On the place of Lithuanian in the typology of aspectual systems

Peter Arkadiev
Institute of Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences / Russian State University for the Humanities / Sholokhov Moscow State University for the Humanities, peterarkadiev@yandex.ru
Preliminaries

Aspect is a grammatical system expressing the “different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation” (Comrie 1976: 3).
Preliminaries

Languages differ as to which (if at all) aspectual meanings are grammaticalised, which of them form oppositions and which are grouped together, and how they are expressed.

Preliminaries

“Two-component” theory of aspect:

**Viewpoint** aspect: particular ways in which the speaker construes the situation and relates it to other situations in the discourse.

vs.

**Actionality**: partly lexically encoded and partly syntactically determined linguistic categorisation of situations.

Preliminaries

Actionality: categorisation of situations as static vs. dynamic, durative vs. punctual, telic vs. atelic etc.

Viewpoint aspect: roughly, construal of situations as **perfective** (bounded, included into the reference time) vs. **imperfective** (unbounded, overlapping with the reference time).
### Preliminaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Perfective</th>
<th>Imperfective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Telic</strong></td>
<td><em>John read the book</em></td>
<td><em>John was reading the book</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Иван прочитал книгу</em></td>
<td><em>Иван читал книгу</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Jonas perskaitė knygą</em></td>
<td><em>Jonas skaitė knygą</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Atelic</strong></td>
<td><em>John slept</em></td>
<td><em>John was sleeping</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Иван поспал</em></td>
<td><em>Иван спал</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Jonas pamiegojo</em></td>
<td><em>Jonas miegojo</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aspect in Lithuanian

Since the introduction of the term *veikslas* by Jablonskis (1922) it has been assumed that most Lithuanian verbs may be characterised as “imperfective” (*eigos veikslas*) or “perfective” (*įvykio veikslas*), though the status of this opposition has been subject to considerable debate (Dambriūnas 1960, Galnaitytė 1962, 1963, 1978, Ambrazas 1999, Wiemer 2001, Arkadiev 2009, 2011, 2012).
Aspect in Lithuanian

The opposition of “aspects” in Lithuanian is lexical-sematic rather than grammatical:

• The “aspect” of a verb can only be determined on the basis of the interpretations of its tense forms, since there are no grammatical (morphosynytactic) features robustly associated with each of the “aspects”.
Aspect in Lithuanian

• “Perfectivisation” by means of verbal prefixes (preverbs) and especially “imperfectivisation” with the suffix -inė- are not fully productive and regular, being in various ways restricted by the lexical semantics of individual verbs, as well as by stylistic considerations and codified norm.
Aspect in Lithuanian

• “Neutralisation” of aspects attested in many contexts in the East Slavic languages and witnessing the obligatory grammatical nature of aspectual opposition, is not found in Lithuanian.

• The class of “biaspectual” (dviveiksliniai) verbs showing behaviour characteristic of both “aspects” is large and comprises many frequent lexemes.
Aspect in Lithuanian

Nevertheless, the differences between Lithuanian and Russian (and other Slavic languages) in the domain of aspect are those of degree rather than of kind.

Even if the aspectual opposition in Lithuanian is not grammatical in the narrow sense of this word, it exists and should be compared with its counterparts in other languages.
Together with Slavic and a number of other languages of Eastern Europe (Latvian, Hungarian, Yiddish, Ossetic, Georgian), Lithuanian shows a type of aspectual system which is called **bounder-based perfectives** by Bybee & Dahl (1989), Bybee et al. (1994), as opposed to **anterior-based perfectives**.
## Typology (1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bounder-based perfectives</th>
<th>anterior-based perfectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>go back to combinations of verbs with adverbial elements</td>
<td>go back to resultative-perfect constructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tend to be derivational</td>
<td>tend to be inflectional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>show lexical idiosyncrasies and often add meanings other than</td>
<td>tend to be semantically compositional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perfective</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>emphasize completion of the event and not just temporal</td>
<td>express temporal boundedness of an event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boundedness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bounder-based perfectives themselves constitute a subtype of aspectual systems which can be called **derivational** (Dahl 1985) or **verb-classifying** (Plungian 2011).

