the avertive accounts for ca. 75% of the corpus examples of the construction, while the proximative is clearly marginal with less than 5% (Arkadiev 2019).

Progressive > proximative > avertive

- In Old Lithuanian the construction was primarily used as progressive and mainly occurred with stative (23) and activity (24) verbs.

Progressive > proximative > avertive

- Old Lithuanian (Wolfenbüttel Postil, 1573, 42r:12):

(23) *Bua* *tew-as* *ir* *matin-a* *ia*
be.PST.3 father-NOM.SG and mother-NOM.SG he.GEN

be-fsi-fteb-i *ant* *ta.*
CNT-REFL-look-PRS.PA.NOM.PL.M on this.GEN

‘His father and mother **were looking** on this.’

CNT - continuative
GEN - genitive
M - masculine
NOM - nominative

PA - active participle
PL - plural
PRS - present tense
PST - past tense

REFL - reflexive
SG - singular

Progressive > proximative > avertive

- The construction was not restricted to the past tense and could be used with a present tense auxiliary (25).

Progressive > proximative > avertive

- Old Lithuanian (Bretke's *Sacred songs*, 1589, 81:6):

(25) *Iog est be-gul-is*
that be.PRS.3 CNT-lie-PRS.PA.NOM.SG.M

edzi-ofu Kudik-is
crib-LOC.PL child-NOM.SG

‘That the Child **is lying** in the crib.’

CNT - continuative
LOC - locative
M - masculine

NOM - nominative
PA - active participle
PL - plural

PRS - present tense
SG - singular

Progressive > proximative > avertive

- The first uses of the construction with the semantics of imminence are attested in the 17th century:
 - in (26) it is plain proximative;
 - (27) is already an avertive, since the context clearly implies that the imminent situation was not realised.

Progressive > proximative > avertive

- Old Lithuanian (Chylinski's Bible, 1660, Gen 40:10):

(26) *Ó and ano wina medies buwo tris ųzakos,*

ó buw-o kaypo be-ųprog-ąs.

and be-PST.3 as CNT-burst-PRS.PA.NOM.SG.M

‘And in the vine were three branches; it **was as though it budded.**’

CNT - continuative

M - masculine

NOM - nominative

PA - active participle

PRS - present tense

PST - past tense

SG - singular

Progressive > proximative > avertive

- Old Lithuanian (Klein's *New Books of Songs*, 1666, 248:14):

(27) *Pékl-on'* *buw-au* *be-grimft-ąs.*
hell-ALL.SG be-PST.1SG CNT-fall-PRS.PA.NOM.SG.M

'I **nearly fell** into Hell [but God saved me].'

ALL - allative

CNT - continuative

M - masculine

NOM - nominative

PA - active participle

PRS - present tense

PST - past tense

SG - singular

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- Unfortunately, since there is no comprehensive and searchable corpus of Old Lithuanian texts, tracing the semantic development of the construction is very hard, given its low textual frequency.
- E.g. I could not find a single token of the construction in the available texts from the 18th century.

Progressive > proximative > avertive

- The development of proximative uses by a progressive construction is quite expected, especially in the context of punctual (achievement) predicates with which progressives naturally denote preliminary stages of the event (Smith 1997: 76-77; Johanson 2000: 153-154; Vafaeian 2018: 109-113).

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- The rise of the avertive interpretation in past contexts is pragmatically conditioned and comes “for free”.

Progressive > proximative > avertive

- Persian (Vafaeian 2018: 104): progressive

(28) *dār-e* *mi-r-e*
have.PRS-3SG IPFV-go.PRS-3SG
be *samt=e* *daryā*
to direction=EZ sea
‘She **is walking** towards the sea.’

