

## MORPHO-SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC ANALYSIS OF ASPECT IN ENGLISH AND LITHUANIAN

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*The English and Lithuanian languages show a systematic correlation between a grammatically expressed opposition of aspects lexically and morphologically encoded in verb forms. English and Lithuanian are encoding aspectual predication syntactically and located at the interface of inflectional morphology and lexical semantics. When dealing with aspect it is important to make differences between grammatical and lexical expressions of the internal time concept of a situation. The indication of the verb tense for different situations to refer to progressive or perfect aspects in English and Lithuanian is a major problem for translators.*

*The paper deals with the aspectual system of the verb as the predicate: translating and indicating time references of tenses their analytic and synthetic forms mostly do not match up on a one-to-one basis in such different languages as English and Lithuanian.*

*The results of the translation analysis have a practical application in comparative syntax and typological linguistics.*

### **Theoretical background of aspect**

The objective of the analysis focuses on the internal temporal contour of verbs (predicates) and the importance of distinguishing progressive and perfect aspects when translating and indicating time references of analytic and synthetic tense forms in English and Lithuanian.

Most grammarians state that the three grammatical categories such as tense, aspect and mood have a noticeable effect on each other, i.e. the expression of present and past time cannot be considered separately from aspect. Tenses and actual language forms of verbs are used to represent time reference notions (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, Svartvik, 1982, 40; Lewis, 1991, 52; Jacobs, 1995, 187; Yule, 1998, 54; Holvoet, 2004, 146).

In English, aspect deals with tense forms of the verb (present and past) and with their functions indicating time references: an event can be completed or in progress. English has two distinct forms for aspect, perfect and progressive, which are marked on the verb. Thus, aspect is the grammatical marking on verbs of the internal time structure of a situation. However, time reference has

to do with meaning rather than form, events and situations are located in time. Jacobs treats “aspect being a complicated phenomenon not because of the tense forms of the verb that are used to represent it, but because it is often impossible to separate the contribution of aspect to a sentence interpretation from the contributions of the predicates that occur with the aspect” (Jacobs, 1995, 187, 201). More over, not all predicates allow progressive aspect forms in English. Stative predicates use the simple present tense form of the verb to refer to present time, whereas dynamic predicates use the present tense form of the verb and the progressive aspect combination for present time reference (Jacobs, 1995, 195).

Opinions differ concerning the category of aspect in English. According to Jacobs (1995, 195) “the traditional school grammar of English encounters as having a twelve-tense system, confuses tense with time reference and conceals the nature of the aspectual system. It assumes that tense and time are the same and that the perfect and progressive aspects are little more than devices to form additional tenses or expanded tenses” (Hornby, 1976, 78-91; Onions, 1971, 99-106; Kaushanskaja, 1973, 81; Iofik, 1981, 73-74; Chalker, 1993, 87, 98). A number of grammarians treat aspect as a category of semantics (Koshevaya, 1982, 173; Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, Svartvik, 1982, 40-41; Collins Cobuild, 1990, 270-279; Jacobs, 1995, 195-189; Lewis, 1991, 51-52; Comrie, 1995, 1244; Yule, 1998, 62-63).

In Lithuanian the tense and the aspect as the grammatical categories of the conjugated verbs are perceived as syntactic–predicate categories. They have the morphological expression of the conjugated verb and are treated as corresponding to the semantic properties of time reference (Paulauskiene, 1994, 326). In Lithuanian, the aspect as the semantic and the syntactic property of the verb is expressed by derivational means: the aspectual meanings of the verbal forms are associated with prefixes, suffixes and adverbs of time. In Lithuanian, the two aspectual meanings are distinguished: imperfective and perfective. The prefixes change the perfective character of a verb modifying the verbal meaning in a variety of ways: some prefixes may express the notion of completed action with an implication of its limit or achieved result, or limited duration. However, “most of the prefixes have corresponding prepositions either quite identical in form (*i- in-; iš- from; per- over; su- with; už- over, by, for*) or with apophonic vowel alternation (*apie- > ap- round, about; pa-, po- under; nuo- > nu- from; prie- > pri- at-, by*). The prefixes *at-* and *par-* alone have no counterparts among prepositions in Standard Lithuanian”. “The suffixed verbs acquire the imperfective meanings of iterativity, or duration, or state. The only perfectivizing suffix is *-er(ė)ti/-el(ė)ti* with momentary meaning”. Some verbs have dual class membership: for instance, a verb may denote an action and a process in different contexts (Lithuanian Grammar, 1997, 221-222, 234-237). However, Holvoet stresses that the system of aspect is mixed in Lithuanian. “Formally, aspect is expressed at two different levels: the opposition of semelfactive and iterative (habitual) past tense forms (*rašė* ‘wrote, was writing’: *rašydavo* ‘used to write’) is inflectional, whereas the opposition of imperfective and perfective stems (*rašyti* : *parašyti*) belongs to derivational morphology” (Holvoet, 2004, 141, 170).