(see Arkadiev 2014, 2015, Arkadiev & Shluinsky 2015)
Typology (1)

Derivational aspectual systems:

• aspectual interpretation is an inherent property of the verbal lexeme;

• in order to apply a different viewpoint to the same situation, a new verb has to be derived by morphological means.
Typology (1)

- **perfectivisation**
  
  \[ \text{VIPF} \rightarrow \text{VPFV} \]

  \[
  \text{skaityti} \ 'read' \rightarrow \text{perskaityti} \ 'read through'
  \]

- **imperfectivisation**
  
  \[ \text{VPFV} \rightarrow \text{VIPF} \]

  \[
  \text{įrodymti} \ 'prove' \rightarrow \text{įrodinėti} \ 'argue'
  \]
Typology (1)

• Being a separate lexeme, an aspectual derivate displays a full verbal paradigm, and not just some particular form or forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>‘write (ipf)’</th>
<th>‘write (pfv)’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>rašo</td>
<td>parašo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preterite</td>
<td>rašė</td>
<td>parašė</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habitual Past</td>
<td>rašydavo</td>
<td>parašydavo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>rašys</td>
<td>parašys</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Typology (1)

• The absence of a particular derivational marker does not necessarily signal a particular aspectual meaning:

vesti ‘lead’ (ipf)

mesti ‘throw’ (pfv)
Typology (1)

Derivational aspectual systems are opposed to inflectional ones where verbal lexemes by themselves are aspectually neutral and combine with grammatical markers indicating particular aspectual meanings.
Typology (1)

Spanish *escribir* ‘write’

*San Juan escribió el Apocalipsis.*

‘Saint John wrote (aorist, PST:PFV) the Apocalypse.’

*Mientras San Juan escribía el Apocalipsis...*

‘When Saint John was writing (imperfect, PST:IPFV) the Apocalypse...’
Lithuanian in typology (1)

• Lithuanian allows the use of the Present tense of “perfective” verbs in habitual and narrative contexts (praesens historicum).

*Kas vakarą išgeria butelį konjako.* (LKT)
‘Every evening he drinks a bottle of brandy.’
Lithuanian in typology (1)

• By this feature Lithuanian differs from Russian and Polish, but is similar to Czech and Slovene:

Cz: **Vypije**(PFV) jednu skleničku vodky denně.

Pol: Codziennie **wypija**(IPF) / *wypije**(PFV) kieliszek wódki.

‘He drinks a glass of vodka every day.’

The same in Latvian, Yiddish and Hungarian.
Lithuanian in typology (1)

- Lithuanian differs from most Slavic languages in that it allows “perfective” infinitives to co-occur with phasal verbs (Holvoet 2014):

  Lith: Vaikas pradeda *užmigti*.
  Pol: Dziecko zaczyna *zasypać(IPF) / *zasnąć(PFV).*
  
  ‘The child is beginning to fall asleep.’
Lithuanian in typology (1)

- However, (standard) Slavic languages turn out to be unique in this ban on perfective infinitives with phasal verbs: Latvian, Yiddish, Hungarian and Kartvelian languages do not have this restriction, just as Lithuanian.
Lithuanian in typology (1)

- Like Slavic languages and Ossetic, but unlike Latvian, Hungarian, Yiddish and Kartvelian languages, Lithuanian has morphological secondary imperfectivisation:

  \( \text{skaiti} \text{tyti} \) ‘read’ →
  \( \text{perskaiti} \text{tyti} \) ‘read through’ →
  \( \text{perskaitinëti} \) ‘read through repeatedly’
Lithuanian in typology (1)

Secondary imperfectivisation in Lithuanian is lexically restricted and not very productive, but Slavic languages also differ widely in the productivity of this process (Petruxina 2000).