EZ - ezafe

IPFV - imperfective

PRS - present tense

SG - singular

Progressive > proximative > avertive

- Persian (Vafaeian 2018: 110): proximative

(29) *ġatār dār-e* *mi-r-e*
train have.PRS-3SG IPFV-leave.PRS-3SG
'The train **is about to leave.**'

Progressive > proximative > avertive

- Persian (Vafaeian 2018: 110): proximative

(29) *ġatār dār-e* *mi-r-e*
train have.PRS-3SG IPFV-leave.PRS-3SG

‘The train **is about to leave.**’

- avertive in the past tense (Vafaeian 2018: 111)

(30) *dāšt-am* *siāh mi-šod-am*
have.PST-1SG black IPFV-become.PST-1SG

‘I **was about to get burned** [but I didn’t]’

Progressive > proximative > avertive

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 - development of the (past) proximative meaning in the context of punctual and telic verbs;
 - conservation of the past progressive uses in limited contexts due to competition with simple past;
 - spread of avertive uses due to pragmatic naturalness and conventionalisation of implicature.

Progressive > proximative > avertive

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- Note also that the Lithuanian construction underwent a reduction, rather than expansion, of its paradigmatic freedom in the domain of tense.
- Cf. the “loss and gain” model of grammaticalisation (e.g. Brems 2011).

Progressive > proximative > avertive

- Stage I (progressive): intraterminality

Progressive > proximative > avertive

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- Stage II (proximative): imminence

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imminence + pastness

Progressive > proximative > avertive

- Stage I (progressive): intraterminality
- Stage II (proximative): imminence
- Stage III (past proximative):
imminence + pastness
- Stage IV (avertive):
imminence + pastness + counterfactuality

Conclusions

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Conclusions

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 - from an incipient progressive to past proximative via lexical extension (durative verbs > punctual verbs) and grammatical narrowing (all tenses > past tense);
 - from past proximative to avertive via conventionalisation of the counterfactual implicature;
 - involves gain, rather than loss, of semantic content.

Appendix

- Back to the history of the Bulgarian avertive construction.
- Kozlov (2014): in Old Church Slavonic (OCS) the *xotěti* + infinitive construction had the following meanings:
 - volition and intention with agentive animate subjects (31);
 - proximative with inanimate as well as animate subjects (32);
 - predestinative (33);
 - counterfactual (34).

Appendix

- OCS (Codex Marianus, Lk 18:13, Kozlov 2014: 129):
volition

(30) *mytarь iz deleče stoję*

ne xotěaše ni očiju

NEG want.IPF.3SG even eye.GEN.DU

vъzvesti na nebo

lift.up.INF on sky.ACC.SG

‘And the publican, standing afar off, **would** not so much as lift up his eyes unto heaven.’

ACC - accusative

DU - dual

GEN - genitive

INF - infinitive

IPF - past imperfective

NEG - negation

SG - singular

Appendix

- OCS (Codex Marianus, Mk 4:37, Kozlov 2014: 130): proximative

(31) *vľny že vľivaxo se vľ ladijo ěko*

juže pogręznoti xotěaše

already sink.INF want.IPF.3SG

‘And the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full [lit. **was about to sink**].’

Appendix

- OCS (Codex Marianus, Jn 11:51, Kozlov 2014: 132): predestinative

(32) *ěko xotěaše is[usъ]*
that want.IPF.3SG Jesus.NOM.SG

umrěti za ljudi
die.INF for people.ACC.PL

‘[he prophesied] that Jesus **should die** for that nation’

ACC - accusative
INF - infinitive

IPF - past imperfective
NOM - nominative

PL - plural
SG - singular

Appendix

- OCS (Codex Suprasliensis 442:17-18, Kozlov 2014: 133): counterfactual

(33) *ašti bo ne vьstalъ to ni*

ta

that.NOM.PL.N

xotěaxo

want.IPF.3PL

imъ

they.DAT

věrna

true.NOM.PL.N

byti

be.INF

‘If He [Christ] had not arisen, then those [promises] **would have turned** out untrue as well.’

Appendix

- Kozlov (2014: 140) criticises Kuteva's (1998) diachronic scenario and proposes the following paths of development of the *xotěti* + *Infinitive*:
 - (i) volition > intention > proximative
 - (ii) past proximative > avertive > counterfactual
- Kozlov (2014: 141): the transition from past proximative to avertive is due to conventionalisation of implicature.

Appendix

- If Kozlov's (2014: 140-141) empirically firmly grounded conclusions are correct, then Bulgarian exemplifies the same mechanism of development of avertive out of past proximate as I have argued for on the basis of Lithuanian.
- NB different grammaticalisation paths converge.

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