ISSN 1648-2824 KALBŲ STUDIJOS. 2005. 7 NR. * STUDIES ABOUT LANGUAGES. 2005. NO. 7

A Study of Aspect Correspondences Between Latvian and Finnish

Andra Kalnača

Abstract. The category of aspect is always regarded as one of the most problematic verbal categories in Latvian and other languages. Aspect has been connected with different treatments of manifestation and semantics both by synchronic and diachronic approaches of investigation.
A study of aspect correspondences between Latvian and Finnish requires more attention in the Baltic and Finno-Ugric linguistics. In this paper only preliminary observations are made. Albeit the manifestation of the aspect differs in both languages, it indicates some interesting synchronic and diachronic parallels. Aspect in Latvian is always connected with the verb's prefixation and tense forms, and in some cases with the particular constructions with adverbs as complements. The aspectual meaning in Finnish manifests itself as a result of verbal valency and discourse semantics. The use of the constructions verb + adverb (particle) is observed as well. These constructions, which are similar formally and functionally in Latvian and Finnish, are the main link between aspect in both languages.

Introduction

The category of aspect is always regarded as one of the most problematic verbal categories in Latvian and other languages. Aspect has been connected with different treatments of manifestation and semantics both by synchronic and diachronic approaches of investigation (e.g., Dahl, 2000:3-25; Зализняк, Шмелев, 2000:10-17). The theoretical literature devoted to these problems is extremely wide and sometimes contradictious.

The analysis of aspect is closely linked to the interpretation of action in language. Aspect provides one of the linguistic possibilities to represent different real situations. Inasmuch as situations can be different, their manifestation tends to be varied. The most familiar kinds are the oppositions of imperfective / perfective, semelfactive / iterative aspects as well as durative, ingressive, inchoative kinds of action. These kinds are analysed in all investigations devoted to aspectology (e.g., Comrie, 1976; Dahl, 1985; Smith, 1997).

Neither in Latvian nor in Finnish does aspect create a pure morphological category of the verb, such as tense, mood or voice. The manifestation of aspectual meanings in Latvian and Finnish also differs from their representation in Slavonic, especially the Russian language. Russian is a well-known example of the category of aspect as the oppositions of imperfective / perfective, semelfactive / iterative aspects are marked there morphologically by affixation (Зализняк, Шмелев, 2000). Latvian and Finnish, on the other hand, are languages with mainly lexical and syntactic expression of imperfective / perfective or semelfactive / iterative aspectual meanings (Kangasmaa-Minn, 1984; Мустайоки, 1999; Kalnača, 2004).

It is important to note that manifestation of aspectual semantics in Latvian and Finnish is typologically different (Kangasmaa-Minn, 1984:77-79). The Latvian language belongs to the Baltic group of the Indo-European languages, while the Finnish language belongs to the Balto-Finnish branch of the Finno-Ugric languages. Thus aspect in Latvian is more similar to aspect in the Slavonic languages, as it functions in the system of the verb. In contrast, the meanings of aspect are expressed nominally in Finnish, by the alternation of cases in the utterance. However, Latvian and Finnish show some aspect correspondences. Most importantly it is the expression of imperfective / perfective action, which will be discussed in this investigation. Some similarities are connected with the semelfactive / iterative aspectual meanings, but this question should be the topic of another study.

The Expression of Aspect in Latvian

The expression of aspect in Latvian is complex. It is linked with the prefixation of verb, simple and complex tense forms and syntactic constructions such as *unprefixed verb + adverb.* Thus aspect cannot be regarded as a homogeneous morphological category, because it is linked with the derivation of verbs and some syntactic elements. So the main problems solved by the Latvian linguists are the following: can the aspect be the grammatical category of verb and where does the verbal aspect belong – to the derivational or the inflectional system of the verb (Kalme, Smiltniece, 2001:218-221; Nītiņa, 2001:90-93; Paegle, 2003:130-138). Various opinions and problems connected with the verbal aspect in Latvian are analysed by Holvet (2001:132-158). Admittedly, the same questions are important for Lithuanian linguistics (Paulauskienė, 1994:291-296; Ambrazas, 1996:288-290).

