# THE BALTIC VIEW ON VERBAL ASPECT

## Darbības vārda veids baltu valodu skatījumā

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# ABSTRACT

**Keywords:**
*Baltic,
Latvian,
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It is argued that, contrary to what is claimed in a series of relatively recent studies, verbal aspect has acquired the status of a grammatical feature in Baltic, and the notion of grammatical aspect is relevant to the description of the Baltic languages. As is widely recognized, aspect is less grammaticalized in Baltic than in Slavonic, but the difference is one of a degree rather than of essence, as in both language branches grammatical aspect arises from the grammaticalization of lexical aspect classes.

# KOPSAVILKUMS

**Atslēgvārdi:**
*baltu valodas,
latviešu valoda,
lietuviešu valoda,
darbības vārda veids,
aspektuālās klases,
teliskums,
prefiksācija,
ierobežotība,
gramatikalizācija*

Rakstā tiek izvirzīta tēze, ka darbības vārda veids baltu valodās ir ieguvis gramatiskās kategorijas statusu un aspekta jēdziens ir nozīmīgs baltu valodu gramatiskajam aprakstam. Kā tiek plaši atzīts, baltu valodās darbības vārda veids nav tik tālu gramatizējies kā slāvu valodās, bet tā drīzāk ir pakāpes, nevis būtības atšķirība. Abos valodu atzaros gramatiskais veids ir leksiskā aspekta gramatizēšanās rezultāts.

## 1. Introduction

The literature on verbal aspect is vast, and so is the domain of research; my aim in this paper is to highlight a small number of issues relevant, in my view, to a correct understanding of the status of verbal aspect in Baltic as well as of the place of Baltic in the cross-linguistic study of verbal aspect. I will take issue with the claim that Baltic, unlike Slavonic, has no verbal aspect as a grammatical category. I accept, however, that in Baltic aspect is less grammaticalized than in Slavonic. In order for the degree of grammaticalization observed in Slavonic to be reached, many processes of generalization must occur, resulting in a pervasive influence of aspect on the distributional properties of verbs and the structure of their paradigm. Here I will not be concerned with most aspects of this process of grammaticalization. I will focus instead on the crucial juncture at which aspect becomes grammatical, arguing against those who claim aspect has not crossed the threshold of grammaticality in Baltic.

## 2. Historical background

The notion of verbal aspect was introduced into linguistic discourse in the 19th century as a result of the achievements of Slavonic scholarship. Aspect appeared to be, at that stage, an exotic category of the Slavonic languages. The available descriptions of the Slavonic aspect systems provided a template for the description of aspect in Baltic. In their grammars, August Schleicher (1856, 138–139) and August Bielenstein (1864, 199–200) could simply appeal to their readers' basic familiarity with Slavonic, as these readers would often be comparative Indo-European scholars. Slavonic and, in course of time, Baltic scholars were careful to point out the considerable differences between the aspect systems of Baltic and Slavonic, but they still invoked the notion of aspect for both branches (Ul'janov, 1891–1895; Èndzelin, 1905/1971). The view that Slavonic and Baltic share a system of aspectual specialization of verbal forms driven mainly by the perfectivizing function of verbal prefixes, though with differences as to what we would now characterize as the degree of grammaticalization, could therefore be regarded as the *opinio recepta* serving as a background for much of the more recent discussions on aspect in Baltic. The idea that there is a difference of

degree rather than of essence pervades all early work on Baltic and Slavonic aspect. A state-of-the art report covering this period is offered in Jan Safarewicz (1938/1974a); cf. also Leonardas Dambriūnas (1959) and Elzė Galnaitytė (1962).

What we now call degrees of grammaticalization is probably not a controversial notion, but there tend to be differences of opinion when it comes to pinpointing the moment at which a category becomes grammatical. In recent times a number of researchers have voiced the view that Slavonic aspect has crossed the threshold of grammaticality whereas Baltic aspect has not. We could mention, e.g., Terje Mathiassen (1996), Markus Kränzle (1997), Lea Sawicki (2000), Eiko Sakurai (2015) and others; the most elaborate statement of this view can be found in Peter Arkadiev (2011). The alternative view, advocated in this paper, is that aspect has crossed the crucial threshold in both Slavonic and Baltic.

