

# **Academia Grammaticorum Salensis Vigesima**

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**The tenses of the past in Indo-European  
Languages (Romance, Germanic and  
Baltic):**

**The development of the analytical perfect**

# INTRODUCTION

- **Development of the tenses of the past from Indo-European to some modern successor languages**
- **The role of the analytical perfect**
- **Cyclical development:**
  - Two tenses beside the imperfect,
  - creation of a single tense,
  - again two tenses,
  - in some languages trend towards one single tense.
- **Latin and Romance languages**
  - Latin: Important for the creation of the analytical perfect.
  - Well documented
- **German**
- **Baltic languages**

# LINGUISTIC CYCLES

- **Linguistic cycles**
  - Demonstrative pronoun becomes article
  - New demonstrative pronoun, often by locative adverb,
  - Process of grammaticalisation,
  - Latin ille and ipse become articles,
  - New forms: ce, cette etc. and –là bzw. –ci in French.
- **Jespersen cycle:**
  - Change in negation particles.

# SYNTHETIC VS. ANALYTIC

- **Synthetic**
  - Inflectional, agglutinative, and polysynthetic languages.
- **Analytic**
  - Relationships are expressed not through inflection or agglutination, but outside of the word.
- **Application of these terms to entire languages problematic**
- **Relative terms (linguistic units); criteria:**
  - Morphosyntactic criteria (separability, relocatability, isolation and transparency),
  - Phonological criteria.

# INDO-EUROPEAN

- **Indo-European verbal system**
- **Focus on the aspect**
  - Within a morpheme, tense and aspect categories are related (Meier-Brügger).
- **Proto-Indo-European: verbal stems**
  - Imperfective stem (traditionally ‘present stem’),
  - Perfective stem (traditionally ‘aorist stem’),
  - Subject-resultative stem (traditionally ‘perfect stem’).
- **Proto-Indo-European perfect**
  - Subject-resultative: the verbal action must have an effect on the state of the subject when it is carried out.
  - mental states, emotional states, physical states, etc.
  - However, not verbs that do not denote actions referring back to the subject.

# INDO-EUROPEAN

- **Special situation of the perfect**
- **Present tense and aorist are in opposition; perfect isolated:**
  - Unlike the present tense and the aorist, the perfect has only the indicative mood.
  - Own system of conjugation.
  - Thesis: In the Proto-language, in addition to the diatheses active and medium there was also the diathesis stative (Meier-Brügger).

# SUMMARY INDO-EUROPEAN

- **In addition to the imperfect, Indo-European had two tenses to express the past:**
  - Aorist and
  - Perfect: different both from a semantic and from a morphological point of view.
- **Some Indo-European branches maintained this structure: Greek, Sanskrit.**

# THE ITALIC LANGUAGES

- **Did a Proto-Italic language exist?**
  - Yes, but not communis opinio.
  - Parts of the same branch or sprachbund?
- **Classification**
  - Latino-Faliscan,
  - Sabellic (in particular Oscan, Umbrian).
- **Arguments for the existence of a Proto-Italic language**
  - Noun morphology,
  - Nominal system,
  - Phonology,
  - In particular, common innovations (e.g. creation of an s-future based on the present stem).



# THE ITALIC LANGUAGES

- Restructuring of the Indo-European verb system in Proto-Italic.
- Loss of the dual.
- Restructuring of the tense-aspect system.
- **Resultative perfect:**
  - Weakening of the semantic restriction from a static to a resultative view.
- Extensions of aorist and perfect overlapped; aorist and perfect became equivalent in more and more contexts.
- Loss of augment in imperfect and aorist.

# THE ITALIC LANGUAGES

- Verb categories
- Finite forms

Dimensions	Categories
Person	1. 2. 3.
Number	singular, plural, dual (?)
Diathesis	active, mediopassive
Mood	indicative, subjunctive, imperative, prospective, preventive
Tense	present, future, past (imperfect/aorist/perfect)
Aspect	perfective, imperfective

# THE ITALIC LANGUAGES

- **Continuation of the Indo-European categories, but restructuring of the modal system:**
  - Loss of the injunctive as independent mood.
  - Syncretism of subjunctive and optative.
- **Exclusively Italic categories**
  - Future system: opposition between perfective and imperfective also in the future (cfr. Early Latin *faxo*).
  - \*-bhā- preterite,
  - Gerundive.