The opposition of the imperfective / perfective aspect in Latvian usually is morphological and it is linked with the prefix of the verb:

If the verb has a prefix, it expresses perfective action; if the verb does not have prefix, it expresses imperfective action, e.g., *nest: aiz-nest* "to carry: to carry away", *lasīt: iz-lasīt* "to read: to read through", *lēkt: pār-lēkt* "to jump: to jump over", *ēst: ap-ēst* "to eat: to eat up". Even if the prefixation of verbs is linked to lexical changes, perfectivity remains fundamental to the meaning of prefix. The so-called *Aktionsart* – local, quantitative or temporal meaning **(*n*)** – bands with the perfective aspect **(*Perf*)** as combination of sememes: ***(Perf + n) + verb***, e.g., *nest: aiz-nest, at-nest* "to

bring here"*, pie-nest* "to bring (to)"*, uz-nest* "to bring up"*, no-nest* "to bring down" (Kalnača, 2004:12). Admittedly *Aktionsart* explains the lexical nature of the verbal aspect in Latvian and other languages, including Russian.

The aspectual correlation is also observed morphologically between simple and complex tense forms in Latvian. The complex tense forms – present perfect, past perfect and future perfect – always express factitivity, while the simple tense forms can manifest imperfective or perfective action depending on the prefixed or unprefixed verbal form, e.g., **present indefinite** *lasu* "I read", **past indefinite** *lasīju* "I red", **future indefinite** *lasīšu* "I shall read", **present perfect** *esmu lasījis* " have read" **past perfect** *biju lasījis* " had read" **future perfect** *būšu lasījis* " shall have read". This opposition of tense forms and aspectual semantics means that the complex tense forms in any case manifest factitive and therefore perfective action:

The constructions *es esmu lasījis grāmatu* and *es esmu izlasījis grāmatu* "I have read a book", *es esmu gatavojis pusdienas* and *es esmu pagatavojis pusdienas* "I have cooked a dinner" from the factitive point of view in both cases express perfective and resultative action. The prefix can diversify the lexical meaning of the verb, but it cannot impress the aspectual meaning of the complex tense form. Moreover, simple and complex tense forms are possible for every verb, while the process of regular prefixation and perfectivization does not embrace all verbs. So in Latvian the factitive meaning of the complex tense forms is wider than the opposition of imperfective / perfective action, which relates mainly to the simple tense forms (Kalnača, 2004:27-30).

In Latvian the aspectual opposition of imperfective / perfective action can be syntactic as well. The construction *unprefixed verb + adverb* is one of the syntactic aspectual manifestations (Kalnača, 1998:247-255), e.g., *nest prom* "to carry away", *nest augšā* "to bring up", *lēkt pāri* "to jump over". These constructions with adverbs as complements express imperfective continuous action, which is directed upon a concrete local or quantitative goal (Comrie, 1976:91). They are used mainly in actual present, when prefixed verbs with a perfective aspect contradict the continuous nature of the present tense (Kalnača, 1996:62-65), e.g., *Es pašlaik lēcu pāri strautam* "I am jumping over the brook", not **Es pašlaik pārlēcu pāri strautam* or *Es pašlaik nesu prom grāmatu* "I am bringing away a book", not **Es pašlaik aiznesu prom grāmatu*. Though, the constructions are found in other tense forms as well, if it is necessary to emphasise continuous action with concrete goal: *Es lēcu pāri strautam, Es nesu prom grāmatu* (past indefinite) "I was jumping over the brook", "I was bringing away a book"*; Es lēkšu pāri strautam, Es nesīšu prom grāmatu* (future indefinite) "I shall be jumping over the brook", "I shall be bringing away a book". The opposition of imperfective / perfective aspect is marked in two ways – syntactically for imperfective action, morphologically for perfective action:

However, the aspectual status and semantics of mentioned constructions are treated in different ways. Kalme & Smiltniece (2001:221) emphasise that the constructions express perfective action. They can be synonyms of prefixed verbs, e.g., *nest: nest prom* / *aiznest, lēkt: lēkt pāri* / *pārlēkt*. Paegle (2003:133-134) analyses these constructions as a kind of imperfective aspect, id est, as the variety of imperfective action with local complement: *nest* / *nest prom: aiznest, lēkt / lēkt pāri: pārlēkt*. Holvoet (2001:146) argues that such constructions must be excluded from the system of aspect as a combination of lexical units, which do not have a link with aspect. Nevertheless, traditionally the constructions *unprefixed verb + adverb* are analysed as part of the aspect system in the Latvian linguistics.

