# *Grammatical Categories in Lithuanian*

A brief overview

# Overview

- Tense
- Aspect
- Mood
- Evidentiality
- Voice

- Definiteness
- Number
- Case
- Gender

# Tense

- Deictic tense distinguishes four values: present, future, and two past tenses, preterite and habitual past:

  *sėdi* 'sits, is sitting etc.'

  *sėdės* 'will sit/will be sitting'

  *sėdėjo* 'sat, was sitting'

  *sėdėdavo* 'used to sit, used to be sitting'

  The habitual past implies non-continuation into the present.

# Relative tense

- The only productive relative tenses express anteriority; the contain the verb 'be' and the past active participle. This yields a perfect:

  *Esu buvęs Paryžiuje.*

  'I've been to Paris' (experiential)

  *Jie jau yra atvažiavę.*

  'They have already arrived.' (resultative)

  There is also a rudimentarily developed perfect based on *turėti* 'have' and the past active participle:

  *turiu atsinešęs maisto* 'I've brought some food with me'.

# Relative tense

- There is a pluperfect often expressing 'two-way action' (cancellation of the result of an action, a kind of 'antiperfect'):

  *Buvo atėjęs kaimynas.*

  'The neighbour dropped in (but is already gone)' (lit. 'the neighbour had come')

- The future perfect is mainly modal.

# Marginal tense forms

- A system of progressive tenses seems to have been developing in Old Lithuanian:

  *kur Jonas buvo krikštijąs*

  'where John was baptizing'

  but this development was never completed (perhaps because of the development of derivational aspect); the only trace is now the preterite of interrupted action:

  *Mes jau buvome beišeiną, kai tu paskambinai.*

  'We were about to go out when you phoned.'

- Other forms were drawn into the evidential paradigm

# Aspect

- derivational, as in Slavonic:

  *sakyti* 'say' (imperf.) : *pa-sakyti* 'say' (perf.)

- Suffixation is increasingly used for imperfectivisation under Slavonic influence:

  *at-imti* 'take away' : *at-im-inėti* 'take away' (imperf.)

  Cf. Russian *otnjat'* : *otnimat'*

- The traditional means of imperfectivisation is extending the meaning of the simple verb to cover the sum of its compounds: *jungti* 'switch on/off' covers *į-jungti* 'switch on' (pf.) and *iš-jungti* 'switch off' (pf.)

- Only a minority of verbs have the means of expressing aspect

# Aspect as a grammatical category

- The degree of grammaticalisation of aspect is decidedly low: a verb like *at-eiti* come (*eiti* 'come, go) is perfective by default but may be contextually coerced into an imperfective interpretation (*jis jau ateina* 'he is coming already')

- The discussion on the grammaticality (that is, essentially inflectional character) of aspect in Baltic is probably idle because the grammaticality of derivational aspect is always very hard, perhaps impossible to prove (even in Slavonic).

# Mood

- Three values : indicative-conditional-imperative (the evidential, traditionally described as the oblique mood, is better regarded as a distinct category). There are residual forms continuing the IE optative (called permissive in Lithuanian grammar): *te-būn-ie* 'let it be'.

# Imperative

- There are two formations: one continuing the IE optative (now in some dialects only) and one new, specifically Lithuanian formation in *-k(i)*, which seems originally to have been a hortative particle.

- There are instances of functional differentiation: Eastern Lithuanian is said to have a future imperative:
  - *rašai* 'write' (forthwith)
  - *rašyk* 'write' (some time in the future)

# Irrealis or subjunctive?

- In the recent literature on mood, ample use is made of the notion of irrealis: a mood conveying irreality, realised
  - with negation
  - in interrogative sentences
  - for deontic obligation
  - in conditional clauses
  - for the future etc.
- Some scholars attempt to apply this notion to the mood systems of IE languages as well (instead of 'subjunctive', 'conditional' etc.), whereas others would distinguish 'realis : irrealis' and 'indicative : subjunctive' systems.

# Irrealis or subjunctive?

- The so-called conditional is the only form with clear irrealis functions (the preterite never has irrealis functions in modern Lithuanian, though there is evidence that the conditional might continue an old pluperfect)

- The Baltic subjunctive lacks a few functions sometimes considered typical of subjunctives, e. g. it is excluded from use with factive evaluative predicates:

  *Gaila, kad jie išvažiavo (\*būtų išvažiavę).*
  (cf. French *Il est dommage qu'ils soient partis*)

# Irrealis or subjunctive?

- Basically the Baltic conditional fits the description of an 'irrealis', though is does so in Latvian more than in Lithuanian; e.g. in Lithuanian it often characterises sentential complement types (and thereby fits the textbook definition of, e. g., the Latin subjunctive) whereas Latvian uses the mood distinction to convey 'degrees of reality':
  - Lith. *Prašė, kad perduotų* (*perduoda*) *laišką*
  - Latv. *Lūdza, lai nodod / nodotu vēstuli*
    'requested the letter to be delivered'

# Evidentiality

- Traditionally described as 'the oblique mood', consisting of active participles being used instead of finite verb forms

- Evidential functions: inferential, mirative, quotative (unlike the Latvian evidential, which is exclusively quotative):

  *Jo tėvo*         *buvęs*         *medžiotojas*

  His father:nom    be:part.pret.act.     hunter

  'his father evidently (reportedly, surprisingly) was a hunter.'