# THE ITALIC LANGUAGES

- **Proto-Italic maintains the distinct categories aorist and perfect, cfr. doublets**
  - parsī and pepercī in the case of lat. parcō
  - Lat. finxī und falisk. /fifigond/
- **Coincidence of aorist and perfect in the Italic languages.**
- **Overlapping of the extensions of both categories.**
- **Transition to a resultative perfect.**

# THE ITALIC LANGUAGES

- **Narrative perfect:**

- The perfect no longer denoted a state, but the result of the action.

- **First stage: limited to transitive verbs.**

- **Later: also in the case of intransitive verbs.**

- vēnī            I have come (and now I am here)

- sēdī            I have sat down (and now I am sitting).

- **At the end of the Proto-Italic period: perfect and aorist are almost entirely functionally identical.**

# **SUMMARY ITALIC LANGUAGES**

- **As Proto-Indo-European, Proto-Italic had two tenses in addition to the imperfect to express the past: aorist and perfect.**
- **Development of the perfect towards a narrative perfect.**
- **Subsequently, the categories perfect and aorist coincided.**

# LATIN

- **A single perfect tense**

- As in the other Italic languages, the categories aorist and perfect also coincided in Latin.

- The emerging perfect forms continue old perfect and aorist forms or are new formations.

- **Different forms**

- Reduplication: tangō, tetigī; canō, cecinī

- Sigmatic forms (sī): dicō, dixī; scrībō, scrīpsī

- Forms with ablaut: faciō, fēcī

- New forms with vī and uī laudavī; colō, coluī

# LATIN

- **Use**

1. Main tense present perfect: Process is completed in the past, result persists in the present. E.g. *nōvī*.

When emphasizing the achieved state, also P.P.P. with *habēre*, e.g. *tē cognitum habeo*

2. Historic perfect: Process completed in the past, but not related to the present of the speaker; e. g. *Caesar in hiberna in Sēquanōs exercitum dēdūxit* (Caesar took his army to the winter camp in the territory of the Sequani).



# **SUMMARY LATIN**

- **Latin has only one perfect form, which on the one hand continues old perfect and aorist forms and on the other hand is based on new forms.**
- **As a result, the Latin perfect flexion is very irregular.**
- **Latin, in contrast to the Proto-Indo-European language, Proto-Italic and other Indo-European branches, has a single tense beside the imperfect tense to express the past.**

# VULGAR LATIN

- **Vulgar Latin**

- Not sermo urbanus, but the colloquial language.
- Reconstruction of this language is difficult.
- However, one can describe the transition from the single perfect to the creation of a periphrastic form, which can be observed in the whole Romania.

- **The periphrastic perfect**

- Constructions of the type cognitum habeo 'I know exactly, have seen through', scriptum habeo 'I have something written' were already used in pre-classical times, but with both components having their own full meaning.
- More common in classical Latin (Cicero).

# VULGAR LATIN

- **The periphrastic perfect**

- Process of grammaticalization and reanalysis of implicitly perfect attributive or predicative constructions, in different stages.
- Since the original function of adjectival perfect participles is to determine nominal objects and not verbs, the semantic integration between participle and verb is low.
- This is followed by a reanalysis and a gradual reduction in the lexical value of *habere*, whereby the participle is reoriented away from the noun object to *habere*.

# VULGAR LATIN

- **The periphrastic perfect**

Example: episcopum ... invitatum habes. Two interpretations:

a) [episcopum ... invitatum] [habes]?

b) [episcopum] ... [invitatum habes]?

a) You now have (with you) the bishop who has been invited'

b) 'you have invited the bishop'

If one interprets the question according to (b), there is a periphrastic perfect.

- **Auxiliary verb esse**

The auxiliary verb in the formation of the new compound perfect was first habēre for transitive verbs and esse for intransitive verbs.

# VULGAR LATIN

- **Why is the periphrastic perfect not synthetic?**
  - Future tense arising from *cantare habeō* in the Romance languages is a synthetic form,
  - The periphrastic perfect formed from *habeō cantatum* is not synthetic.
- **Possible reasons**
  - Phonological hypothesis
  - Purely syntactic conditions.

# SUMMARY VULGAR LATIN

- In Vulgar Latin, or perhaps also in Classical Latin, a periphrastic perfect developed, which came alongside the uniform perfect of Latin.
- That means that the language again has two tense forms which, in addition to the imperfect, express the past tense.
- This periphrastic perfect is not synthetic like, for example, the future tense of most of today's Romance languages, which arose at the same time and in a similar way.