Difficulties arise when translating the verb (predicate) because of the mismatches of the complexity and the interdependence of the tense systems and time references between Lithuanian and English. For the following Lithuanian sentence in the illustrated example *Ką tu valgai?* the three translations are possible into English that contain the different verb forms of the present tense. For example: *What do you eat? What are you eating? What have you been eating?* The first sentence in English uses the simple present form of the verb to indicate activity rather than an event happening

at the moment of speech. The second sentence in English combines the present continuous form of the verb and the progressive aspect to locate the events at the moment of speech. The combination of the perfect and the continuous form of the verb which indicates the perfect and the progressive aspects in the third sentence in English is viewed as ongoing and not completed yet. Lithuanian uses a single grammatical tense form of the verb to express the three kinds of time relations indicated in the grammatical tense forms of the verbs in the English sentences. These aspectual features of the English tense system are very confusing for translators.

When dealing with the aspect it is relevant to distinguish grammatical and lexical expressions with the internal temporal elements of a situation. The distinction is made between *fill* and *fill up* in English, or *pildyti* and *užpildyti* in Lithuanian. The internal temporal nature of the verbs *fill* and *pildyti* is non-perfect in both languages. However, the internal temporal nature of the verbs *fill up* and *užpildyti* is perfect and reaches the end-point. The distinction of the completeness in the English example *fill up* is indicated by the particle *up*, the grammatical form of the verb is non-perfect. In the Lithuanian example *užpildyti*, the distinction of the meaning of the completeness is indicated by the prefix *už*.

The problem of the research is associated with the aspectual system of the English language that does not fit the aspectual system of the Lithuanian language when translating the tense forms of the verbs.

The comparative analysis of the verb (predicate) aims at distinguishing grammatical form and lexical expressions of the internal temporal properties of a situation of the verb as a predicate when translating from English into Lithuanian. The restrictive effects of the grammatical aspect marking are based on the syntactic interpretation of a verb's inherent aspectual character. The comparative analysis is based on the content of scientific-technical texts as viewed from the grammatical (structural) and semantic perspective.

### Comparative approach to progressive and perfect aspects

The combination of *be* requires the verb following it to be in its present participle form, the so-called *-ing* form, is known as progressive aspect in English (*is/are* to mark on the present tense form of the verb) (Jacobs, 1995, 200). In English the continuous form of the verb denotes an action in its development, in its progress, with certain time limits.

(1) *The Internet is changing the way people shop.*

*Internetas keičia žmonių apsipirkimo įgūdžius (Pac., 2003).*

The form of the verb *is changing* in the example (1), in English, combines the present continuous tense form and the progressive aspect to locate the events at the moment of speech. The translated tense form of the verb *keičia* in the example (1), imperfective in Lithuanian, views the action in its continuation. However, the same tense form of the verb in Lithuanian *keičia* may indicate an event, a non-durative meaning in a different context. Thus, Lithuanian may use a single grammatical tense form of the verb to express the two kinds of time relations, i.e. durative and non-durative.

In English “the *have* is the special form known as the perfect, which requires that the verb following it be in its past participle form, the *have* plus past participle combination indicate perfect

aspect" (Jacobs, 1995, 191). The contribution of the perfect aspect to the sentence interpretation indicating the completed action describes the past event with current relevance to the present in English, and the translation of the past form of the verb makes confusion into Lithuanian.

- (2) *The situation in labour-market has also changed.*      *Pasikeitė padėtis darbo jėgos rinkoje*  
(Pet., 2003).

In the example (2), in English, the present perfect form of the verb *has changed* refers to the present time and indicates the result of the action. In the example (2), in Lithuanian, the perfective aspect of the verb form *pasikeitė* (simple, active) is associated with the prefix *pa-* as the derivational means. The prefix *pa-* changes the aspectual character of the verb *keitė* into perfective modifying the meaning of the predicate. The translated form of the verb *pasikeitė* is in the past and indicates the meaning of the perfective aspect; it is viewed as having been completed. The translation may be varied into Lithuanian as such *Padėtis darbo jėgos rinkoje yra pasikeitusi*.

The syntactic factors affect the interpretation of the grammatical aspect expressed by the tense form of the verb when comparing English and Lithuanian.

- (3) *Due to this cams repeatedly press elastic pipe*      *Dėl to kumšteliai suspaudinėja elastinį vamzdelį,*  
*causing the motion of a fluid inside it* (Bub., 2002).      *priversdami jame esantį skystį judėti.*

The non-perfect (present) verb form *press* with the adverb *repeatedly* used in the example (3), in English, syntactically tend to be interpreted as the repeated act. In the Lithuanian translation the verb with the suffix *-inė-* derived from the prefixed verb *suspaudinėja* is imperfective. Due to its iterative meaning the suffix *-inė-* is used as means of secondary imperfectivization and ascribes the imperfective meaning to the prefixed verb *suspaudinėja*.

Typical example will be seen to involve the perfect aspect and the simple past as non-perfect in English.

- (4) *The restrictions have been masked often,*      *Apribojimai dažnai būdavo maskuojami,*  
*e.g., the carrier delivered the cargo to foreign*      *pavyzdžiui, vežėjas, atvežęs krovinį į kitą šalį,*  
*country was forced to come back without any cargo.*      *buvo priverstas grįžti be krovinio* (Pet., 2003).

