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# What is left behind the scenes: non-trivial uses of the Latvian perfect

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# Outline

- the Latvian tense system and the structure of the perfect forms
- **typical uses of the Latvian perfect in conversations**
  
- interpretation of tense forms in conversations and narratives
- **uses of the Latvian perfect in narratives 1 (with reference to states)**
- states and events in a narrative
- **uses of the Latvian perfect in narratives 2 (with reference to events)**
  
- aspectual analysis of the Latvian perfect with respect to its narratives uses
- tendencies in the development of the Latvian perfect

# Data

- Parallel Lithuanian-Latvian-Lithuanian corpus (LiLa) at [lila.korpuss.lv](http://lila.korpuss.lv)
- original Latvian works of fiction (with Lithuanian translations) 1,7 mln words
- all examples come from the original Latvian texts

# Simple vs Perfect Tenses

1sg *darīt* 'do, make'

Perfect tenses are given in sg.f

	Simple	<b>Compound=Perfect</b>
Present	<i>daru</i>	<i>esmu darījusi</i>
Past	<i>darīju</i>	<i>biju darījusi</i>
Future	<i>darīšu</i>	<i>būšu darījusi</i>

# Perfect Construction

- *būt* 'be' + Past Active Participle (pst.pa)

<i>Par</i>	<i>t-o</i>	<i>es</i>	<i>jau</i>	<i>esmu</i>	<i>dzirdēj-us-i</i>
about dem.acc.sg	1sg.nom		already	be.prs.1sg	hear-pst.pa-sg.f

'I have heard about it already.'

# Present Perfect uses: experiential

*Par t-o es jau esmu dzirdēj-us-i*  
about dem-acc.sg 1sg.nom already be.prs.1sg hear-pst.pa-sg.f  
'I have heard about it already.'

- a situation of a certain type occurring at least once during a period in the past up to the present (Comrie 1976, 58)
- occurs with all types of verbs, including atelic ones

# Present Perfect uses: subject-oriented resultative

*Vai esmu atpalik-us-i no sav-a*  
q be.prs.1sg fall.behind-pst.pa-sg.f from rfl.poss-gen.sg.m  
*laik-a vai aizsteig-us-ie-s t-am priekšā?*  
time-gen.sg or hurry.away-pst.pa-sg.f-rfl dem-dat.sg.m ahead  
'Have I fallen behind my time or hurried away ahead of it?'

- a state brought about by a preceding event (Nedjalkov & Jaxontov 1988, 6)
- with telic verbs
- intransitive verbs denote a change of state of the subject

# Present Perfect uses: possessive resultative

*Un nu esmu jūs sagrāb-us-i*  
and now be.prs.1sg 2pl.acc seize-pst.pa-sg.f  
*sauj-ā kā tauriņ-u <...>*  
handful-loc.sg as butterfly-acc.sg

‘And now I have seized you in my hand as if you were a butterfly’

- transitive verbs convey a change of state involving the direct object and also affecting the subject (Nedjalkov & Jaxontov 1988, 9–10)
- with telic verbs

# Present Perfect uses: current relevance

*Droši vien esmu pārāk ilg-i par t-o*  
probably be.prs.1sg too long-adv about dem-acc.sg

*sapņoj-us-i* <...>

dream-pst.pa-sg.f

‘Probably, I have dreamt about it too long’  
(implied: ‘I’m not interested in the object of my dreams any longer’)

- the effect of the previous situation is ‘not directly derivable from the meaning of the verb’ (Dahl & Hedin 2000, 392)
- since lexical restrictions are lifted, the verb does not need to be telic
- the interpretation of the resultant state is based on knowledge of the world and the situation

# Present Perfect uses

- experiential: a situation of a certain type occurring at least once during a period in the past up to the moment of speech
- **resultative: a state at the moment of speech brought about by a preceding event**
- current relevance: the effect of the previous situation 'not directly derivable from the meaning of the verb', that exists at the moment of speech

## Past Perfect uses: cancelled result

***Bij-a***      *jūs-u*      *liet-a*      <...>

be.pst-3    2pl-gen    file-nom.sg

*aiz*      *skapj-a*                      ***aizkrit-us-i.***

behind    bookcase-gen.sg    fall.behind-pst.pa-sg.f

‘You file <...> had fallen behind the bookcase.’ (A part of the meaning is that the file was recovered later.)

