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**ASPECT AND ACTIONALITY IN LITHUANIAN IN COMPARISON WITH RUSSIAN
(ON A TYPOLOGICAL BACKGROUND)**

Peter M. Arkadiev

*Department of Typology and Comparative Linguistics, Institute of Slavic Studies,
Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow
alpgurev@gmail.com, peterarkadiev@yandex.ru*

Introductory remarks

This paper is a part of a larger project of studying the aspectual system of Lithuanian in a typological perspective with focus on lexical semantics and syntactic compositionality. Since Baltic and Slavic languages form a tight genetic and areal unit tied by a long history of contacts and mutual influence, a comparative analysis of Lithuanian and Russian aspectual systems needs no special justification.

The data used in this paper was collected during 2005 — 2006 with native speakers of literary Lithuanian in Moscow and Lithuania.

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1. Slavic aspect and the typology of tense-aspect systems

❶ The aspectual systems of Slavic languages (I will take Russian as an example) are characterized by the following properties (Маслов 1984; Исаченко 1965; Плу́нган 2000):

- ✦ a binary opposition between Perfective (*совершенный вид*) and Imperfective (*несовершенный вид*) aspects cross-cutting through whole inflectional paradigms;
- ✦ absence of either consistent morphological expression of aspectual grammemes or even consistent markedness relations between them;
- ✦ from the semantic point of view, both aspectual grammemes are highly polysemous and resist an ‘invariant’ characterization (see various contributions to Черткова (ред.) 1998).

❷ From a typological point of view (see Dahl 1985, Dahl (ed.) 2000), the Slavic aspectual systems differ from the European ones (as well as from the majority of aspectual systems attested in the languages of the world) in the following respects:

- ✦ the primary semantic distinction between Perfective and Imperfective is not that of ‘boundedness’ but that of ‘punctuality’ (see, e.g. Плу́нган 2000: 303);
- ✦ this results in a much more complex interaction between grammatical meaning of aspectual categories and the inherent lexical content of verbs, than that observed in such languages as French or English;
- ✦ as a consequence of this, the formal locus of aspectual categories in Russian is (despite all controversies regarding their ‘inflectional’ vs. ‘derivational’ status, see Перцов 2001 and Зализняк &

Шмелёв 2000 for a recent discussion) is not just a wordform, but a whole lexeme: there are Perfective and Imperfective verbs, not only wordforms in Russian.

☞ Thus, Slavic aspect is to a large extent lexical (derivational) in nature, whereas European aspect is purely inflectional.

③ Although Perfective and Imperfective are in the Slavic languages lexical categories, they have strong and uncontroversial grammatical impact, ramifications of which can be observed on various levels of linguistic structure. Perfective and Imperfective verbs differ, *inter alia*

✦ in their inflectional paradigms, cf. Table 1

Table 1. Paradigms of Perfective and Imperfective verbs in Russian

	Imperfective	Perfective
Present	<i>рисует</i> ('present')	<i>нарисует</i> ('future')
Past	<i>рисовал</i>	<i>нарисовал</i>
Future	<i>будет рисовать</i>	<i>*будет нарисовать</i>
Part.Pres.	<i>рисующий</i>	<i>*нарисующий</i>

✦ in the grammatical constructions they may appear in, cf. example (1)

- (1) a. *Иван* *нача-л* *писат-ь^I* *письм-о.*
 Ivan(NOM.SG) begin-PAST(SG.M) write-INF letter-ACC.SG
 'Ivan started writing the letter.'
- b. **Иван* *нача-л* *на-писа-ть^P* *письм-о.*
 Ivan(NOM.SG) begin-PAST(SG.M) PRV-write-INF letterACC.SG

☞ It is precisely the formal grammatical properties common to all Perfective (resp. all Imperfective) verbs that allow linguists to attribute to these categories their grammatical status, despite the notorious lack of semantic coherence.