For all of the authors mentioned here the Slavonic languages are still a natural point of reference for the study of aspect in Baltic even though the weight of Slavonic in aspectological studies in general has decreased. Typological work by Bernard Comrie (1976), Östen Dahl (1985) and others has shown that aspect is a typologically widespread category, and that Slavonic aspect, far from being a paradigm example, is actually a structurally rare subtype of it. As Dahl (1985, 89) points out, the aspects of the Slavonic (and, we could add, Baltic) verb are "grammaticalized lexical classes" that function somewhat differently from the aspecto-temporal systems of, say, Romance, which have aspectually marked tense forms. Joan Bybee & Dahl (1989, 85ff) introduce the notion of "bounder-based aspect" to refer to the aspect systems of Slavonic, Baltic, Hungarian, Georgian and a number of other languages using spatial prefixes, adverbs etc. to introduce boundedness, as a basis for aspectual oppositions, into verbal semantics. These languages constitute a not quite contiguous area extending from Central Europe to the Causasus (this areal phenomenon has recently been investigated in greater detail, see Arkadiev, 2014).

Authors writing on aspect in Baltic are, of course, keenly aware of the looming presence of Slavonic in the background of their domain of study, but they differ in how they evaluate this situation. While some

suggest that the structural similarity of aspectual marking in Baltic and Slavic has led to an overestimation of the relevance of aspect to Baltic grammar, others (e.g., Hauzenberga-Šturma, 1979) have pointed out that by mechanically carrying over criteria of (im)perfectivity from Slavonic aspectology to Baltic one risks treating idiosyncratic features of Slavonic aspect as universal principles of aspectuality. I basically concur with the latter view. One could cite the example of phasal verbs ('begin', 'continue', 'stop'), which, in Slavonic, take only imperfective complements; many authors' expectation has been that Baltic should conform to this as well, but in fact the Slavonic restriction of phasal-verb complements to imperfectivity is not a universal tendency (cf. Noonan, 2007, 140).

## 3. Boundedness and aspect

The creation of an aspectual opposition involves the introduction of boundedness, which, in aspecto-temporal systems, is done by a grammatical marker (an aspectually specialized tense form) while in bounder-based systems it is done by a spatial prefix or adverb. The introduction of this bounder leads, through a process of grammaticalization, to the rise of perfective forms. Both in Slavonic and in Baltic, bounders can be of two types: one could be called culminational, referring to a process reaching the inherent final boundary of a telic process, as in Lithuanian *per-skaityti knygą*, Latvian *iz-lasīt grāmatu* 'read a/the book through'; the other type could be called delimitative, referring to an arbitrarily singled-out quantum of a state or activity, as in Lithuanian *pa-sėdėti ant suoliuko*, Latvian *pa-sēdēt uz soliņa* 'spend some times sitting on a bench'. In Slavonic this difference has been known since Sigurd Agrell (1908) as part of a system of Aktionsarten of the verb. Both types of bounders can often occur with the same verbal root, as many events are susceptible of both a telic (accomplishment) and an atelic (activity) construal, hence *iz-lasīt grāmatu* 'read a book through' (accomplishment) vs *pa-lasīt grāmatu* 'spend some time reading a book' (activity). In the case of an atelic (state and activity) construal delimitative bounding is the only path leading to grammatical perfectivity. In aspecto-temporal systems the effect of the use of a perfective form is, in the case of atelic predicates, to single out an arbitrary temporal quantum of a state or activity, as in French *il fut président de la République* 'he was (for a

certain time) president of the Republic', where the perfective past tense imposes temporal boundaries that are not given in the lexical meaning of the verb. In bounder-based systems, this effect must be achieved by a bounding prefix; the tradition in Slavonic scholarship characterizing the relevant verbs as a special delimitative Aktionsart to be set apart from some more fundamental feature of perfectivity is therefore misleading. Agrell viewed the prefixes representing the different Aktionsarten as encoding aspect *plus* Aktionsart; in fact, delimitative *po-* encodes just perfective aspect – the only form of perfectivity available for the given aspectual class (cf. Holvoet, 1991). Both types of bounding (culminational and delimitative) must be present for a system of 'viewpoint aspect' (Smith, 1991) to develop.

