



Project

The Baltic Verb

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Future as a narrative tense?

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History of our study (recall previous project workshops)

- The Baltic future: overview (Nicole, October 2020)
 - The tenses of 'tomorrow' (Nicole & Birute, May 2021)
 - Future tense in past contexts (Nicole & Birute, May 2021)
 - Future tense in narratives
- Future as a narrative tense?

An old question

Kann vielleicht auch mit dem Indikativ des Futurums erzählt werden?

‘Is it possible [in Indo-European languages] to narrate with the indicative future?’

(Delbrück 1897, *Vergleichende Syntax.. II*;
Section *Das Futurum in der Erzählung*)

“Will man, dass der Zuhörer sich in der Phantasie die Entwicklung der Ereignisse vorstelle, so wählt man das Imperfektum; hat man lediglich die Absicht zu konstatieren, dass etwas geschehen ist, den Aorist oder (im Altindischen) das Perfekt. Wenn der Zuhörer sich gewissermassen im Geiste als Zuschauer vor der Bühne des Geschehens setzen soll, so gebraucht man das Präsens. Kann vielleicht auch mit dem Indikativ des Futurums erzählt werden?“ (Delbrück 1897, 306-307)

“If one wants the listener to imagine the development of events, one chooses the imperfect; if one only wants to state that something has happened, the aorist or (in Old Indic) the perfect is chosen. If the listener is meant, in a manner of speaking, to take a seat in front of the scene of action, one uses present tense. **May it be possible to narrate with the future indicative as well?**“ (our translation)

Table 3. Tense, Memory, and Narrative Perspective

DATA SOURCE	NARRATING PERSONA	TENSE	MODE OF REPORTING	ACTIVITY
	Performer	PR	Mimetic	OBSERVATION/RE-PRESENTATION: I speak what <i>I see</i> .
	Memorialist	PERF/PC	Autobio-graphical ^a	EVOCATION: I speak what <i>I have seen</i> as it relates to me now, an erstwhile participant in the events I have retrieved from my personal memory.
	Historian	PRET	Diegetic	NARRATION: I speak what has become an objective knowledge. Through an effort of retrospection I can recall what <i>I once saw</i> , its original temporal structure still intact, though it is now distanced and detached from me as an erstwhile observer.
	Painter	IMP	Pictorial	DESCRIPTION: The original structure of what I saw/experienced has become blurred. Elements of it return to

cf. Fleischman (1990)

“a typology of narrating personae, each of which is associated with a tense-aspect category found in narration: the historian with the unmarked PRET, the memorialist with the PERF/PC, the painter with the IMP, and the performer with the PR.”

A different approach: Narrative and non-narrative tenses

- Harald Weinrich: *Tempus. Besprochene und erzählte Welt.* (1964, 1971)
[The world commented and narrated]
- Émil Benveniste:
Les relations de temps dans le verb français.
(Article 1959)



Or rather different **uses** in narrative and other discourse types? (back to Delbrück)

“In other words, it is the ways in which tense and person function in narrative, and not the presence or absence of certain tenses or grammatical persons, that justifies the claim here that narrative is a distinctive category of linguistic performance. Only in narration, for example, can the PR tense acquire a temporal value of “past”; only in narration can the English simple PR or the French IMP receive a punctual interpretation.”

(Fleischman 1990)

*From
Medieval
Performance
to Modern
Fiction*

**TENSE
AND
NARRATIVITY**

Suzanne Fleischman

But what is [a] narrative?



LATE FROM THE SCHOOL-ROOM.

Minnie. "I AM READING SUCH A PRETTY TALE."

Governess. "YOU MUST SAY NARRATIVE, MINNIE—NOT TALE!"

Minnie. "YES, MA'AM; AND DO JUST LOOK AT MUFF, HOW HE'S WAGGING HIS NARRATIVE!"