# Passive-like evidentials

- There is a problem with evidential constructions based on passive participles
    - *Jo tėvas          buvęs              medžiotojas.*
        his father(nom) be(part.pret.act) hunter (nom)
    - *Jo tėvo            būta               medžiotojo.*
        his father (gen) be (part.pret.pass.) hunter (gen)

    'His father reportedly/evidently was a hunter.'

    Lithuanian grammars describe their functions as identical to those of the constructions with active participles, but whereas the latter are described as a distinct oblique mood, the former are just described as a variety of the passive 'with meanings similar to those of the oblique mood'.

# Passive-like evidentials II

- This cannot be correct, because passive-like evidentials
  - are derived in unorthodox ways:

    *Mano     būta                    užmigta*
    1sg:gen  be:part.pass.pret  doze-off:part.pass.pret
    'I must have dozed off.'
  - show behaviour atypical of passives (the "agent phrase" is usually the topic):
    - *Jo čia gyventa* 'He is said to have lived here.'
  - violate several constraints on passives:
    - derived from unaccusative verbs (like *užmigti* 'fall asleep' etc.)
    - inanimate implicit subjects (*palyta* 'it has evidently been raining')
    - passivisation of epistemic modals (*jo galėta būti nesveiko* 'he may evidently have been ill')

# The status of evidential constructions

- Between syntax and mophology: basically the evidential consists in substituting participles for finite verb forms, but participial endings may also be added to forms already marked, e. g., for mood: Lith. dial. *jis ne būtąs žinojęs* 'he (reportedly) wouldn't have known'; here the participial ending becomes an inflectional marker of evidentiality.

- The Baltic evidential feeds mainly on tense, the finite-nonfinite distinction and on the passive

# The passive

- Always periphrastic, consists of
  - present and past passive participles (in some dialects only past participles); the opposition is aspectual:

    *namas buvo statomas* 'the house was being built'

    *namas buvo pastatytas* 'the house was built'

    the verb 'be' as an auxiliary
  - an agent phrase in the genitive (originally a possessive genitive):

    *tėvo pastatytas namas* 'the house built by father' (originally 'fathers built house'

    *namas buvo pastaytas tėvo* 'the house was built by father'

# The middle voice

- Verbal forms arisen by accretion of an enclitic form of the reflexive pronoun have assumed middle voice (not passive) functions; they are functionally distinct from reflexive constructions (now only with orthotonic reflexive pronouns):
  - *tėvas skutasi* 'father is shaving'
  - *durys atsidaro* 'the door opens'
  - *Alisa mato save veidrodyje* 'Alice sees herself in the looking-glass'

# Middle voice functions

- spontaneous processes
- inherently reciprocal activities
- involuntary actions (*duona greitai susivalgė* 'the bread got eaten quickly'; more widespread in Latvian)
- Facilitative (marginal and attributed to Slavonic influence): *knyga gerai skaitosi* 'the book reads well' (considered incorrect by prescriptive grammarians)

# The treatment of the middle voice

- Middle voice (reflexive) forms used to be treated as inflectional forms of the verb (and still are in most Lithuanian dictionaries), but in grammatical descriptions 'reflexive verbs' were introduced in Soviet times under the influence of Russian grammar. This causes a discrepancy between Lithuanian grammars and dictionaries.

# The structure of voice I

- Ternary voice system (active-middle-passive)? Not an ideal solution because the two intersect:

  *knyga     buvo pa-si-skolinta*

  book      was   borrowed:part.pass.pret

- Two oppositions in voice
  - active : passive
  - non-middle : middle

# The structure of voice II

- Of course, the position of the middle in the system of voice remains an object of controversy; some prefer to describe the middle as a valency-reducing operation (opposing it to valency-encreasing devices like causatives), but is this really an attractive solution?
  - why is the IE middle inflectional?
  - what about mediopassives?

# Definiteness

- Lithuanian has no articles, but has definite forms of the adjective, historically derived by accretion of a determiner to the adjective: *geras-is žmogus* 'the good man'

- Unlike Latvian, where the definiteness of the noun phrase is obligatorily reflected in the definiteness of the adjective, Lithuanian avoids redundancy in marking definiteness, cf.