## 4. Two kinds of telicity

It is sometimes claimed in the literature that the prefixes of the Baltic verb introduce not perfectivity but telicity. This claim is voiced in Arkadiev (2011, 88) and repeated in Sakurai (2015, 386). The claim is not clearly defined as 'telic' has several meanings in the literature.

As Dahl (1981) shows, the term 'telic' has two different uses. According to some authors, a verb is telic when it denotes a process with an inherent final boundary beyond which it cannot be continued, as *I am reading this book*. The fact that the book has a final page introduces boundedness but not every use of a verb of this type is actually bounded: in 'progressive' uses the reaching of the final boundary is not really part of the meaning of the verbal expression, as all that is denoted is the inclusion of reference time in the process leading up to the reaching of the boundary. Other authors, on the other hand, identify telicity with boundedness: the reaching of the boundary must be part of the meaning of the verbal form, so that *I am reading this book* is atelic on this terminological convention.

In a controversy that is purely terminological neither of the sides is either right or wrong, but it is important to be aware which meaning of the term 'telic' is being invoked. Arkadiev (2011) invokes the latter of the two senses mentioned above, which means that in his view *skaitė knygą* is always atelic, and *perskaitė knygą* is always telic, by which he means that *skaitė*

*knygą* is always unbounded, while *perskaitė knygą* is always bounded. Sakurai (2015) also invokes the notion of telicity in characterizing the opposition of simple and prefixed verbs in Lithuanian, which suggests the terms are similarly understood. When understood as boundedness, telicity is of course an important component of perfectivity, and thus of the whole aspectual opposition. If, however, the boundary is expected to be comprised in the meaning of the verbal form rather than implied by the nature of the process referred to, it is no longer clear how the notion of telicity could be invoked to explain the different aspectual behaviour of, say, *sit on a bench*, *live in Paris*, *like porridge* on the one hand and *read a book*, *make a chair*, *cross the bridge* on the other. It is not clear that the difference between telicity and boundedness is relevant to all languages, but it is probably the case that an understanding of telicity as synonymous with boundedness is not appropriate for languages where aspect is based on lexical aspectual classes. A test frequently used to set apart telic and non-telic verbs, going back to Zeno Vendler (1957, 145) and David R. Dowty (1979, 56ff) even though the term 'telic' is not used in these works, consists in using a verb form with time adverbials of the types *for an hour* and *in an hour*. One would expect this test to set apart non-prefixed and prefixed verbs in Baltic if the opposition was one of telicity, but actually *Mary read a book for an hour* and *Mary read a book in an hour* can both be rendered by perfective (or, at least, prefixed) verbs:

(1)   Latvian (constructed)
*Marija      kādu        stundu       pa-lasīja      grāmatu.*
Mary.NOM  some.ACC.SG  hour.ACC.SG  PFV-read.PST.3  book.ACC.SG
'Mary read a book for an hour.'

(2)   *Marija      kādā        stundā       iz-lasīja      grāmatu.*
Mary.NOM  some.ACC.SG  hour.ACC.SG  PFV-read.PST.3  book.ACC.SG
'Mary read the book through in about an hour.'

There is, then, an obvious advantage in calling the verb atelic in (1) and telic in (2). Describing Baltic and Slavonic verbal prefixes as telicizing, and the aspectual opposition as based on a distinction in telicity, therefore deserves no recommendation. There should be a way of saying that the bounded verb in (1) is atelic while many simple (imperfective) verbs are telic in the sense of implying a natural boundary.