FIGURE 1. Narrative or the tale? A mid 19th century cartoon from *Punch*. (from Beer 2002)

1. The mystery of *Narration*

What are narratives? This is a tricky question [...]
(Gallagher & Hutto 2008: 30)

This chapter addresses a very basic question: What is a *Narration* actually? It is by no means a trivial question as it is intricately linked to the "mystery of *Narration*": while everyone intuitively seems to know what a narration is, no one knows exactly how to define it. Within the field of narratology, this elusiveness has led to an

(Zeman 2018)

Narrative clauses

“A narrative clause is one that contains a unique event that, according to the narrative norm, is understood to follow the event immediately preceding it and to precede the event immediately following it.”

(Fleischman 1990)

Important features of narrative clauses:

- temporal order
- immediateness
- unique events

- advance the plot
- make up the “skeleton” of the story
- foregrounded content
- typically in past tense

Where in a narrative are **non**-narrative clauses?

- Orientation (*There was a father who had three sons.*)
 - Descriptions (*She talked and smiled to everybody, feared nobody.*)
 - Comments, evaluations by the narrator or the teller
 - Speech and thoughts of protagonists
-

This lead us to **two research questions**:

- Where, in which functions is future tense used in narratives?
- Does future tense occur in narrative clauses?

Future in non-narrative clauses (reported content and epistemic evaluation)

Latvian (LVK2018)

*Nu lasīju vēstuli un tur skaidri un gaiši bija rakstīts, ka viņš **koncertēs** Rīgā, lai es piezvanu uz operu vai arī pirmajā janvārī aizeju uz koncertu. Par vēlu. Viņš jau **būs aizbraucis** uz citu pasaules zemi. Viņš spēlē tur, kur viņu ielūdz, kur grib viņu dzirdēt.*

‘Now I read the letter, where it was written plainly that he **would give** a concert in Riga. I should call the opera or go to the concert on first of January. Too late. He **will have left** already for another part of the world. He plays where he is invited, where they want to hear him.’

More tricky: is this [a] narrative?

Būs viss kā bijis. Klausīsies viņa gudrajās runās par mūziku, kura pašai būs liegta. Tai vienkārši neatliks laika. Ja arī atļausies ko iebilst, tad saņems atbildi — ko tu saproti. Viņš ieslēgsies istabā un klausīsies ierakstus, bet viņa klās viesību galdus, jo Maldis ir sabiedrīks cilvēks. Pie tiem viņa nesēdēs, jo būs jāsavāc bērni, lai nemaisās pa kājām. Jāmazgā trauki un jāpasniedz deserts. Viņa būs tikai galda meita. Vīri, kas sēdēs ap galdu, slavēs viņas gatavotos ēdienus un Maldi. (LVK2018)

‘Everything **will be** as before. She **will listen** to his clever talk about music, which **will be denied** to herself. There simply **will be** no time left for it. Even if she **will dare** to express an observation, she **will get the answer** – what do you understand. He **will shut** himself into the bedroom and **will listen** to recordings, while she **will lay** the tables for a party, for Maldis is a sociable man. She **will not sit down** with them, for she **will have to take** the children so they are not in the way. She must do the dishes and serve the dessert. She **will be** only the table girl. The men, who **will sit** at the table, **will praise** her dishes and Maldis.’

Evoked scenario in the past – why is this not [a] narrative?

Lithuanian (DLKT, Birutė Junuškaitė, *Didžioji sala* II d., Vilnius, Vaga 1999)

Seniokas ilgai pykti nemokėjo [PST]. *Pavaikščios* [FUT], *parėkaus* [FUT], *išsitrauks* [FUT] *ne itin švarią nosinę, kad pradės* [FUT] *pūsti į ją, kad ims* [FUT] *trinti savo ir taip jau raudoną, didžiulę kuprotą nosį – jums visa baimė išgaruoja* [PRS] *ir pasigirsta* [PRS] *kikenimas.*

‘The old man **was not able** to be angry for a long time. He **WILL WALK** and **WILL SHOUT** for a while, [then he] **WILL PULL OUT** his not very clean handkerchief and **KAD WILL START** blowing into it [very intensively], **KAD WILL START** rubbing his already red, huge humped nose—and all your fear **evaporates** and the pupils **start** giggling.’