The Expression of Aspect in Finnish

In Finnish the expression of aspect is different, because the verb lacks the formal distinctions of it. The aspectual meanings depend on the formation of the discourse structure, namely, on the semantic backbone of the utterance (Kangasmaa-Minn, 1984:84; Tommola, 1990). The opposition of imperfective / perfective aspect for transitive verbs is marked by the alternation of partitive and accusative cases of noun (Kangasmaa-Minn, 1984:84-86; Tommola, 1990:351-353; Nelson, 1998:157-159, etc.).

The noun in partitive or accusative is the direct object in such utterances. So the meaning of imperfective / perfective aspect is manifested by the case alternation of the direct object, e.g., *Hän auttoi minua kuivaamaan astioita* (partitive)*: Hän auttoi minua kuivaamaan astiat* (accusative) "He helped me to dry the dishes: He helped me with drying the dishes" (Tommola, 1990:359). The same opposition of imperfective / perfective aspect is observed in such sentences as *Minä pesen autoa* (partitive): *Minä pesen auton* (accusative) "I am washing a car: I have washed the car"*; Minä syön kalaa* (partitive): *Minä syön kalan* (accusative) "I am eating a fish: I have eaten the fish". The finite verb is not directly involved in aspect marking. The basic function of the case alternation is different; it indicates indefiniteness or definiteness of action. Aspectual meaning results from this function. In other words, aspect marking in the direct object nouns makes this category highly dependent on discourse functions: the definiteness and specificness / non-specificness of the object reference (Tommola, 1990:349). Unlike Latvian, the aspect in Finnish is not primarily shown in the verbs themselves but in the noun categories dependent on the verbs. As Kangasmaa-Minn argues, it is more correct to speak of the aspect of the utterance than the aspect of the verb (Kangasmaa-Minn, 1984:86).

In Finnish constructions *verb + adverbs (particles)* are closely connected with the opposition of imperfective / perfective action as well, e.g., *mennä sisään* "to go in", *lukea läpi* "to read through". It is important to note that particles point to the local or quantitative terminativity (Larsson, 1984:102-103). These constructions concretise the goal of the action, therefore they could be considered as the realization of the perfective aspect. The utterance that uses the construction *verb + adverbs (particles)* becomes perfective, so such terminativity is a manifestation of the perfective aspect (Kangasmaa-Minn, 1984:88). Accordingly, a verb without a particle indicates an imperfective action, while a verb together with a particle indicates perfective action., e.g., *mennä: mennä sisään* "to go: to go in"*, lukea: lukea läpi* "to read: to read through".

The Aspect Correspondences Between Latvian and Finnish

The Finnish particles correspond to the verbal prefixes in the Latvian language or to the adverbs in the constructions *unprefixed verb + adverb*:

The constructions *unprefixed verb + adverb* are used in Latvian mainly in the present indefinite tense, namely, actual present instead of the prefixed verbs, e.g., *Es eju iekšā, lasu cauri* "I am going in, reading through". Formally these constructions in Latvian are almost identical to the Finnish ones. However, as mentioned above, in Latvian these constructions express imperfective, continuous action, while in Finnish they express perfective, terminative action. The aspect correspondences between Latvian and Finnish are the following:

The origin of aspectual constructions *verb + adverb (particle)* is treated in different ways. In the tradition of Baltic linguistics these constructions are described as Finno-Ugric loans in Latvian (Endzelīns, 1951:961; Kagaine, Bušs, 1985:35-44). This opinion is based on the formal similarities as well as the fact that such constructions are most frequently used in the Livonian dialect of Latvian. This dialect was formed under the strong influence of the Finno-Ugric languages – Livonian and Estonian. In both languages the aspectual system of the verb is very similar to the Finnish one.

