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The role of verbal prefixes in the expression of Baltic resultatives

There is a considerable body of literature that deals with resultatives in English and some other languages (cf. Rappaport, Levin 2001; Boas 2003; Washio 1997; Legendre 1997; Napoli 1992). However, Baltic resultatives have not so far received much attention in the linguistic literature (cf. Holvoet 2008; Vaičiulytė-Semėnienė 2014). Thus, the presentation aims to discuss the basic features of Lithuanian and Latvian resultatives.

Resultatives, or resultative secondary predicates, express the state achieved by a participant of an event as a result of the action denoted by a verb. A prototypical resultative construction denotes a causative and telic event. As far as telicity is concerned, the telic point can be introduced either by a verb phrase itself or by the resultative secondary predicate in Germanic languages.

Resultatives in the Baltic languages are usually accompanied by verbal prefixes which are generally assumed to mark boundedness. There is a discussion as to what type of boundedness these prefixes introduce: lexical boundedness (telicity) or grammatical boundedness (perfectivity) (cf. Arkadiev 2011; Holvoet 2014). The presentation follows the assumption that Baltic verbal prefixes can at least in some cases introduce both telicity and perfectivity. Therefore, the addition of a prefix to an activity verb often yields an accomplishment. This leads to the conclusion that in Baltic resultatives telicity (and respectively the meaning of a result) is determined by the verbal prefix rather than by the secondary predicate as in Germanic languages. The crucial role of verbal prefixes in Baltic resultatives is also illustrated by the fact that prefixes can license an additional (unsubcategorized) argument (cf. in Germanic languages such additional arguments are licensed by resultative secondary predicates).