Proleptic use of the future – narrative? (sometimes called «historical future»)

Latvian (Emuāri)

<i>es</i>	<i>uzlieku</i>	<i>vārīties</i>	<i>zupu,</i>	<i>kas</i>	<i>rakstot</i>
1SG.NOM	PVB.put.PRS.1SG	cook.INF.RFL	soup.ACC.SG	REL.NOM	write.CVB
<i>pāries</i>	<i>pāri</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>appludinās</i>	<i>plīti.</i>	
spill_over.FUT.3	over	and	overflow.FUT.3	stove.ACC.SG	

‘I **put** on soup to cook, which **WILL SPILL** over and **WILL OVERFLOW** the stove while writing.’ (= ‘would spill over’ or ‘spilled over’)

Intention, imminence, and inception

- Intention: N **wants** to do something – non-factual, may or may not happen
- Imminence: N **is about** to do something – non-factual (?), may be cancelled; highlights the time immediately before an (expected) event – phasal (?)
- Inception: N **starts** to do something – factual, though may not be completed; highlights the first phase of an action – phasal

Reported intention = non-narrative clause

Latvian (LVK2018; Vizma Belševica, *Bille*. Riga 1995)

Durvis aizcirtās [PST], *un istabā iešņirkstējās* [PST] *no patahtes velkamais čemodāns. Ies* [FUT] *projām. Vecāmāte vienmēr tā.*

‘The door **banged**, and the scratching noise of a suitcase being torn from under the sofa **resounded** in the room. [She] **WILL GO** away. Grandmother [was] always like that.’

Intention vs imminence

Example from Latgalian (with *jau*)

Izkuopu [PST] *augšys stuovā*, *dūmuoju* [PST] – *mož kaidom drēbem atlaidis. Drēbis lātuokys kai Viļānu tiergā, tok saprotu* [PST], *ka maņ tuos lupotys napateik [...]* *Apmešu* [FUT] *riņči i jau īšu* [FUT] *prūm, a pieški nazkaida kosmetikys puordevieja skrīn* [PRS] *prīškā.*

‘I **went up** to the second floor and **thought** – maybe some clothes [will be] at a discount. The clothes [were] cheaper than at the market in Viļāni, but I **recognized** that I didn’t like these rags [...] **I WILL MAKE A ROUND** (= I plan to go around) and **JAU WILL GO** away (= I am about to go away), but suddenly some cosmetics saleswoman crosses my way (literally: **runs** in front of me).’ (MuLa)

Intention and inception in **fairy tales**

Latvian (LPT, Lāča dēls, 9; Ezere, Southern Courland, 1879)

*Priežurāvējam sirds vietā, **iesmels** [FUT] **traukā un dos** [FUT]; *bet līdz šis **palieksies** [FUT] **pie katla, tā vīrelis no muguras puses čuprī un nu **dod** [PRS] un **dod** [PRS], cik ieiet [PRS].****

‘The fir-ripper [has] his heart at the right place. He **WILL SCOOP** [gruel] into a bowl and **WILL GIVE** [it to the man who had asked for it] (= he intends to scoop and give). But as soon as he **WILL BEND** (= begins to bend, bends) down to the pot, the little man [springs] from behind onto his neck and **beats** him with all his might (literally ‘gives and gives’).’

(This example is also cited in Endzelīns’ grammar)

Intention to go = setting off (inception)

Lithuanian (BTB; Apie kalvio sūnų. Telšiai, Northern Žemaitia, 1904)

***Susinešė** [PST] maišus į vežimą ir **eist** [FUT] persivesti iš pievas arklius ir **važiuos** [FUT] namon. **Nuejo** [PST] ir nebranda arklių!*

‘He **put** the sacks into the carriage **and WILL GO** (= set off) to the field to bring horses and **WILL DRIVE** (= intended to drive) home. He **went** there, but he did not find the horses!’