☞ From a semantic point of view, it has proved to be more instructive to analyze aspectual categories in Russian in a non-uniform way, paying primary attention to the way inherent aspectual properties of the verbal lexemes (Aktionsart or actionality) interact with more abstract aspectual categories Perfective and Imperfective (see Авилова 1976, Гловинская 1982, Маслов 1984, Падучева 1996, 2004, Smith 1997/1991, Borik 2002).

2. Is there grammatical aspect in Lithuanian?

① The Lithuanian grammatical tradition, largely influenced by the Slavic and in particular Russian linguistics, postulates a grammatical (Valeckienė 1998: 285–287) or a 'lexical' (Dambriūnas 1959; Ambrazas (ed.) 1997: 234–237) category of Aspect (*veikslas*) with two members: Perfective (*įvykio veikslas*) and Imperfective (*eigos veikslas*).

② However, this 'category of aspect' does not have any formal grammatical ramifications: both 'Perfective' and 'Imperfective' verbs

✦ have full paradigms of synthetic and analytic forms;

✦ share major derivational capacities and syntactic features;

✦ do not allow neutralization in certain contexts, e.g. *praesens historicum*, thus in Lithuanian there is no criterion for assigning verbs to 'aspectual pairs', cf. [Вимер 2001].

☞ There is no grammatical aspect in Lithuanian even in the rather special 'Slavic' sense (cf. Mathiasen 1996, Вимер 2001, Wiemer 2002, Holvoet, Čižik 2004).

☞ What constitutes the basis of the aspectual system of Lithuanian?

3. Actionality in Lithuanian

① Theory of actionality.

That it is necessary to carefully distinguish between aspect proper and the inherent lexical content of verbs, the so called Aktionsart (actionality, eventuality type etc.), is widely acknowledged (see e.g. Маслов 1948, 1984, 1978; Smith 1997/1991; Klein 1994; Filip 1999; Bertinetto & Delfitto 2000; Tatevosov 2002).

In this paper I follow a typological approach to actionality proposed by Sergej Tatevosov (2002). It is based on the following concepts:

✦ Universal elementary actional meanings, i.e. the semantic primitives from which the actional content of verbs in particular languages are built up:

- ♣ atelic: **state** (**S**; ‘know’, ‘sit’), **process** (**P**; ‘work’, ‘run’), **multiplicative process** (**M**; ‘cough’, ‘twinkle’);
- ♣ telic: **entry-into-a-state** (**ES**; ‘fall’, ‘write a letter’), **entry-into-a-process** (**EP**; ‘start running’), **quantum** of a multiplicative process (**Q**; ‘give a cough’).

✦ Universal aspectual viewpoints, i.e. the aspectual meanings, which are necessarily present in all languages, although they need not be grammaticalized (cf. Smith 1997/1991, Klein 1994):

- ♣ progressive: the event is taking place simultaneously to the speech act, and the ‘window of attention’ of the speaker is inside the event; PROGRESSIVE is usually instantiated either by special forms (as in English) or by the general Present forms (as in Russian and Lithuanian).
- ♣ limitative: the event is completely included into the ‘window of attention’ of the speaker; LIMITATIVE is usually expressed by specialized Past Perfective or general Past tense forms.

✦ The actional characteristic of a lexeme is a pair <PROG, LIM>, where PROG is the set of actional meanings the verb has when combined with the PROGRESSIVE aspectual viewpoint, and LIM is the set of actional meanings the verb has when combined with the LIMITATIVE viewpoint.

☞ The PROG set may be empty, and both sets may contain numerous actional meanings.

✦ The actional class is a set of verbs with identical actional characteristics.

② The actional system in Lithuanian.

The actional classification is based on a sample of ca. 200 lexemes (ca. 110 roots).

The Present form was taken as the representative of the PROGRESSIVE viewpoint, and the Simple Past (Preterite, *būtamasis kartinis laikas*) form as expressing the LIMITATIVE viewpoint.