  *raudonoji skarelė* 'the red scarf'

  *ta (tavo) raudona skarelė* 'that (your) red scarf'

# Definiteness

- the adjective is also definite if it is used to build a generic definite description: *juodasis strazdas* 'the black thrush' (blackbird)

- When such a generic definite description is transferred from generic to individual level, it retains its definiteness even through the noun phrase as such is indefinite: *keli juodieji strazdai* 'a few black thrushes'

# Definiteness

- Definite forms may also be markers of substantivisation, e.g. *išrinktieji* 'chosen ones' (originally 'the chosen ones'), *mieloji* 'my dear DEF.F)' (otherwise cf. *gerbiamas pone* 'dear:INDEF sir' but Latv. *godātais kungs* 'dear:DEF sir', as vocatives are inherently definite)

- In Lithuanian, definite adjectives are now mainly used in terminology, whereas their original function as markers of definiteness is becoming increasingly rare. Still, a few uses are still obligatory, e.g., with proper names:

  *žymusis Gėtė* 'the famous Goethe'

# Definiteness effects

- Definiteness effects are created by case marking of intransitive subjects and objects (mainly with perfective verbs):

  *išgėriau arbatą* (accusative) 'drank the tea (my tea)'

  *išgėriau arbatos* (partitive genitive) 'drank some tea'

  *problemos* (nom) *atsirado* 'the problems arose'

  *problemų* (gen) *atsirado* 'problems arose'

# Number

- Lithuanian has a singular vs. plural distinction for most word classes; only pronouns now have optional dual forms like *mudu* 'we two' alongside *mes* 'we'.This reflects the general principle of greater number differentiation for animates (pronouns are highest on the animacy hierarchy).

- In nouns, a striking feature is the high frequency of pluralia tantum: mass nouns are often plural, e.g. *dūmai* 'smoke', *miltai* 'flour'. Latvian has even a greater number of pluralia tantum, comprising, e. g., names of mental and physical states such as *slāpes* 'thirst', *dusmas* 'anger' or (optionally) *uztraukumi* 'excitement'.

# Case

- Lithuanian has a rich case system; the inherited IE cases were supplemented by a system of local cases in Common Baltic. Four local cases were used in Old Lithuanian; modern dialects retain either one locative or (in East High Lithuanian, e.g. in Salos) locative and illative: *miške* 'in the wood', *Rākiškin* 'to Rokiškis'

# Case agreement

- Lithuanian has some curious cases of agreement:

  *šią dieną* (ACC.SG) 'this day'

  *šiomis dienomis* (INSTR.PL) 'these days'

  *liepos penktą* (ACC.SG) *ir šeštą* (ACC.SG) *dienomis* (INSTR.PL)

  'on the fifth and sixth of July'

- Such patterns are more widespread still in Latvian, where they have been reinforced by the coalescence of the old instrumental with the accusative in the singular and the dative in the plural:

  | *ar* | *jums* | *pašu* 'with yourself' |
  |------|--------|------------------------|
  | with | you (HONOR):DAT.PL | self:ACC.SG |

# Gender

- Nouns distinguish two genders, masculine and feminine.

- Neuter forms have been retained for adjectivals. These neuter forms are used for default agreement if no agreement controller with gender features is available:

*Skambinti pianinu yra sunku* 'playing the piano is difficult'

*Man sunku.*

(me:DAT hard:NEUTR) 'I'm having a hard time.'

# Gender

- Neuter forms can also function as nouns:
  *daryti gera* 'do good'
  *maža yra gražu* '(the) small is beautiful'
- Lithuanian grammarians often refuse to recognise these neuter forms as gender forms and describe them as adverbs. In principle, adverbs can function as default agreement forms, cf. Latv.

  *tas ir apbrīnojami* 'that is admirable'
- Still, for Lith. forms like *gražu* this is problematic as they have no typical adverbial functions (there is no *\*gražu dainuoti* 'sing beautifully')
- Similar gender systems (with more target genders than controller genders) are attested, e.g., in some Romance dialects.

# Gender

- Nouns often seem to inflect for gender: natural gender is denoted by changing the inflectional ending:

  *mokytojas : mokytoja 'teacher'*

  *darbininkas : darbininkė* 'worker'

  and even

  *liūtas : liūtė* 'lion : lioness'

  *asilas : asilė* 'ass' (m./f)

  Latvian has basically the same system but here 'inflectional' gender is reserved for humans: *lauva* 'lion', *ēzelis* 'ass' have suffixal feminine forms *lauviene, ēzeliene*)

Thank you!