Latvian (LPT, *Derības par sievas uzticību*, 1. Zaslauks, Rīga, from LP)

Dabūjis *ceļa* *zināt,* *tas* *iejūdz*
 get.PST.PA.SG.M way.GEN.SG know.INF DEM.NOM.SG.M harness.PRS.3
divi *dižus* *zīrgus* *un* *brauks*
 two stately.ACC.PL.M horse.ACC.PL and drive.FUT.3
šos *uz turieni* *apsērst.*
 DEM.ACC.PL.F to that_place.ACC.SG PVB.visit.INF

‘**Having learned** the way, he **harnesses** two stately horses and **WILL DRIVE** (= set off) to visit them there.’

Protagonist sets off = beginning of the story or of an episode

- Movement of the protagonist towards an adventure
 - Combines intention and inception
 - Textual function
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- Latvian example: beginning of the story after two layers of orientation / background information
 - Lithuanian example: beginning of an episode when the journey had already started

Latvian (LPT; Muļķis par precinieku; Nīcā)

[1] *Senos laikos cilvēkiem **nebijušas** [PST.PA] bikses. Visi **staigājuši** [PST.PA] lupatās satinušies.*

[2] *Vienai meitai **bijis** [PST.PA] bagāts brūtgāns. Brūtgāns **domājis** [PST.PA], ka čitādāki varētu ietērpies, lai nebūtu auksts. **Licis** [PST.PA] pašūt skroderiem bikses. Skroderi **nezinājuši** [PST.PA], kas tas ir, bet brūtgāns **paskaidrojis** [PST.PA], un skroderi arī **uztaisījuši** [PST.PA] bikses.*

[3] *Nu brūtgāns **ies** pie brūtes un **parādīs**,*
 now lover.NOM.SG go.FUT.3 to bride.GEN.SG and PVB.SHOW.FUT.3
kas viņam ir no jauna.
 what.NOM.SG 3.DAT.SG.M be.PRS.3 of new.GEN.SG.M

‘[1] In the old times, people **did not have** trousers. They all **walked** around wrapped in rags.

[2] One girl **had** a rich suitor. The suitor **thought** of a way to dress differently in order not to be cold. He **ordered** tailors to sew trousers. The tailors **did not know** what that was, but the suitor **explained**, and the tailors **made** trousers.

[3] Now the suitor sets off to his chosen one in order to show her the new thing he has.’ (literally: ‘Now the wooer **will go** to his bride and **will show**’)

Lithuanian (BTB; Apie kalvio sūnų. Telšiai, Northern Žemaitia, 1904)

*Vienas kalvis **turėjo** [PST] sūnų milžionių. Sūnus **buvo** [PST] toks stiprus, kad jau 3 metų **galėjo** [PST] su mešku grumtis. Kaip jis suaugo į 12 metų, tėvas **nukalo** [PST] jam lazda nuo 12 pūdų ir **išleido** [PST] į srietą tarnauti. Sūnus **išėjo** [PST]. Eidamas keliu, **pamatė** [PST], kad žmonys ketveriais žemę ara. Jis **eis** [FUT] prie tų žmonių. Žmonys, pamatę ateinantį tokį didilį vyrą, o dar su geležine didiliausia lazdu, **išbėgiojo** [PST] į visas puses.*

‘One blacksmith **had** a giant son. The son **was** so strong that already at the age of three he **could** grapple with a bear. When he became 12 years old, his father **made** him an iron stick of 12 pounds weight and **let** him go out into the world to serve [people]. The son **left**. Going on a road, he **saw** some men who were ploughing the land with four oxen. He **WILL GO** to those men (= ‘made up his mind and set off’). The people, seeing such a big man approaching them with such a large iron stick, **ran away**.’

Arrival of new character and beginning of episode: pure textual function

- This use of the future tense was only found in Latvian.
- Verb of arriving + verb of speaking

Latvian (LPT, Ar brīnuma lietām iegūtā ķēniņa meita. Ūziņi)

*Vienam ķēniņam **nebija** [PST] neviena bērna. Viņš sendienām par to **gaužas** [PRS], bet kas jau ir, tas ir. Te vienreiz **atnāks** [FUT] vecs nabags un ķēniņš **izsūdz** [PRS] savas bēdas arī tam. Nabags **klausās, klausās** [PRS], beidzot **teiks** [FUT]: “[...]”*