In contrast, in Finno-Ugristics constructions, *verb + adverb (particle)* are discussed as hypothetical Indo-European, and, in particular, Baltic borrowings (Kangasmaa-Minn, 1984:77-79; Larsson, 1984:105-107). More precisely, aspect and the expression of aspect are borrowed into Balto-Finnish from the Baltic languages, probably, over a period of the Proto-Finnic language. Larsson points out that "There is, however, at least a theoretical possibility that the Baltic system was taken over more or less directly" (Larsson, 1984:105). As the Baltic and Finno-Ugric languages differ typologically, the Baltic aspect manifestation, of course, was transformed. It is a wellknown fact that the Finno-Ugric languages lack prefixes. Therefore the morphologic expression of the Baltic aspect could be modified in two lexically syntactic ways – the alternation of cases and constructions *verb + adverb (particle).* The grammatical category of the Baltic verb has become a semantic category of an utterance in Finnish.

Therefore the question about the Finno-Ugric origin of Latvian aspect constructions can be interpreted in different ways. Inasmuch as similar constructions *verb + adverb (particle)* are founded in Lithuanian (*eiti: eiti iš* "to go: to go out"), Russian (идти*:* идти прочь "to go: to go away"), English (*to eat: to eat up*) and other Indo-European languages (Comrie, 1976:93; Holvoet, 2001:135), it must be concluded that the constructions can be the result of natural development of any mentioned language. More frequent use in Latvian, naturally, can be the result of interference from other languages.

Conclusions

The analysis of the aspect correspondences between Latvian and Finnish is very important for the synchronic and diachronic investigation of the Latvian verb and its grammatical categories. A study of aspect correspondences between Latvian and Finnish requires more attention in Baltic and Finno-Ugric linguistics. In this paper only preliminary observations are made. Albeit the manifestation of the aspect differs in both languages, it indicates some interesting synchronic and diachronic parallels. Aspect in Latvian is always connected with the verb's prefixation and tense forms, and in some cases with the particular constructions with adverbs as complements. The aspectual meaning in Finnish manifests itself as a result of verbal valency and discourse semantics. The use of the constructions *verb + adverb (particle)* is observed as well. These constructions, which are similar formally and functionally in Latvian and Finnish, are the main link between aspect in both languages.

References

1. Ambrazas, V. (ed.) (1996). Dabartinės lietuvių kalbos gramatika. Vilnius.
2. Comrie, B. (1976). Aspect. Cambridge.
3. Dahl, Ö. (1985). Tense and Aspect Systems. Basil Blackwell.
4. Dahl, Ö. (2000). The Tense-aspect Systems of European Languages in a Typological Perspective // Tense and Aspect in the Languages of Europe. Ed. by Dahl, Ö. Mouton de Gruyter, 3-25.
5. Endzelīns, J. (1951). Latviešu gramatika. Rīga.
6. Holvoet, A. (2001). Studies in the Latvian Verb. Kraków.
7. Kagaine, E., Bušs, O. (1985). Dažas baltu un Baltijas somu valodu semantiskās paralēles // Baltu valodas senāk un tagad. Rīga, 35-44.
8. Kalme, V., Smiltniece, G. (2001). Latviešu literārās valodas vārddarināšana un morfoloģija. Liepāja.
9. Kalnača, A. (1996). Darbības vārda veida un laika nozīmju mijiedarbība vienkāršās un saliktās tagadnes formās // Baltu filoloģija VI. Rīga, 62-65.
10. Kalnača, A. (1998). Darbības vārda veida opozīcijas kontekstuālā izpausme latviešu valodā // Linguistica Lettica 2. Rīga, 247-255.
11. Kalnača, A. (2004). Darbības vārda veida kategorijas realizācija latviešu valodā // Linguistica Lettica 13. Rīga, 5-34.
12. Kangasmaa-Minn, E. (1984). Tense, Aspect and Aktionsarten in Finno-Ugrian // Aspect Bound. A Voyage into the Realm of Germanic, Slavonic and Finno-Ugrian Aspectology. Groot de, C., Tommola, H. (eds.). Dordreht – Holland / Cinnaminson, 77-96.
13. Larsson, L. G. (1984). The rôle of Baltic Influence in the Aspectual System of Finnish // Aspect Bound. A Voyage into the Realm of Germanic, Slavonic and Finno-Ugrian aspectology. Groot de, C., Tommola, H. (eds.). Dordreht – Holland / Cinnaminson, 97-109.
14. Мустайоки, А. (1999). Аспектуальность в теории функционального синтаксиса // Die grammatischen Korrelationen. Tošović B. (Hrsg.). – Graz, 229-244.
15. Nelson, D. (1998). Case Competition in Finnish // Nordic Journal of Linguistics. 2., Vol. 21. Scandinavian University Press, 145-178.
16. Nītiņa, D. (2001). Latviešu valodas morfoloģija. Rīga.
17. Paegle, Dz. (2003). Latviešu literārās valodas morfoloģija. I daļa. Rīga.
18. Paulauskienė, A. (1994). Lietuvių kalbos morfologija. Vilnius.
19. Smith, C. S. (1997). The Parameter of Aspect. (2nd edition). Kluwer Academic Publishers.
20. Tommola, H. (1990). On Finnish "Aspect" in Discourse // Verbal Aspect in Discourse. Thelin, N. (ed.) Amsterdam / Philadelphia, 349-364.
21. Зализняк, А. А., Шмелев, А. Д. (2000). Введение в русскую аспектологию. Москва.