- The resultant state existed at some point before the moment of speech but does not exist at the moment of speech (Squartini 1999, 57–58)

# Deictic pattern/register of tense interpretation

- deictic pattern/register relates a sentence to the time of speech
- the default pattern found, for example, in conversation, also applied to isolated sentences (Smith 2003, 93)
- associated with a canonical communication situation when the speaker and the listener share both space and time (Padučeva 1996, 286; Padučeva 2011, 137)

# Narrative pattern/register of tense interpretation

- the traditional idea that tense is always deictic is not applicable to narratives, where events and states are related to previous events and temporal adverbials rather than the time of speech (Smith 2003, 93)
- in the narrative pattern/register there can be no correlation between the sentence and the moment of speech because the speaker/narrator is distanced from the listener (Padučeva 1996, 286; Paducheva 2011, 137–138)

# Past Perfect: resultative (narrative)

<i>Just-s</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>viegli</i>	<u><i>piebikstīj-a,</i></u>	
pn-nom.sg	1sg.dat	gently	nudge.pst-3	
<i>jo</i>	<b><i>bij-u</i></b>		<b><i>palik-us-i</i></b>	<i>iepakaļ.</i>
because	be.pst-1sg		fall.behind-pst.pa-sg.f	behind

‘Justs nudged me gently because I had fallen behind (him).’

- the resultant state holds at the time of the previous event in the text (which is expressed by a verb in the past tense)

# Narrative pattern/register of tense interpretation

- locating events and states of a narrative in time prior to the time of speech is a convention (Smith 2003, 94)
- the choice between the present and the past tense in a narrative reflects the degree to which the listener is distanced from the situation and/or the speaker, the narrative present cancelling the distance between the speaker and the listener (Padučeva 1996, 289; Paducheva 2011, 142)

# Present Perfect: resultative (narrative)

*Piecel-o-s                    sēd-us,                    bet                    Rut-e                    man                    ir*  
sit.up.prs-1sg-rfl    sit-cvb                    but                    pn-nom.sg    1sg.dat                    be.prs.3

***uzgriez-us-i**                    mugur-u                    un                    aiztur                    asar-as*  
turn.away-pst.pa-sg.f    back-acc.sg    and                    hold.prs.3                    tear-acc.pl

*cik                    spēk-a.*  
how.much    strength-gen.sg

‘I sit up but Rute has turned her back on me and is doing her best to hold her tears.’

- the resultant state holds at the time of the previous event in the text (which is expressed by a verb in the present tense)

# States and events in a narrative

- ‘Narrative presents a sequence of events and states that have the same participants and/or a causal or other consequential relation’
- ‘Narrative time advances with bounded events <...> Unbounded situations – ongoing events and states, including perfects – **do not move time.**’
- ‘We interpret the unbounded situations as **simultaneous with a time previously established in the text.**’

(Smith 2003, 26–27, with references to other authors)

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because	be.pst-1sg		fall.behind-pst.pa-sg.f	behind

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‘I sit up but Rute has turned her back on me and is doing her best to hold her tears.’

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# States and events in a narrative according to our data

- Our data show that a resultant state can introduce a plot-advancing bounded event into a narrative by marking its endpoint while the event itself remains 'behind the scenes'
- The movement of time corresponding to an event behind the scenes is revealed by reference to other events occupying the same time or by directly mentioning the passage of time

# Behind the scenes

Eins-zwei,    *un*    *viņ-a*            ***bij-a***            ***uzzīmēj-us-i***            *uz*  
and    3-nom.sg.f    be.pst-3            draw-pst.pa-sg.f    on  
*Andžel-o*        *vaig-a*            *sarkanbaltsarkan-as*        *strīp-as*.  
pn-gen.sg    cheek-gen.sg        red.white.red-acc.pl.f        stripe-acc.pl

‘Eins-zwei, and she drew (literally: had drawn) red-white-red stripes on Angelo’s face’ meaning ‘Eins-zwei, and red-white-red stripes appeared on Angelo’s face, drawn by her hand.’