# 5. The grammaticalization of lexical aspect

When aspect starts out as aspectually profiled lexical classes, imperfective and perfective forms are, in the formative stage of the aspect system, initially different lexemes. It is only when the aspectual system is already established that the formal means originally opposing lexical classes become grammatical markers. Not only Lithuanian *skaityti knygą* vs *perskaityti knygą* and Latvian *lasīt grāmatu* vs *izlasīt grāmatu*, but also Polish *czytać książkę* vs *przeczytać książkę* must originally have been pairs of lexemes referring to different events. At what point and in what way does this situation change? Arkadiev (2011, 88, passim) proposes an account characterizing simple and prefixed verbal forms as different subevents within the complex situation referred to by the lexeme pair, and argues that in Slavonic (actually Russian) the opposition between these subevents is often neutralized while in Baltic it never is. As far as the alleged differences in neutralization are concerned Arkadiev's claims are fallacious, as argued in Axel Holvoet, Anna Daugavet & Vaiva Žeimantienė (2021), but in any case this is irrelevant to the matter at hand.

There are indeed contexts in which the opposition between agency leading to a change of state and the change of state itself is retained. This may be observed in the negated imperative. For Slavonic the mechanism underlying the opposition of imperfective and perfective negated imperatives has been explained by Andrej Bogusławski (1985). Though the difference is usually formulated in terms of different speech acts – prohibitions as against warnings – it is actional in origin. While the negated imperfective imperative is an appeal to refrain from a type of agency leading to a certain change of state, the perfective negated imperative is an appeal to avoid a change of state, without the assumption that this change of state could be the outcome of conscious agency on the part of the addressee.

(3) Lithuanian (constructed)

| *Ne-trauk* | *kištuko* | *iš* | *lizdo.* |
|---|---|---|---|
| NEG-pull.IMP.2SG | plug.GEN.SG | from | socket.GEN.SG |

'Don't pull the plug from the socket.'

(4) *Ne-iš-trauk*      *kištuko*     *iš*      *lizdo.*
     NEG-PFV-pull.IMP.2SG   plug.GEN.SG   from      socket.GEN.SG
     'Don't pull the plug from the socket (by accident).'

The example of the negated imperative shows that the difference between simple and prefixed verb can be one between agency towards a change of state and the change of state itself. It might be the case that the two are kept apart in the imperative because aspect has been constructionalized here in terms of speech-act distinctions. In the temporal domain the use of aspect is regulated basically by implicatures. When a change of state normally produced as a result of a certain agency is said to have been achieved, the implicature will be that the agency was applied, though this can be defeated by adding an adverbial like Lith. *netyčia*, Latv. *nejauši* 'inadvertently, accidentally':

(5) Lithuanian (constructed)

*Kažkas*        *netyčia*      *iš-traukė*      *kištuką*
someone.NOM    inadvertently    PFV-pull.PST.3    plug.ACC.SG
*iš*     *lizdo.*
from    socket.GEN.SG
'Somebody pulled the plug from the socket by accident.'

Now suppose a speaker uses the imperfective form in order to state the fact that agency was applied and the change of state was not accidental:

(6) Lithuanian (constructed)

*Kažkas*        *traukė*     *kištuką*     *iš*     *lizdo.*
someone.NOM    pull.PST.3    plug.ACC.SG   from    socket.GEN.SG
'Somebody pulled the plug from the socket.'

When uttered in isolation, this sentence carries a strong implicature to the effect that the desired result was not achieved, the reason being that if the change of state was achieved, the Gricean maxim of quantity would (as noted already by Dahl, 1974) compel the speaker to use the perfective form, which represents the stronger claim. The implicature is absent, however, if there is another motive for using the imperfective form, viz., the inclusion of reference time in event time. This requires a narrative context, and it is a matter of viewpoint aspect. We could illustrate this with (7):

(7) Lithuanian (constructed)

> *X jau trauk*ė *kištuk*ą *iš lizdo...*
> X already pull.PST.3 plug.ACC.SG from socket.GEN.SG
> 'X was already pulling the plug from the socket...'

These examples show that speakers are able to choose between simple (lexically imperfective) and prefixed (lexically perfective) verbs not so much in terms of what phase of a process they want to refer to as in terms of perspective. The standard implicatures associated with aspectually marked verb forms probably facilitate the development of actionality-based, lexical aspect into grammatical aspect.