# THE MODERN ROMANCE LANGUAGES

## Three tenses to express the past

- **Imperfect**

- Inherited from Latin, remarkably stable over time.

- **Preterite**

- Inherited from Latin.

- passé simple; passato rimoto; pretérito indefinido; pretérito perfeito (simples); passat simple; perfectul simplu.

- Morphological differences:

- Romanian and Italian: scrisei and scrissi; rupse and ruppi
    - Spanish and Portuguese: escribí and escrevi; rompí rompi.
    - Catalan: vaig cantar (passat perifràstic) beside cantí.

# THE MODERN ROMANCE LANGUAGES

- **Analytic (periphrastic) perfect**
  - passé composé; passato prossimo; pretérito perfecto compuesto; pretérito perfeito composto; perfet; perfectul compus.
  - Innovation of the Romance languages.
  - Auxiliar verbs to have and/or to be.
  - Differences among the languages, e.g. congruence.
- **Again three tenses of the past.**
- **Restoring of the situation in Indo-European and (early) Italic.**



# THE MODERN ROMANCE LANGUAGES

- **Further development; three types**
- **Simultaneous existence of preterite and perfect maintained**
  - Portuguese, Spanish, Catalan, Occitan.
  - However, some differences in use.
- **Simultaneous existence of preterite and perfect maintained; with restrictions**
  - Italian: In northern Italy only formal written language; alive in southern Italy.
  - Romanian: formal written language, regional (Oltenia), lively also in oral communication.
  - French: written language.
- **Only one tense (= perfect)**
  - Romanian, French und Italian (regional) colloquial language.
- **Are we going back to the situation in Latin?**

# THE MODERN ROMANCE LANGUAGES

- **Aoristic drift and the four stages (Harris, Squartini, Bertinotto)**

- **Aoristic drift**

Process of gradual aoristicization of the periphrastic perfect (i.e. of transformation into a purely perfective past).

- **Stage I**

–The periphrastic perfect is restricted to present states resulting from past actions, and is not used to describe past actions themselves, however recent.

–Some Southern Italian vernaculars.

# THE MODERN ROMANCE LANGUAGES

- **Aoristic drift**
- **Stage II**
  - The periphrastic perfect occurs only in highly specific circumstances, such as contexts aspectually marked as durative or repetitive.
  - Galician and Portuguese, many varieties of American Spanish.
- **Stage III**
  - The periphrastic perfect expresses the archetypal present perfect value of past action with present relevance.
  - Castilian Spanish; some varieties of langue d’oil and langue d’oc.

# THE MODERN ROMANCE LANGUAGES

- **Aoristic drift**
- **Stage IV**
  - The periphrastic perfect also expresses the preterital or aoristic functions, while the preterite is restricted to formal registers.
  - Standard French, Northern Italian, Standard Romanian.

# **SUMMARY ROMANCE LANGUAGES**

- **Development initiated in late Latin: system of two tense forms expressing the past tense in addition to the imperfect.**
- **Increasing frequency of use of the analytic perfect at the expense of the past tense.**
- **Four Stages: Harris.**
- **In some Romance languages: cyclical movement towards a single past tense.**

# GERMAN

- **Use in modern German: Preterite vs. perfect.**
  - Both forms are common in German: ich schrieb/ich habe geschrieben.
  - Their use in the spoken language is subject to stylistic and regional influences.
  - Regional: In the extreme south of the German-speaking area, the preterite is seldom used in oral communication, in the north it is well preserved.
  - In between there are a variety of gradations.
  - “Präteritumschwund im Deutschen”

# GERMAN

- **Other Germanic languages**

- In the other Germanic languages the synthetic forms are still used:

- English: I said, I came; Dutch: ik zei, ik kwam; Swedish: jag sade, jag kom.

- **Yiddish**

- Yiddish is a West Germanic language historically spoken by Ashkenazi Jews. It originates from 9th century Central Europe.

- In medieval Yiddish, past tense and perfect tense were used.

# GERMAN

- **Yiddish**

- The use of the preterite steadily decreased.

- Today there exists only the periphrastic perfect.