In the example (4), in English, the present perfect form of the verb (passive, compound) *have been masked* implies the current reference of the result, and the adverb *often* indicates the meaning of repetition to the event. However, the ordinary past tense form of the verb *was forced to come back* (passive, compound) makes no such commitments; it indicates the indefinite past time. The past perfect frequentative tense form *būdavo maskuojami* (passive, compound) with the adverb of frequency *dažnai* refer to the actions that were habitual and were repeated in the past more than once. The past perfect tense form *buvo priverstas grįžti* (passive, compound) with the prefixed verb *priverstas* denotes a result.

When the two aspects, the perfect and the progressive, occur together in English, the combination of tense, aspect and voice shows the perfect aspect always precedes progressive aspect. The sense of the result of the perfect aspect applies to the duration of the progressive.

(5) *The government has been asking for an extension of a term of regulations equalization because bridges, crossovers and other road elements have to be secured.*

*Vyriausybė prašo pratęsti terminus ir suvienodinti reikalavimus, nes gali tekti stiprinti tiltus, viadukus, kitus įrenginius (Pet., 2003).*

In the example (5), in English, *has been asking ...* the aspectual meaning is viewed as the compositional, compound and active. The present perfect continuous tense form *has been asking ...* relates the implicated meaning of the present time reference to the situation of utterance, and the period is seen as extending up to the present. The translated example (5) into Lithuanian *prašo pratęsti ir suvienodinti* (compositional, compound and active) implies the process of the action and the prefixed verb forms denote the result of the actions. The English present perfect continuous tense form of the verb can be translated with the implicated meaning of the past time into Lithuanian as *...buvo prašiusi pratęsti ir suvienodinti... or prašė pratęsti ir suvienodinti...*

Verb forms of the tense systems and the aspect in the English and Lithuanian languages are treated as distinct dimensions corresponding to the semantic properties of time reference.

## Conclusions

Translating verb tense and aspect is the most troublesome area in comparative analysis of tense-aspect systems of the English and Lithuanian languages. The translation analysis proves the significance to identify cross-linguistically recurring patterns of semantic interpretations involving grammaticalized oppositions of aspects morphologically and lexically expressed in verb forms in such structurally different languages as English and Lithuanian. The grammatical expressions of the present perfect, the present perfect continuous and the past simple forms of the verbs do not always have the same interpretations of time references when translating from English into Lithuanian. Thus, time references of tense forms are defined as depending on the text meaning. Moreover, the syntactic factors affect the interpretation of the grammatical aspect expressed by the tense forms of the verb when comparing English and Lithuanian. The past tense forms of the verb do not necessarily show past time and the present tense forms of the verb not always indicate present time reference to the sentence when translating. The conceptual distinction between the same grammatical tense forms of the verbs involves different perspective and time references in Lithuanian.

## SOURCES

The sources are the reports of translation internship: the material comprises different technical texts (Petrulionytė K., HMB 00/01; Pačekvičiūtė K., HMB 00/01).

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## MORFOSINTAKSINĖ IR SEMANTINĖ VEIKSMAŽODŽIO ASPEKTO ANALIZĖ

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Santrauka

Anglų ir lietuvių kalbų gretinamoji veiksmažodžių/predikatų opozicija atskleidžia sisteminių tarpusavio ryšį tarp veikslų, kurie yra morfologiškai ir leksiškai užkoduoti veiksmažodžių formose. Gramatinė laiko morfemų reikšmė viena pati galutinai nenustato laiko sąvokos sakinyje šiose kalbose. Sakinio predikacijoje užkoduota eigos ir įvykio veiklo rezultatinė reikšmė veiksmažodžių, kurie pažymi paprastą veiksmą. Gramatinį veikslą ribojantys veiksniai būdingi tik veiksmažodžiu.

Lietuvių kalboje sakinio veiksmažodžio (predikato) veikslas reiškiamas įvairiais priešdėliais ir priesagomis. Kadangi gramatinė laikų išraiška neįgauna tos pačios interpretacijos vertime, laikai yra apibūdinami kaip priklausomi reiškiniai nuo konteksto. Sakinio faktoriai veikia gramatinio veiklo interpretaciją, išreikštą veiksmažodžiais, sugretinus abi skirtingų sistemų kalbas. Būtojo laiko veiksmažodžiai nebūtinai nurodo būtąjį laiką, o esamojo laiko veiksmažodžiai ne visada nurodo tą laiką, kuris sakinyje yra pasakytas.

Šiame darbe nagrinėjama keletas techninės kalbos veiksmažodžio (predikato) kaip sakinio dalies esamojo ir būtojo laikų raiškos atvejų, atskleidžiant eigos ir įvykio veiklo rezultatinų formų atitikmenis tipinėje sintaksinėje aplinkoje.

Gretinamoji analizė atlikta remiantis mokslinės-techninės inžinerijos tekstais bei jų vertimais ir yra pagrįsta struktūriniu (gramatiniu) ir teksto semantiniu požiūriu.

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