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From evaluative to deontic predication:
Evidence for the grammaticalization path from clausal
complementation strategies

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A few things about Lithuanian

- Lithuanian belongs (together with Latvian) to the Baltic branch of the Indo-European languages. The third attested Baltic language, Old Prussian, became extinct in the early 18th century. The Baltic languages are often considered to be part of a larger Balto-Slavic branch within IE.
- Lithuanian is a conservative IE language that has undergone relatively few changes in its phonology and morphology, so that many Lithuanian forms can be put alongside those of Sanskrit or ancient Greek:

Lith. *móterj* < **māter-im* < **meh₂ter-m* 'women' (ACC.SG)

OGr. *mētér-a*, Skr. *mātār-am* etc. 'mother', Latin *matrem* (ACC.SG)

- "toute personne souhaitant entendre le vieil indo-européen devrait aller écouter un fermier lituanien" (Antoine Meillet)

One of the oldest languages...

(in a humorous version
by Herta Burbė)



The study of Lithuanian

- Lithuanian was 'en vogue' among Indo-European scholars in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Imagine an 'ancient' IE language on which you can do fieldwork!
- More recently, Lithuanian has attracted attention from typologists, e.g., in the work of Emma Geniušienė, who is a member of the Leningrad typology group.
- The study of Lithuanian in Lithuania itself is characterized by
 - a strong diachronic bias,
 - a strong prescriptive tradition (even in Lithuanian academia, 'grammar' is often understood as 'correct usage', though among the younger generation this is, of course, no longer the case).

Attestation and accessibility

- Lithuanian is attested in writing from the mid-16th century. 16th and 17th-c. Lithuanian writings are mainly translations of religious texts, including two complete Bible translations.
- Most Old Lithuanian texts have now been digitized and are thus searchable (with important gaps, though).
- Very few texts are available in digital format for the 18th, 19th and early 20th century; there is no historical corpus for Lithuanian, and none is in the pipeline.
- The Kaunas Corpus of Contemporary Lithuanian starts from 1991.

A few sundry curiosities of Lithuanian grammar

- In the nominal domain, Lithuanian has a rich case system, with 7 cases in the standard language and, in Old Lithuanian, an additional system of local cases that has left traces in the dialects: East Lith. *Vilniun* (ILL) 'to Vilnius'
- Like Slavic, Lithuanian has boulder-based verbal aspect with prefixal markers, e.g. *rašyti* 'write' (IPFV) vs *pa-rašyti* 'write' (PFV)
- Evidential forms based on participles, now in decline (*jis dirbąs* 'he is reportedly / apparently working')
- An inferential passive from intransitive verbs, e.g., *čia kažkieno sėdėta* 'somebody has apparently been sitting here' (lit. 'there has been sat here by somebody')
- A 'BE'-perfect (one of Danguolė's favourites): *esu buvusi Salose* 'I've been (F) to Salos'
- A verb-framed construction for excessive degree (mainly in the dialects): *padauginau išgerti vyno* 'I drank too much wine', lit. 'I overdid drinking wine' (one of my favourites)

The topic of this talk

- Lithuanian has an anteriority converb in *-us*, basically used in non-finite adverbial clauses with a temporal or conditional value:

parėj-us *būty* *galima* *pasilsėti*
go.home.CVB be.IRR possible rest.INF
'after coming home/if we (one) went home we (one) could have some rest'

- It has, however, a series of uses that are generally not characteristic of anteriority converbs, and they will be the topic of my talk.
- The constructions involved show interesting and non-trivial developments not hitherto described in the literature.
- They provide interesting evidence for the grammaticalization path from evaluation to deontic/desiderative modality.

The converb with evaluative predicates

- The converb is used with higher predicates (adjectives and adverbs) expressing an evaluation: 'it would be a good thing', 'it would not be amiss' etc. The subject is optionally expressed in the dative. The example is from the Lithuanian Academy Grammar. The converb can be used synonymously with the infinitive.

<i>Gal</i>	<i>geriau</i>	<i>būtu</i>	<i>namo</i>	<i>grįžus;</i>
maybe	better.ADV	be.IRR.3	home	return.CVB
<i>palauktume,</i>	<i>kol</i>	<i>išauš.</i>		
wait.IRR.1PL	till	dawn.FUT.3		

'Perhaps it would be better to return home; we could then await dawn.'

Deontic questions

- The converb is used in deontic questions (also known as deliberative questions, direction questions), i. e., questions meant to elicit a directive speech act rather than a piece of information. The subject can be expressed in the dative, or it can be contextually retrievable. The examples are from the Lithuanian Academic Grammar.