- Uriel Weinreich writes in his prestigious Yiddish textbook:

- “The past tense of a verb is formed by adding its past participle to the appropriate form of the auxiliary verb hobn or sajn.”

- The analytical perfect has completely taken over the function of narrative tense in the past.



# PERIPHRASTIC PERFECT IN GENERAL

- **General phenomenon, in many (also non-Indo-European) languages. Examples:**

–German                    ich habe geschrieben

–Swedish                 jag har skrivit

–Albanian                kam shkruar

–Croatian                napisao sam

–Persian                 نوشته‌ام (newešte-am)

–Lithuanian             esu parašęs

–Latvian                 esmu (uz)rakstījis

–Finnish                 olen kirjoittanut

–Estonian                olen kirjutanud

# PERIPHRASTIC PERFECT IN GENERAL

- **Contact as the Essential Trigger for Language Change**
  - Contact cannot be ignored as a major factor in the development of the periphrastic perfect (Bridget Drinka)
- **Marked east-west split in auxiliary usage**
  - To have: only in the west.
  - To be: predominant in the east, but with considerable eastward diffusion of to have.
  - Predominance of to have in the west was due initially to the influence of Ancient Greek on Latin, the growth of the construction in Late Latin, and the retention and spread of the construction in the Romance and other western European languages.