☞ The Lithuanian Preterite may be used in both ‘perfective’ and ‘imperfective’ contexts:

- (2) *Mano broli-s raš-ė laišk-us.*
 my brother-NOM.SG write-PAST.3 letter-ACC.PL
 {What did your brother do when you visited him yesterday?} ‘My brother was writing letters.’
- (3) *Berņiuk-as skait-ė knyg-ą 2 valand-as, po t-o*
 boy-NOM.SG read-PAST.3 book-ACC.SG two hour-ACC.PL after that-GEN.SG
žiūrė-jo televizori-ų ir nu-ėj-o miego-ti.
 watch-PAST.3 television-ACC.PL and PRV-go-PAST.3 sleep-INF
 {What did the boy do yesterday afternoon?} ‘The boy read a book for two hours, then watched TV, and then went to sleep.’

Table 2. Actional classes in Lithuanian.

Class	No. of lexemes	PROG	LIM	Examples
Punctual	71	—	ES	<i>mesti</i> ‘throw’, <i>parašyti</i> ‘write (to the end)’
Processual	57	P	P	<i>skristi</i> ‘fly’, <i>rašyti</i> ‘write’
Stative	26	S	S	<i>girdėti</i> ‘hear’, <i>laukti</i> ‘wait’
Strong telic	20	P	ES	<i>mirti</i> ‘die’, <i>užmigti</i> ‘fall asleep’
Multiplicative	12	M	M	<i>bučiuoti</i> ‘kiss’, <i>moti</i> ‘wave’
Delimitative-stative	5	—	S	<i>palaikyti</i> ‘hold (for some time)’
Strong multiplicative	4	M	Q	<i>nulašėti</i> ‘drip’, <i>kąsti</i> ‘bite’
Weak telic	4	P	ES,P	<i>plyšti</i> ‘tear (itr.)’, <i>padėti</i> ‘help’
Delimitative-telic	4	—	ES,P	<i>pažiūrėti</i> ‘watch (for some time)’
Punctual-ingressive	3	—	EP	<i>užvirti</i> ‘start boiling’
Weak inceptive-stative	2	S	ES,S	<i>patikti</i> ‘please’,
Delimitative-processual	2	—	P	<i>pavaikščioti</i> ‘walk (for a while)’
Strong inceptive-stative	1	S	ES	<i>suprasti</i> ‘understand’
Weak inceptive-telic	1	S	ES,P	<i>prisiminti</i> ‘remember’

☞ What is typologically unusual about the Lithuanian actional system is the distribution of lexemes among the classes rather than the system of the classes itself.

✦ Punctual and Processual verbs predominate, while genuinely Telic verbs are a minority.

✦ Verbs whose analogues in other languages are Telic, here are ‘split’ between the Processual and the Punctual classes.

✦ There are pairs of Processual and Punctual verbs with the following properties:

- ♣ the Punctual verb is morphologically derived from the Processual one via prefixation;
- ♣ the Processual verb denotes an incremental process, while the Punctual one denotes its natural endpoint.

☞ Incrementality (Krifka 1989, 1998; Filip 1999): ‘informally, an incremental predicate is a predicate which denotes events standing in a one-to-one relation with their participants’ (Tatevosov 2002: 352), cf. *to eat an apple* vs. *to push a cart*.

Table 3. Correlative Processual and Punctual verbs in Lithuanian

Processual	Punctual	Gloss
<i>dainuoti</i>	<i>sudainuoti</i>	‘sing’
<i>gerti</i>	<i>išgerti</i>	‘drink’
<i>rakinti</i>	<i>atrankinti</i>	‘unlock’
<i>griauti</i>	<i>nugriauti</i>	‘destroy’

☞ The distinction between Processual and Punctual verbs in Lithuanian is never neutralized:

- (4) *Sekretori-us kasdien per dvi valand-as pa-raš-o* || **raš-o*
 secretary-NOM.SG every.day in two(ACC.PL) hour-ACC.PL PRV-write-PRES.3 write-PRES.3
tr-is laišk-us ir iš-ei-na.
 three-ACC.PL letter-ACC.PL and LOC.PRV-go-PRES.3
 ‘Every day the secretary writes three letters in two hours and quits the office.’