This is not everything, of course. An aspect system based on bounders can still be lexical and yet be pressed into service as a means of bringing out narrative perspective. For Lithuanian, Sawicki (2010) looks into the narrative functions of preverbation without actually assuming grammatical aspect. Aspectual forms have their default perspective, a fact captured by Dambriūnas' intuition (shared by most native speakers of Lithuanian) that a preterite like *atėjo* is exclusively perfective (Dambriūnas, 1959, 254). But verbs with a default perfective perspective can often be coerced into imperfective use, e.g., Lithuanian *ateina* can be used in progressive sense:

(8) Lithuanian

> *[Tai gal geriau atnešiu kav*ą*, kai j*ū*s*ų *sve*č*ias atvyks?]*
> *Jis jau at-eina, – parodžiau ranka* į
> 3.NOM.SG.M already PFX-come.PRS.3 point.PST.1SG hand.INS.SG at
> *kit*ą *aikšt*ė*s pus*ę*.*
> other.ACC.SG square.GEN.SG end.ACC.SG
> '[Then perhaps I should bring your coffee when your guest arrives?] "There he's coming already", I pointed with my hand at the other end of the square.'[1]

Aspect becomes grammaticalized at the stage where this coercion is no longer allowed. In Baltic this is the case with many prefixed verbs whose prefixes do not contribute to lexical meaning:

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[1]     http://laiskailietuviams.lt/index.php/1951m-7-liepos/224-jis-buvo-geriausias-tevas (accessed 04.07.2022).

(9)  Lithuanian (constructed)

*Kaip tik*      *su-organizuojame*      *konferenciją.*
right_now    PFV-organize.PRS.1PL    conference.ACC.SG
'We are organizing a conference right now.'

(10) *\*Kaip tik*      *pa-skaitau*      *laikraštį.*
right_now    PFV-read.PRS.1SG    newspaper.ACC.SG
'I'm reading the newspaper right now.'

The best way of explaining why the coercion into progressive use observed elsewhere is impossible here is to assume that the verbs in question have acquired a grammatical feature of perfectivity. Even in the case of perfective verbs not allowing this coercion it has been argued that the ban on progressive use does not prove grammaticalization as it might result from lexical meaning, e.g., terminative Aktionsart (Sawicki, 2000, 141). A way of making this notion of terminative Aktionsart more precisely defined would be to resort to Arkadiev's notion of 'subevent', but, as argued above, this notion does not afford a convincing explanation of the functioning of prefixed and simple verbs with regard to aspect. Explaining why *ateina* can be coerced into progressive use while *suorganizuoja* cannot would probably involve recognizing that the subevent account no longer applies to *suorganizuoti*. Moreover, the subevent account does not apply to delimitative (atelic) perfectives like *paskaityti* in (10) anyway.

The grammatical nature of the ban on progressive use of part of the prefixed verbs entitles us to call them perfective. The viewpoint differences already inherent in the distinctions between lexical aspectual classes acquire, at this stage, grammatical status. This, in turn, entitles us to characterize prefixed verbal forms allowing progressive use (like Lithuanian *palaikyti* 'support' Latvian *izaicināt* 'challenge' and the like) as bi-aspectual. The restriction of unequivocal aspectual differentiation to a relatively small part of the lexicon does not detract form its grammaticality, though it does point to a relatively low degree of grammaticalization when compared to Slavonic. The appearance of the grammatical feature of perfectivity, precluding the coercion of a verb into imperfective (more specifically progressive) use, entails the availability of an alternative expression that can be used in imperfective (progressive) function. I will briefly discuss this in section 6.

## 6. Generalization throughout the lexicon

The verb *su-organizuoti* in (9) has an exact counterpart in the simplex verb *organizuoti*. Here *su-* is a typical example of a so-called *préverbe vide* (a term apparently introduced for Slavonic by Vey, 1952), and one suspects the only reason why it was added was to provide a perfective counterpart to the simplex verb at a stage where the aspectual opposition was already established.