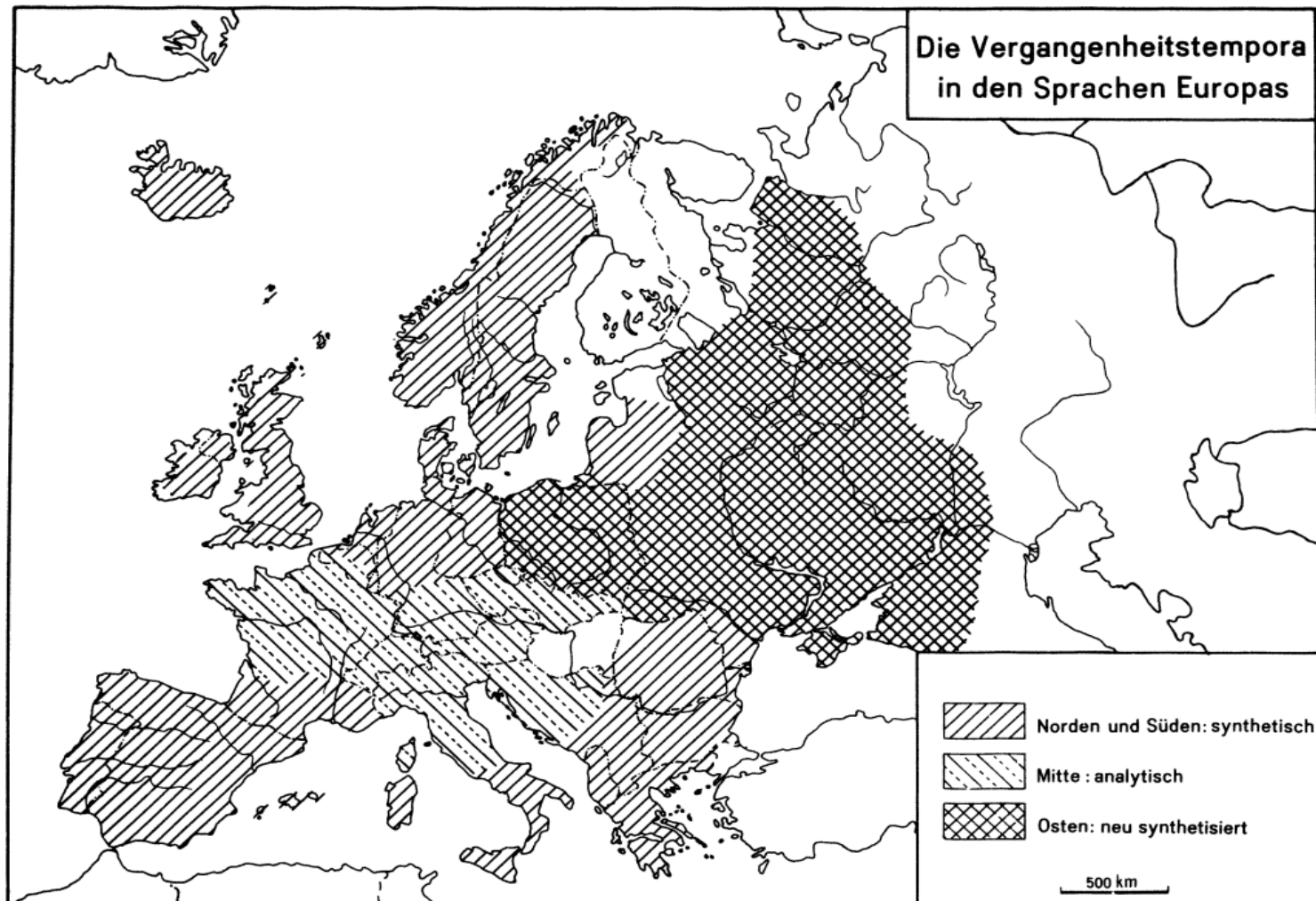
# PERIPHRASTIC PERFECT IN GENERAL

- **Bridget Drinka**
- The periphrastic perfects of Europe originated exclusively in Western Europe and did not arise independently in Eastern Europe.
- They entered Eastern Europe especially through three routes:
  - In the Balkans, Greek (re-)adopted the to have-perfect of Western Europe during the time of the Crusades and proceeded to some Balkan languages.
  - In the Circum-Baltic area, Hanseatic trade promoted the development of these forms based on a Low German model.
  - In “Slavia Romana,” vernacular Czech, Slovak, Sorbian, and Polish developed to have them based on centuries-long contact with High German.

# PERIPHRASTIC PERFECT IN GENERAL

- **Geolinguistic distribution in Europe**
  - Clear north-south distribution: Synthetic forms predominate in the north and south, analytical forms in the middle.
  - New synthetization: auxiliary verb disappears, for example, in Russian: Я читал;
  - Polish: czytałem (only suffix);
  - Croatian: čitao sam (auxiliar verb remains).

# PERIPHRASTIC PERFECT IN GENERAL



# BALTIC

- **Baltic verbal system**

- The Baltic verbal system does not reflect an extremely archaic state of affairs.

- It is characterized by a generalized simplification and has lost many categories attributed to Indo-European.

- Large number of innovations.

- **Tenses**

- Tenses: present and past.

- Past: syncretism of the Indo-European aorist and perfect.

- Present: the sole Baltic tense stem of Indo-European origin.

# BALTIC

- **The preterite**

- Innovation (which substitutes the ancient perfect and aorist).

- Two typical suffixes

- \*-ā-; hard stems (e.g. Lith. dīrbau < \*-ā-u ‘I worked’ ~ dīrbti.

- \*-ē-; soft stems (e.g. Lith. sakiaũ < \*-ē-u ‘I said’ ~ sak-ý-ti

- The two suffixes are in complementary distribution in modern standard Lithuanian, while the Latvian standard language only has \*-ā- and Latvian dialects agree with the general picture of Lithuanian.

# BALTIC

- **The frequentative preterite (imperfect)**
  - completely absent in Old Prussian and Latvian,
  - formative -dav- (e.g. dīrbdavau ‘I used to work’ ~ dīrbti ‘to work’)



# BALTIC/LITHUANIAN

German	Spanish	Lithuanian	
<b>simple forms</b>	<b>simple forms</b>	<b>simple forms</b>	
Präteritum	pretérito perfecto	būtasís kartínis laikas	ich las; leí; skaičiau
-----	imperfecto	būtasís dažnínis laikas	leía; skaitydavau
<b>compound forms</b>	<b>compound forms</b>	<b>compound forms</b>	
Präsensperfekt	pretérito perfecto compuesto	atliktínis esamásis kartínis laikas	ich habe gelesen; he leído; esu skaitęs
Präteriumperfekt	pretérito anterior	atliktínis būtasís kartínis laikas	ich hatte gelesen; hube cantado; buvau skaitęs
-----	pluscuamperfecto	atliktínis būtasís dažnínis laikas	había leído; būdavau skaitęs
Futurperfekt	futuro perfecto	atliktínis būsímasis laikas	Ich werde gelesen haben; habré leído; būsiu skaitęs

# BALTIC LITHUANIAN

- **Semantic-pragmatic differences**
- **There are important semantic-pragmatic differences between the tenses in the individual languages:**
  - Imperfecto ≠ būtasis dažninis laikas;
  - pretérito anterior ≠ atliktinis būtasis kartinis laikas;
  - pluscuamperfecto ≠ atliktinis būtasis dažninis laikas.

