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Lithuanian in the typology of derivational aspectual systems

In Lithuanian linguistics, there has been much debate about the nature of aspectual oppositions of the type *rašyti* 'write' ~ **pa**rašyti 'write up', especially in comparison with the better-known Russian aspectual system (see Dambriūnas 1960, Galnaitytė 1962, 1978, Ambrazas 1999, cf. also Wiemer 2001). The primary question has been to which domain, lexicon or grammar, such an opposition belongs. In this paper I shift the focus from the language-internal to the cross-linguistic perspective, addressing the characterization of Lithuanian from the point of view of contemporary knowledge about aspectual systems found in the languages of the world.

Together with Slavic aspectual systems, the Lithuanian one belongs to the so-called "bounder-based perfectives" (Bybee & Dahl 1989), which, in turn, form one of the possible subtypes of derivational, or word-classifying, aspectual systems (see Arkadiev & Shluinsky 2015), in which perfective vs. imperfective meanings are inherent properties of the verbal lexeme, rather than part of the inflectional system.

Comparison of Lithuanian with a broader range of languages with prefix-based perfectivization (including both Slavic languages as well as Latvian, Hungarian, Yiddish, Ossetic and Georgian, see Arkadiev 2014, 2015), yields the following conclusions:

1) Lithuanian is closer to the Western Slavic type of aspectual system (Dickey 2000), i.e. Czech and Slovene, in that its "perfective" verbs are used in the present tense in habitual and historical contexts, where Russian and Polish have to substitute perfective verbs by imperfective partners. In this respect Lithuanian forms part of a larger Central European "aspectual area" comprising Latvian, Hungarian and Yiddish as well.

2) Lithuanian differs from Slavic languages in the unavailability of the process of prefix stacking or secondary perfectivization, and in this respect it is similar to most other languages with prefixal perfectives.

3) By the lack of futurate uses of the "perfective" present and the availability of aspectually neutral inflectional future Lithuanian differs from the North Slavic languages, but aligns with both South Slavic (Bulgarian) and non-Slavic languages (Ossetic).

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