But perfectivization also occurred in verbs whose prefix was not 'empty'. A possible way to provide an imperfective counterpart for a perfective verb with a non-empty prefix is to drop the prefix in spite of its semantic load, thus enriching the simplex with an additional meaning conveyed by the prefix; this has been called 'deprefixation' (Schuyt, 1990, 313, with literature), and it is particularly frequent in Lithuanian. The wide polysemy of Lithuanian *leisti* 'launch (projectiles)', 'publish (books)', 'spend (money)', 'spend (time)' etc. (all this in addition to the basic meaning 'let, allow') suggests that it has at least part of its respective meanings from the corresponding prefixal verbs *pa-leisti*, *iš-leisti*, *pra-leisti* etc.

Deprefixation is less characteristic of Latvian because this language has developed a set of 'postverbs' forming a system of correspondences with perfectivizing prefixes (the term 'postverb' is taken from Lithuanian linguistics, cf. Mikulskas, 2003). This can be illustrated with Latvian *nākt iekšā* 'enter, come in' (IPFV) alongside *ie-nākt* 'come in' (PFV). Basically spatial postverbs of this type, like spatial prefixes, are 'bounders' whose natural tendency would be to develop into a perfectivizing device; this is what has actually occurred in the case of Estonian verbal particles (Viitso, 2003, 105). But as prefixes were singled out for perfectivization in Latvian, the postverbs remained aspectually neutral (they combine with both perfective and imperfective verbs) and their combinations with simplex verbs could yield aspect pairs of the type *ienākt* : *nākt iekšā*. The aspect pairs thus arising basically remained within the domain of spatial relations, and substitution of a postverb for a prefix never developed into a regular means to derive imperfective verbs from just any perfective prefixed verb. The 'spatial' domain, however, extends to a certain number of cases where the prefix is not associated with (caused) motion but still somehow interpreted as spatial. Of course, the original

meanings of prefixes underlying their more abstract meanings are always spatial, and where the line of division will be drawn does not seem to be predictable. So, for instance, the prefix *iz-* is treated as spatial when it has the meaning of disintegration or annihilation, as in PFV. *iz-jukt* 'break down' vs IPFV. *jukt ārā*, PFV. *iz-putēt* 'go bankrupt' vs IPFV. *putēt ārā* etc. An interesting fact about aspect pairs based on the correspondence between prefix and postverb is that they occur even in cases where the prefix appears to be a *préverbe vide*, e.g., alongside IPFV *mirt* 'die', PFV *nomirt*, there is also IPFV *mirt nost*. Edīte Hauzenberga-Šturma (1979, 300) notes that the phrasal verb often describes a gradual and protracted process with a complex internal structure. The functioning of postverbs deserves to be made the object of a detailed investigation. They also occur in West Lithuanian dialects (Mikulskas, 2003), and here as well, they are basically not an imperfectivizing device but may be drawn into aspectual oppositions with prefixed verbs:

(11) Lithuanian (Mikulskas, 2003, 84)

*O     aš     jau ne-kraunu,          [pinigų],          turiu*
but    I.NOM  PTC NEG-amass.PRS.1SG  [money.GEN]  have.PRS.1SG
*i      leidu          lauk.*
and    let.PRS.1SG    out.
'I don't amass [money], I have it and spend it.'

Finally, it is known that Lithuanian has developed means for secondary imperfectivization similar to those of Slavonic (cf. Polish *wylecieć* 'fly out' → *wylatywać*), though such formations are frowned upon by prescriptive grammarians:

(12) Lithuanian

*Kai iš-ei-dinėjome          į lauką,  mus       pamatęs*
as   out-go-IPFV.PST.1PL  outside  1PL.ACC  see.PA.PST.NOM.SG.M
*akordeonistas,          vėl      puolė     prie instrumento.*
accordinionist.NOM.SG  again   fall.PST.3  to   instrument.GEN.SG
'As we were coming out, the accordionist took to his instrument again when he saw us.'[2]

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2    https://jp.lt/daugiausiai-saliu-apkeliaves-lietuvis-atskleidzia-kas-ji-pribloske-siaures-korejoje (accessed 04.07.2022).