On the contrary, in Russian only Imperfective verbs may figure in the habitual context:

- (5) *Секретарь кажд-ый день пиш-ет* || **на-пиш-ет*
 secretary(NOM.SG) every-NOM.SG day(NOM.SG) write-PRES.3SG PRV-write-PRES.3SG
тр-и письм-а за дв-а час-а.
 three-ACC.PL letter-ACC.PL in two-ACC.PL hour-ADNUM
 ‘= (3)’

☞ (4) and (5) clearly show that Russian underived incremental verbs are telic (even though in episodic contexts their telicity cannot be expressed), while in Lithuanian they are atelic.

☞ ‘Semantically vacuous’ prefixation in Russian really affects only the range of aspectual meanings the verb can have in episodic contexts, but not its actionality proper, while in Lithuanian it is precisely the actionality which is changed by the prefix.

③ Telic (Strong and Weak) verbs form a class which allows some sort of non-trivial characterization. It contains the following groups of verbs:

✦ underived non-incremental verbs: *mirti* ‘die’, *grįžti* ‘return’, *plyšti* ‘to tear (itr.)’

✦ verbs with lexicalized prefixes: *atidaryti* ‘open’ (*daryti* ‘do’), *pradėti* ‘begin’, *padėti* ‘help’ (*dėti* ‘put’), *prisijungti* ‘join (a community)’ (*jungtis* ‘to be joined’).

✦ some inchoative verbs: *užmigti* ‘fall asleep’ (*migti* ‘sleep’), *susirgti* ‘fall sick’ (*sirgti* ‘be sick’).

✦ prefixal verbs of motion: *parbėgti* ‘come home running’, *įeiti* ‘enter’, *atskristi* ‘come flying’.

④ The principal difference between Punctual and Telic verbs is that the latter allow the PROGRESSIVE interpretation of their Present tense while the former do not, cf. (6) and (7):

(6) a. *Gatv-ės žibint-ai už-ges-ta 7t-a valand-a ryt-o.*
 street-GEN.SG lamp-NOM.PL PRV-extinguish-PRES.3 seventh-ACC.SG hour-ACC.SG morning-GEN.SG

‘The street lights are extinguished at 7 o’clock every morning.’ (habitual)

b. **Žiūrė-k, lauž-as už-ges-ta.*
 look-IMP.2SG fire-NOM.SG PRV-extinguish-PRES.3

‘Look, the fire is dying out.’

(7) *Mokytoj-as su-galvo-ja užduot-į mokini-ams.*
 teacher-NOM.SG PRV-think-PRES.3 assignment-ACC.SG student-DAT.PL

{What is the teacher doing now?} ‘The teacher is thinking over an assignment for the students.’

☞ Native speakers not always agree on whether the PROGRESSIVE interpretation is possible or not, cf. (8) and (9):

(8) *Berنيuk-as (pri-)riš-a šun-į prie medži-o.*
 boy-NOM.SG (PRV-)bind-PRES.3 dog-ACC.SG at tree-GEN.SG

{What is the boy doing?} ‘The boy is binding the dog to the tree.’

(9) *Berنيuk-as (pri-)ei-na prie savo tėv-o.*
 boy-NOM.SG PRV-go-PRES.3 at his father-GEN.SG

{I see that} ‘The boy is approaching his father.’

4. Aspectual derivation in Lithuanian

Lithuanian possesses an extraordinary rich system of more or less productive derivational processes affecting the actionality of the verb, see. Ambrazas (ed.) 1997: 221–226. The derivational potential of a verb is largely motivated and constrained by its actionality.

✦ Processual verbs:

- ♣ prefixal ‘telicization’ creating Punctual verbs; the choice of the prefix is usually lexicalized; the derivation is productive only with incremental verbs;
- ♣ ingressive (usually prefixation of *už-* or *su-*), creating Punctual-ingressive or Telic verbs; the derivation is productive with non-incremental verbs;
- ♣ delimitative (*pa-*prefixation), creates Delimitative-processual verbs from non-incremental verbs, and Delimitative-telic from the incremental ones.