‘A king **did not have** [PST] a single child. He often **laments** [PRS] it, but it is as it is. Now once an old beggar **comes** [FUT] along and the king **pours out** [PRS] his complaints to him as well. The beggar **listens** [PRS] for a while and finally **says** [FUT]:’

Latvian (LPT, Velns ar lāci rijā; Dole)

Otrā *rītā* *atnāks* *velns*
 other.LOC.SG morning.LOC.SG PVB.come.FUT.3 devil.NOM.SG
pie *rijkura* *un* *teiks*:
 to kiln_heater.GEN.SG and say.FUT.3

‘The next morning, the devil **comes** to the kiln heater and **says**’

Latvian (LPT; Burvju putns, 17. Ūziņi, Southern Courland, from LP)

Zēns nosēžas [PRS] *kalna galā un neko. Te par brīnumiem nāks* [FUT] *tik uz reizi trīs vīri no meža ārā un gremjas* [PRS] *viens uz otru, ka bail.*

‘The boy **sits down** on top of the hill and nothing [happens]. Then wondrously three men suddenly **WILL COME** (= come) out of the wood and **growl** at each other in a scary way.’

Beginning and suddenness, unexpectedness

- The word ‘begin’ appears often in the future tense in narrative clauses in Latvian and Lithuanian fairytales.
- In Lithuanian we find a construction with a particle *kad* or *kaip* and ‘begin’ in future tense, still used in modern Lithuanian (ex. on slide 13, nose-blowing); it has a parallel in Russian

Lithuanian (BTB; Apie kalvio sūnų. Telšiai, Northern Žemaitia, 1904)

Milžionis geruoju prašė [PST], *kad atstotų, paskui kaip pradės* [FUT] *šaudyti su lazdu velniams – visi išlakioja* [PST]!

‘The giant first **asked** them in a friendly manner to leave him alone, then [he] **KAIP WILL START** (= suddenly started) to beat the devils with a stick—they all **ran away!**’

Foregrounding of last action in a chain (Latvian fairytales)

Latvian (LPT, Velns zarkā 7. No place mentioned. From LP)

Ja, ienesuši [PST.PA], *izņēmuši* [PST.PA] *mironi un vilks* [FUT], *vadzi*, *ādu nost*. *Viens divi tas padarīts* [PST.PP] *un nu nemsies* [FUT] *mironi sadalīt trijās daļās*

‘Yes, they **carried** in the corpse, **gutted** it and **WILL PULL** (= pulled), **behold**, the skin down. In a jiffy this [was] **done**, and now they **WILL START** (= started) to split the corpse into three parts’

Latvian (LPT, Burvju putns 17. Ūziņi, Southern Courland. From LP)

<i>Mežsargs</i> [...]	<i>tūliņ</i>	<i>plūc</i>	<i>pīli</i>	<i>nost</i>	<i>un</i>	<i>nu ceps</i> .
forester.NOM.SG	at_once	pluck.PRS.3	duck.ACC.SG	down	and	PTC roast.FUT.3
<i>Necik</i>	<i>ilgi -</i>	<i>pīle</i>	<i>čurkst</i>	<i>pannā</i> .		
not_much	long	duck.NOM.SG	sizzle.PRS.3	pan.LOC.SG		

‘The forester **plucks** the duck immediately and **WILL ROAST** it (= roasts, or: starts to roast). Not much later, the duck **is sizzling** in the pan.’

Summing up (from end to beginning)

- Future tense in 19th century fairytales has **textual functions** (beginning of episodes; foregrounding) – in such functions it appears in clearly narrative clauses.
- **Intention, imminence** and **inception** make up a cluster of functions. Inceptive and imminent meanings appear in narrative clauses.
- The **proleptic** function is rare, found mostly in genres in the middle of a continuum between narrative and report.
- When future tense has the temporal-aspectual meaning **past habitual**, it expresses background information (illustrations) in non-narrative clauses.

If Herr Delbrück had asked us...

- **in 1897**, our answer would have been «yes» – in Latvian and Lithuanian, **future tense is used to narrate**, though as a marked tense with special functions and effects;
- but in 2021, we have to admit that in the modern languages these uses are marginal if they have not vanished completely.