# BALTIC

- **Lithuanian**

- The German preterite and the Lithuanian preterite agree in their basic meanings.

- However, the Lithuanian perfect corresponds only partially with the German perfect.

- The perfect usually represents

- a) the past as continuing in the present; example:

- Kaimynai jau (yra) grįžę. The neighbors have already returned.

- Rašytoja yra parašiusi daug romanų. The writer has written many novels.

# BALTIC

- **Lithuanian**

b) It is also used to express the persistence of a resultant state; example:

Miestas (yra) išsidėstęs prie upės. The city is situated on the river.

c) implying a generalization, especially with imperfect verbs; example:

Ar kada esate buvusios Afrikoje? Ar kada buvote Afrikoje? Have you ever been to Africa?

– If the final state is not emphasized, or if the perfect tense only expresses an action or a completed state at the time of speaking, it can be replaced by the past tense (example c).

# BALTIC

- **Latvian**

**Two tenses:**

- Preterite (synthetic)
- Perfect (analytic): present of būt and participle.

# BALTIC

## Functions of the Lithuanian und the Latvian perfect

- **Resultative function: a state causally determined by a previous event; in both languages.**
  - Lithuanian: Buvo šviesiai nusidažiusi plaukus.
  - Latvian: Bija izbalinājusi matus.
  - She had dyed her hair in light colour.
- **Experiential function: event has occurred at least once in the past and is considered as a salient property of the subject.**
  - Lithuanian: Esu čia gyvenusi, taigi žinau visas gatves.
  - Latvian: Es te esmu dzīvojusi, tāpēc zinu šeit katru ielu.
  - I have lived here, so I know every street here.

# BALTIC

- **Current relevance; much more developed in Latvian than in Lithuanian; intermediate between the resultative proper and the experiential, a discourse-oriented notion.**
- **Lithuanian speakers prefer the simple past.**
  - Communicative situation: The window is open, but A has not noticed that. A asks B: why is it so cold in the room?
  - Lithuanian: Aš atidariau langą.
  - Latvian: Esmu atvēris logu.
  - I have opened the window.

# BALTIC

## Functions of the Lithuanian und the Latvian perfect (cont'd)

- **Universal function; absent in Lithuanian and only marginally attested in Latvian. For both languages the default option in such contexts is the present tense, cf. the examples.**

– Latvian: ...viņ-š vienmēr ir iz.cēlies ar to, ka vienmēr meklēj-is kaut ko jaun-u.

– ...he [=Gidon Kremer] has always stood out because he has always been looking for something new.

Other example [A is still living in this town.] A: I LIVE here for seven years.

– Lithuanian: Aš gyvenu čia septynerius metus.

– Latvian: Es šeit dzīvoju septiņus gadus.

– I have been living here for seven years.



# BALTIC

- **Summary**

Function	Lithuanian	Latvian
resultative	yes	yes
experiential	yes	yes
current relevance	marginal	yes
universal	no	marginal

# BALTIC

- **Summary**
- **The Baltic perfects retain their close connection to the resultative.**
- **Stages of grammaticalisation according to Harris**
  - The Lithuanian present perfect is at stage II.
  - The Latvian present perfect is at stage III.
  - Latvian seems to employ the present perfect more consistently and systematically.
  - In Lithuanian the present perfect is in many contexts optional and can be substituted by other verbal forms, most commonly by the simple past.

# CONCLUSIONS

- **Cyclical development.**
- **Indo-European and Italic: Two tenses to express the past beside the imperfect.**
- **Perfect becomes resultative.**
- **Coincidence of the two categories aorist and perfect: creation of the narrative perfect; only one perfect form in Latin (beside the imperfect).**
- **Modern Romance languages: Return to double classification as in Indo-European.**
- **In some Romance languages again one perfect form (aoristic drift).**
- **German: only preterite and perfect.**
- **Increased frequency of use of perfect (aoristic drift).**

# CONCLUSIONS

- **Baltic languages: only preterite and perfect.**
- **Some special developments, e.g. būtasis dažninis laikas.**
- **Perfects retain their close connection to the resultative.**
- **Stages of grammaticalisation according to Harris different between Lithuanian and Latvian.**
- **More consistent use of the perfect in Latvian.**
- **Substitution of the perfect by other verbal forms seems easier in Lithuanian than in Latvian.**