✦ Multiplicative verbs:

- ♣ semelfactive derivation, creates Punctual verbs; productive suffixation (-*telė-*, -*terė-*), less productive prefixation.

✦ Stative verbs:

- ♣ inceptive (usually prefixation of *už-*), creates Punctual or Telic verbs;
- ♣ delimitative (usually prefixation of *pa-*), creates Delimitative-stative verbs.

✦ Punctual and Telic verbs:

- ♣ iterative, creates Processual verbs; productive suffixation of -*inė-*, other suffixes are less productive.

☞ Iterative derivatives from Telic verbs often assume PROGRESSIVE meaning, both in the Preterite and in the Present tense:

- (10) a. *Kai įė-ja-u, viršinink-as pa-si-raš-inė-jo popieri-us.*
 when LOC.PRV-go-PAST-1SG director-NOM.SG PRV-REFL-write-ITER-PAST.3 paper-ACC.PL
 ‘When I came in, the director was signing the papers.’
- b. *Kai aš grįž-a-u, sveči-ai dar iš-ei-dinė-jo.*
 when I.NOM return-PAST-1SG guest-NOM.PL already LOC.PRV-go-ITER-PAST.3
 ‘When I came back, the guest were already leaving.’

In (10a,b) the non-iterative forms (*pasirašė*, *išėjo*) cannot be used. In the Present tense they are allowed, but they are gradually ousted by the iterative forms, cf. (11), which leads to the shrinking of the telic classes.

- (11) *K-a dabar dar-o direktori-us? –*
 what-ACC.SG now do-PRES.3 director-NOM.SG
J-is pa-si-raš-inė-ja || ?pa-si-raš-o popier-ius.
 he-NOM.SG PRV-REFL-write-ITER-PRES.3 PRV-REFL-write-PRES.3 paper-ACC.PL
 ‘What is the director doing now? – He is signing the papers.’

This process has not gone too far, however; Google search shows that iterative forms both in the Present and in the Past tense are quite rare, cf. Table 4 for some figures.

Table 4. Google results for some iterative and non-iterative forms

Wordform	Gloss	Tense	No. of occurrences
<i>pasirašo</i>	‘sign’	Present	268.000
<i>pasirašinėja</i>		Present	793
<i>pasirašė</i>		Past	337.000
<i>pasirašinėjo</i>		Past	516
<i>išeina</i>	‘go out’	Present	218.000
<i>išeidinėja</i>		Present	28
<i>išėjo</i>		Past	227.000
<i>išeidinėjo</i>		Past	285

Although this figures are very preliminary, it is clear that the distribution of simple and iterative forms is a matter of idiosyncratic behavior of individual lexemes. Anyway, this matter requires further study.

Summary

The data surveyed above allows to draw the following conclusions:

- ❶ Lithuanian does not have a grammaticalized aspectual category, neither in a ‘European’ nor in a ‘Slavic’ sense of the term.

- ② The ‘aspect-like’ behaviour of Lithuanian tense forms results from the universal associations between actional meanings and (largely discourse-based) viewpoint distinctions (cf. Bohnemeyer, Swift 2005).
- ③ The actional system of Lithuanian has some typologically non-trivial features, e.g. the predominance of correlative processual and punctual verbs, which links it with the Slavic systems, but it differs from the latter in that these distinctions are less grammaticalized and are never neutralized, and that in Lithuanian there is a large and consistent class of telic verbs, as well as a number of ‘initio-transformative’ verbs (in the sense of Johansson 2000).
- ④ Lithuanian possesses a rich and productive system of aspectual derivations, which change the actionality of the verb and serve as the primary realization of different aspectual meanings which in other languages are realized by different paradigmatic forms of a single lexeme.

Abbreviations

ACC — accusative, ADNUM — adnumerative, DAT — dative, GEN — genitive, IMP — imperative, INF — infinitive, INS — instrumental, ITER — iterative, LOC — locative, M — masculine, NEG — negative, NOM — nominative, PART — participle, PL — plural, PRES — present, PRV — preverb, PAST — preterite, REFL — reflexive, SG — singular

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