PS Did the 19th c. grammarians know it all?

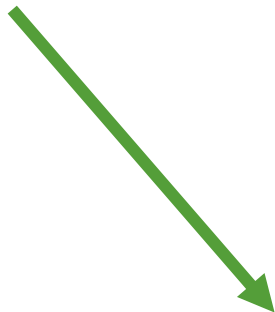
Latvian

Rosenberger 1852



Latvian

Bielenstein 1863



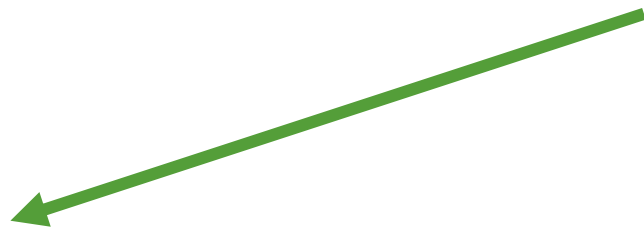
Lithuanian

Schleicher 1856



Lithuanian

Kurschat 1876



Comparative IE grammar

Delbrück 1897

Brugman 1916

Rosenberger (1852)

[talking about the historical present)

So hatte ich die Regel gefaßt und mit dem Beispiel eben niedergeschrieben, als mir aus authentischer Quelle die Kunde kam, daß der Lette bei lebendiger Darstellung einer vergangenen Begebenheit gewöhnlich nicht wie der Deutsche und Grieche das indicative Präsens gebraucht, sondern das Futurum.

‘[I just learned] that Latvians, when **depicting a past event in a lively manner**, do not **use** the present tense, as do Germans and Greeks, but **the future tense**’

Rosenberger's example (in modern orthography)

*Mēs kopā **staigājām** [PST], tad es viņu **prasīšu** [FUT], vai jau ēdis, un viņš man **sacīs** [FUT] kā vēl nav, un tad mēs **iegājām** [PST] krogā.*

‘We **were walking** together, then I **WILL ASK** (= asked) him whether he had eaten, and he **WILL SAY** (= said) that he had not, and then we **went** into a pub.’

Bielenstein (1863) gives the same example (without naming a source) and another one, which seems to be constructed after the Lithuanian example given by Schleicher (1863): *viens **raudzīja** [PST], un otrs arī **raudzīs** [FUT] un **iet** [PRS] projām* ‘one **tried** and the other **will try** as well and **go/goes** away’

Schleicher (1856)

— 308 —

In erzählungen hört man bisweilen das futurum da, wo man das praeteritum oder praesens der erzählung erwartet, nämlich um eine handlung zu bezeichnen, die auf eine andere folgt. Der erzählende stellt sich dann auf den standpunkt der ab gelaufenen handlung, von welchem auß die folgende als zukünftig erscheint, z. b. *vëns taí dárè ir dabàr antràsis taí ir darýs ir eína í bütq* u. s. f. einer tat diß und jezt wird es der andere auch tun (tat es der andere auch) und geht ins haus u. s. f.

Descriptions/explanations

- Schleicher (1856): the future is **sometimes** used in narratives instead of the past or the present tense «to mark an event that follows another. The speaker takes the point of view of the past action, from which the following appears as lying in the future.»
- Bielenstein (1863): future is used **not rarely** instead of past or present. «It marks an action that follows another one, and the speaker takes a past point of view, from which he sees the action that passed later as a future one.»
- Endzelīns (1922) «the speaker takes the point of view of the past action, from which the following events appear as future ones.»

Delbrück (1897)

„Der Indikativ Futuri versetzt die vorhergesehene oder beabsichtigte Handlung in die vor dem Sprechenden liegende Zukunft. Er konnte vielleicht auch gebraucht werden, um ein zu erwartendes Glied in einer Kette von erzählten Ereignissen zu bezeichnen, also gewissermassen präterital.“

‘The future indicative transports the planned or intended action into the future of the speaker. Maybe it was also used **to name an expected link in a chain of narrated events**, somehow as a preterit.’

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