Baltic thus possesses several devices creating aspect pairs, but their scope is relatively limited, and both Lithuanian and Latvian are rich in bi-aspectual verbs. The lexical basis for grammatical aspect is therefore narrow compared to Slavonic, where the numbers of bi-aspectual verbs are quite small. This shows the relatively low degree of generalization of aspect (in the sense of diffusion through the lexicon), which is an important factor in assessing the degree of grammaticalization. Another aspect of the process of generalization associated with increasing grammaticality is generalization of meaning, which I will discuss in section 7. However, what is basically a difference of degree should not be viewed as a difference of essence.

## 7. Generalization of meaning

As soon as the present of an imperfective verb opposed to a prefixed perfective acquires a monopoly on the expression of the progressive present, it may find itself on a road towards a monopoly on the expression of the present. The progressive present, consisting in the time of speech, which is also reference time, being included in event time (S/R $\subset$ E), is one of the most prominent usage types of the present, and one in which innovations often begin. Not all presents are progressive, as they may also be performative (*I promise*), habitual (*she often plays the piano*) etc. But progressive forms may be expansive, and spread over all present-tense functions, ousting the original present tense in the process. This can happen in different ways. In modern Armenian the original present of Classical Armenian (*kardam* 'I read') has become a kind of subjunctive, while in its original function it has been completely replaced with the originally progressive *kardum em* 'I am reading' (Sayeed & Vaux, 2017, 1155). In East and West Slavonic, the present-tense of perfective verbs has been completely ousted from present-tense functions and has become a future. These two processes are, of course, different: in Armenian a new progressive form expands and ousts non-progressive presents, while in West and East Slavonic an old perfective present retreats and is ousted first from progressive function and subsequently from all other present-tense functions. But there is a basic similarity in that processes affecting the progressive present reshape the whole present tense. The situation in Baltic is obviously similar to that in Slavonic, but the process

of generalization has not advanced very far, and non-progressive presents of perfective verbs are still frequent.

The retreat of perfective presents is basically a parallel process in the two Baltic languages, but there are probably differences that still have to be investigated in detail. To take just one example, the performative present (*I promise*), is non-progressive and therefore originally perfective. Endzelin (1923, 740) states this for Latvian (obviously without using the term 'performative'), citing the example *to jums abiem pasaku* 'that's what I say to both of you'. In modern Latvian, both aspects seem to be used interchangeably in performative function:

(13) Latvian

*Tuvāko          20 gadu        laikā        arī        tas        būs*
next.GEN.PL.DEF  year.GEN.PL time.LOC  also    that.NOM  be.FUT.3

*noticis,                            to        es        jums        solu.*
happen.PA.PST.NOM.SG.M  that.ACC I.NOM  2PL.DAT promise.PRS.1SG

'In the course of the next 20 years this will have happened as well, I promise you that.'

(14) *Nākamgad  Latvijas      rekords        kritīs –    to        es*
next_year    Latvia.GEN   record.NOM    fall.FUT.3  that.ACC  1SG.NOM
*jums          apsolu.*
2.PL.DAT     PFV-promise.PRS.1SG

'Next year the Latvian record will fall, I promise you that.'[3]

Lithuanian, on the other hand, seems to opt for the imperfective form:

(15) Lithuanian
*Sveikinu                      (\*pa-sveikinu)                sulaukus*
congratulate.PRS.1SG   (PFV-congratulate.PRS.1SG)   live_till.CVB

*džiugios            šventės –              mokyklos*
joyful.GEN.SG.F   celebration.GEN.SG   school.GEN.SG

*95-mečio!*
95th_anniversary.GEN.SG

 'I congratulate you on this joyful occasion – the 95th anniversary of our school.'[4]

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3    https://sportacentrs.com/vieglatletika/07082018-sincukovs_nakamgad_latvijas_rekords_kriti?is_
     mobile=0 (accessed 04.07.2022).

4    https://grybauskaite.lrp.lt/lt/sveikinimai/2010-11 (accessed 04.07.2022).