The productivity, frequency and functions of the Lithuanian -ine-formations await an unbiased empirical investigation.
Lithuanian in typology (1)

- Unlike Slavic languages, Lithuanian allows (with a couple of strongly lexicalised exceptions) only one aspectual prefix per verb, thus lacking secondary perfectivisation.
- In this respect Lithuanian patterns with most other languages with prefixal perfectivisation.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>Lithuanian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>открыть ‘open (pfv)’ →</td>
<td>atidaryti →</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>открывать ‘open (ipf)’ →</td>
<td>atidarinėti –l→</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>пооткрывать ‘open a lot (pfv)’</td>
<td>*paatidarinėti</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lithuanian in typology (1)

- Lithuanian has an inflectional future tense formed from all verbs regardless of “aspect” and lacks the futurate uses of the “perfective” present.
- In this respect it is different from the North Slavic and Kartvelian languages but patterns with both South Slavic languages and Latvian and Ossetic.
Lithuanian in typology (1)

Arkadiev 2014, 2015: a multifactorial areal-typological approach to prefixal perfectivisation taking into account formal and functional properties of preverbs, prefixal verbs, and verbal systems.
Lithuanian in typology (1)
Lithuanian in typology (1)

- Lithuanian and Latvian stand apart from the fairly tight Slavic cluster, being close both to the Slavic “outsider” Colloquial Upper Sorbian, where the aspectual opposition has degrammaticalised under German influence (Breu 2000, 2012), and to Ossetic, which forms part of the Caucasian cluster of prefixal perfectivisation.
Bounder-based perfectives are not necessarily prefixal.

In many languages morphemes expressing spatial and aspectual modifications of verbal semantics are suffixal.
Typology (2)

**Margi** (Chadic, Nigeria, Hoffmann 1963)

$gù$ ‘seek, look for (ipf)’ →

$gú-bá$ ‘find out (pfv)’

**Aymara** (Aymaran, Bolivia, Haude 2003)

$sawu-ña$ ‘weave (ipf)’ →

$saw-su-ña$ ‘finish weaving (pfv)’
Typology (2)
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- Derivational aspectual systems are not necessarily predominantly perfectivising, like Slavic and Baltic, but can be imperfectivising as well.
  (Arkadiev & Shluinsky 2015)
Typology (2)

**Enets** (Samoyedic, Taymyr, Andrey Shluinsky’s field materials)

*piri-*ʔ ‘they cooked (pfv)’ →
*piri-goɔ* ‘s/he is cooking (ipf)’

**Mapuche** (Araucanian, Chile, Smeets 2007)

*lüq-*üy ‘it became white (pfv)’ →
*lüq-*küle-y ‘it is white (ipf)’
Lithuanian in typology (2)
Lithuanian in typology (2)

In the broader typology of derivational aspectual systems currently being developed (see Arkadiev & Shluinsky 2015), Lithuanian occupies a position close to Slavic and, notably, remote from Latvian.
Lithuanian in typology (2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lithuanian</th>
<th>Latvian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>both prefixal and suffixal perfectivisation</td>
<td>only prefixal perfectivisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suffixal imperfectivisation, including secondary</td>
<td>no morphological imperfectivisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lithuanian in typology (2)

• Are Lithuanian and Latvian so different?
• Probably not, but this depends on the typological parameters chosen, which, in turn, depend on the overall range of languages and phenomena surveyed.
Conclusions

Lithuanian (and Latvian) data are indispensable for the adequate typology of aspectual systems:

• for the understanding of possible correlations between different relevant parameters;
• from an areal and diachronic perspective.
Conclusions

• Typological approach can help refine the description of the Lithuanian aspectual system:
  • more adequate characterisation of language-particular phenomena;
  • formulation of questions in need of in-depth empirical studies.
References


References


References


Ačiū už dėmesį!
Thank you for your attention!