Andra Kalnača

Aspekto analogijų tarp latvių ir suomių kalbų tyrimas

Santrauka

Aspekto kategorija visada yra laikoma viena iš labiausia probleminių veiksmažodžio kategorijų latvių ir kitose kalbose. Aspektas yra susijęs su įvairiais jo traktavimo būdais ir semantika bei sinchroniniu ir diachroniniu tyrimo požiūriu.
Aspekto analogijų tarp latvių ir suomių tyrimas reikalauja daugiau dėmesio skirti baltų ir fino-ugrų kalbotyrai. Šiame straipsnyje pateikiami tik parengiamieji stebėjimai. Nors aspektas skirtingai pasireiškia abiejose kalbose, jis atspindi kai kurias įdomias sinchronines ir diachronines paraleles.
Latvių kalboje aspektas visada yra siejamas su veiksmažodžio prefiksacija ir laikų formomis, o kai kuriais atvejais su detaliomis konstrukcijomis su kuriom prieveiksmiai eina papildiniais. Aspektinė reikšmė suomių kalboje pasireiškia kaip veiksmažodinio valentingumo rezultatas ir diskurso semantika. Taip pat yra stebima konstrukcija veiksmažodis + prieveiksmis (dalelytė). Konstrukcijos, kurios yra formaliai ir funkcionaliai panašios latvių ir suomių kalbose, yra pagrindinė jungtis tarp abiejų kalbų.

Straipsnis įteiktas 2004 05
Parengtas spaudai 2005 03

The Author

Andra Kalnača, PhD, assistant professor at Latvia University, Latvia.
Area of research interests: general and theoretical grammar, functional research of language.
Main research results (selected publications in 2004): *monograph:* Morfēmika un morfonoloģija. – Rīga: LU Akadēmiskais apgāds, 2004. *Articles:* Kvazimorfēmas latviešu valodā // Kalbos teorija ir praktika. – Kaunas, 2004, 73-79; Bemerkungen zu einigen neueren Entwicklungstendenzen der lettischen Sprache // Sprache, Literatur, Politik. Ost– und Südosteuropa im Wandel. – Hamburg, 2004, 237-243; Darbības vārda veida kategorijas realizācija latviešu valodā // Linguistica Lettica 13. – Rīga, 2004, 5-34.
Address: University of Latvia, Faculty of Philology / Faculty of Modern Languages, Visvalža street 4a, Rīga LV-1050, Latvia
E-mail: kalnaca@latnet.lv

DOI: 10.5755/j01.sal.1.7.43214