- the event happens so quicky (*eins-zwei*, presumably in two seconds) that it is only perceived from the resultant state

# Behind the scenes

*Kamēr*      *mazgāj-o-s,*      *mās-a*      ***bij-a***  
while      wash.pst-1sg-rfl      sister-nom.sg      be.pst-3  
***sagatavoj-us-i***      *div-us*      *stipr-us*      *kokteiļ-us.*  
prepare-pst.pa-sg.f      two-acc.pl.m      strong-acc.pl.m      cocktail-acc.pl  
'While I washed, my sister made (literally: had made) us two strong cocktails.'

- the event (preparation of cocktails) is simultaneous with another event (washing) in a parallel plot line and goes unnoticed until the resultant state is revealed when the two plot lines merge

## Cf. Old French passé composé

from Fleischman (1990, 138), *La Chanson de Roland*, 1902f

*Vait le ferir en guise de baron:*

***Trenchet li ad li quens le destre poign.***

‘Noble that he is, he goes to strike him,

Count [Roland] **has** his [Marsile’s] hand **cut off.**’

‘Observe that the act of cutting off Marsile’s right hand is not itself narrated — we see Roland approach his enemy; the next frame shows us the result: Marsile’s right hand is missing. This technique is common in cinematographic narration <...>’

# Aspectual analysis of perfect

Klein (1994, 108) introduces the notion of Topic Time ('a time for which an assertion is made'), different from both the Time of Situation and the Time of Utterance, so that different aspects can be defined in terms of how the Topic Time is related to the Situation Time

- imperfective: TT is included in TSit, giving the impression that the situation is viewed from within (also progressive: *Mary was sleeping*)
- perfective: TSit is included in TT, the situation is viewed from outside (*John slept; John opened the window*)
- perfect: TT falls completely into the time after TSit (*Mary had slept; John has opened the window*)

# Perfect vs Perfective

- ‘The posttime <...> is the time after T<sub>Sit</sub>’. According to Klein (1994, 109), ‘[i]n the perfective, TT is partly included in the posttime, and in the perfect, TT falls completely into the posttime.’
- See also Klein (1994, 105): ‘*John has slept* implies *John slept* <...>’, see also the re-interpretation of the present perfect as a past perfective in French and other languages
- It is possible under certain conditions that the resultant state represents the entire bounded event, as in our Latvian examples
- While the perfect in the perfective meaning is found only occasionally in Latvian, where it is also determined by the context, the construction may become entrenched eventually producing the same outcome as in French...

# Latvian Past Perfect > Lithuanian Simple Past

Latv	<i>Kamēr</i>	<u><i>mazgāj-o-s,</i></u>	<i>mās-a</i>	<b><i>bij-a</i></b>
	while	wash.pst-1sg-rfl	sister-nom.sg	be.pst-3
	<b><i>sagatavoj-us-i</i></b>	<i>div-us</i>	<i>stipr-us</i>	<i>kokteiļ-us.</i>
	prepare-pst.pa-sg.f	two-acc.pl.m	strong-acc.pl.m	cocktail-acc.pl
Lith	<i>Kol</i>	<i>maudži-au-si,</i>	<i>sesuo</i>	<b><i>paruoš-ė</i></b>
	while	wash.pst-1sg-rfl	sister.nom.sg	prepare-pst.3
	<i>du</i>	<i>stipri-us</i>	<i>kokteili-us.</i>	
	two.acc.pl.m	strong-acc.pl.m	cocktail-acc.pl	

‘While I washed, my sister made (Latvian: had made) us two strong cocktails.’

# Conclusions

- Apart from typical uses in conversations (deictic mode), the Latvian Perfect is also found in narratives where it usually refers to states simultaneous with the previous event.
- A less common use of the Latvian Perfect in narratives refers to events in an indirect way by showing their results, so that the event itself is left 'behind the scenes'. This use requires that the timeslot, occupied by the event, be shown by explicitly mentioning the passage of time or through simultaneous events.
- The use is also common in other languages that are known to have undergone the development of the corresponding forms from the perfect meaning towards the meaning of simple past. Although Latvian is far from taking this path at the moment, the use reflect the preconditions for the change and confirms the Latvian Perfect as a highly grammaticalised construction.

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