This means that Lithuanian has, in this respect, moved faster on the way towards generalization of imperfective presents than Latvian. Another important domain where the process of generalization can be seen at work is habituality. In Lithuanian we can see that both aspects can be used to refer to habitual occurrence of a completed event:

(16) Lithuanian

| *Iškart* | *supratau,* | | *kad* | *kažkas* | | *negerai,* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| at_once | understand.PST.1SG | | that | something.NOM | | wrong |

| *nes* | *duris* | *visada* | *užrakinu...* |
|---|---|---|---|
| because | door[PL].ACC | always | PFV-lock.PRS.1SG |

 'I understood at once something was wrong, because I always lock the door...'[5]

(17) | *Kambarį* | *ji* | *visada* | *rakina,* | *tačiau* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| room.ACC.SG | she.NOM | always | lock.PRS.3 | but |

| *tuo metu* | *ne-buvo* | *už-rakintas...* |
|---|---|---|
| at_that_time | NEG-be.PST.3 | PFV-lock.PP.PST.NOM.SG.M |

'She always locks her room, but at that moment it was unlocked...'[6]

In East Slavonic and Polish, where the present is always imperfective, only the imperfective verb would be possible in such cases. Arkadiev (2011, 71–72) regards this difference as significant, arguing that when an imperfective verb is used to denote the habitual occurrence of a completed change-of-state event the opposition between sub-events (the process leading up to the change of state and the change of state itself) is neutralized. He claims this occurs in Slavonic but not in Lithuanian. This is, of course, only partly true as the neutralization optionally occurs in Lithuanian as well (as seen in (17)) and is optional or does not occur in half of the Slavonic languages. Dickey (2000) describes this as an important parameter of variation among the Slavonic languages: East Slavonic has consistent neutralization, West Slavonic has non-neutralization, while

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5    https://www.tv3.lt/naujiena/projektai/batakiuose-siaucia-vandalai-n427014 (accessed 04.07.2022).

6    https://e-teismai.lt/byla/67256170298195/1-151-363/2017 (accessed 04.07.2022).

More importantly, however, habituality does not yield any crucial evidence as the claim that simple and prefixed verbs in Baltic refer to different sub-events is unconvincing in other domains as well, see section 5. On the other hand, the use of imperfective verbs in cases like (17) is certainly a step in a process of generalization of the imperfective form throughout the present.

With regard to generalization of aspectual meaning (a second important parameter of grammaticalization alongside generalization across the lexicon) Baltic lags behind (most of) Slavonic. However, it is important to set the process of extension and generalization apart from the crossing of the grammaticalization threshold itself. This threshold has been crossed, and no amount of evidence for the low degree of grammaticalization in comparison to Slavonic can change this.

## 8. In conclusion

The principal aim of this paper was to show that in Baltic verbal aspect has crossed the threshold of grammaticality; and that, having crossed this threshold, it did not go very far on the road towards further grammaticalization in the form of successive generalizations as observed in the Slavonic verb. We do not know why, but it might simply be because Baltic aspect is quite young. Safarewicz (1938/1974b) found no verbal aspect in Old Lithuanian. As late as the end of the 18th century, Kristijonas Donelaitis ("Pavasario linksmybės", 203) could write *balsas nei nuskęstančio* 'a voice as if of a drowning man' with a prefixed verb where now only the imperfective *skęstančio* would be possible. With reference to the contemporary languages, however, it is fully legitimate to use the notion of verbal aspect in the sense of a grammatically relevant feature. The legitimacy of the notion having been established, the legitimacy of the corresponding research domain is a logical corollary. Research into weakly grammaticalized aspect systems is important for the diachronic typology of aspect. It is to be hoped that recent studies like Holvoet, Daugavet & Žeimantienė (2021) and Vladimir Panov (2021) will pave the way for more in-depth research into the functioning of Baltic verbal aspect in its various subdomains (the tense forms, the modally marked forms, the converbs and participles etc.), which should be facilitated by the increasing availability of corpus data.

# ABBREVIATIONS

ACC – accusative

CVB – converb

DAT – dative

DEF – definite

F – feminine

FUT – future

GEN – genitive

IMP – imperative

INS – instrumental

IPFV – imperfective

LOC – locative

M – masculine

NEG – negation

NOM – nominative

PA – active participle

PFV – perfective

PFX – prefix

PL – plural

PP – passive participle

PRS – present

PST – past

PTC – particle

SG – singular

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