- In simple clauses:

Mama, kaip čia man su Katryte pasimačius?
 mum.VOC how PTC 1SG.DAT with K.INS meet.CVB
 'Mum, how could I arrange a meeting with Kate?'

- Embedded:

Neišmanau, kur tave paguldžius.
 NEG.know.PRS.1SG where 2SG.ACC lay_down.CVB
 'I've no idea where to put you up.'

Wish clauses

- The converb is used in wish clauses, usually with the typical optative marker *kad tik* 'would that, if only'. No subject can be expressed; it can be contextually retrieved.

Juozas Baltušis (example from the Lithuanian Academy Grammar)

Ė, kad tik greičiau atvykus į vietą.
INTERJ that only faster arrive.CVB on spot.ACC

'If only we could (one could) reach our destination as soon as possible.'

Adverbial purpose clauses

- A final type is not mentioned in Lithuanian grammars as it is condemned by prescriptive linguists. The converb in *-us* is used in purpose clauses whose implicit subjects are controlled by the main-clause subject, or have arbitrary control (cf. English *in order to see*, German *um zu sehen*, Polish *żeby zobaczyć* etc.)

Draugas, 28-3-1934, <https://www.draugas.org/archyvas-pdf-1934/>

<i>Kad</i>	<i>žinojus</i>	<i>kiekvienu</i>	<i>momentu</i>	<i>kiek</i>	<i>yra</i>
that	know.CVB	every.INS.SG.M	moment.INS.SG	how.many	be.PRS.3

<i>Lietuvoje</i>	<i>gyventojų,</i>
Lithuania.LOC	inhabitant.GEN.PL

[*centralinis statistikos biuras nuo 1923 metų veda smulkią gimimų ir mirimų apyskaitą.*]

‘In order to know at every moment how many people live in Lithuania, [the Central Bureau for Statistics has conducted an accurate count of births and deaths since 1923.]

On data and methods

- Participial and converbial constructions in 16th and 17th-century Lithuanian have been thoroughly studied by Vytautas Ambrazas. None of the constructions just listed is attested in his material.
- The processes giving rise to these constructions must therefore have taken place somewhere in the 18th or 19th century, that is, in a period for which we have virtually no data.
- Even if a historical corpus should become available, it is not certain that the data will be sufficient to enable a data-based study of the diachronic relations between the individual constructions, and of the chronology of changes.
- What I will offer here is based on internal reconstruction.

The crucial juncture: evaluative predicates

- Complementation strategies with evaluative predicates illustrated by expressions like *gera būty* 'it would be a good thing' are the likely source of the usage types of the converb in *-us* discussed here.
- Evaluative (commentative) predicates are also sometimes called 'factives' because of the factive presuppositions associated with them (in the sense of Kiparsky & Kiparsky 1970):

It's a good thing you speak French.

(presupposes: the addressee speaks French)

- A factive reading can be avoided by using a 'pseudo-conditional' strategy:

It's a good thing if you speak French.

The crucial juncture: evaluative predicates

- It was probably this pseudoconditional strategy that led to the introduction of the *-us* converb in evaluative constructions in Lithuanian, with subsequent extensions.
- Adverbial clauses with the anteriority converb may have a conditional value. Both finite conditional clauses with *jeigu* 'if' and converbial clauses can be used with evaluative predicates. An example with *jeigu* 'if':

<i>Apskritai</i>	<i>būty</i>	<i>ne pro šalį,</i>	<i>jeigu</i>	<i>pretendentai</i>	<i>j</i>
generally	be.IRR.3	not.amiss	if	pretender.NOM.SG	to
<i>pranašus</i>	<i>deklaruoty</i>	<i>interesus.</i>			
prophet.ACC.PL	declare.IRR.3	interest.ACC.PL			

'On a general note, it would not be amiss if pretenders to prophethood would declare their interests.'

(<https://www.teise.pro/index.php/2021/01/13/konstitucinio-teismo-atnaujinimas-teisininkai-izvelgia-gresmes-teisinei-valstybei/>)

The crucial juncture: evaluative predicates

- And an example with the same predicate *ne pro šalį* and the *-us* converb (from the Kaunas corpus)

<i>Man</i>	<i>kilo</i>	<i>mintis,</i>	<i>kad</i>	<i>ne pro šalį</i>	<i>būtų</i>
1SG.DAT	arise.PST.3	thought.NOM	that	not.amiss	be.IRR.3
<i>įsirengus</i>	<i>dar</i>	<i>vieną,</i>	<i>atsarginę,</i>	<i>operacinę...</i>	
install.CVB	yet	one.ACC	spare.ACC.F	operation.room.ACC	

'It occurred to me that it would not be amiss to install one more operation room to fall back on.'

From evaluative to deontic

- From evaluative predicates the *-us* converb could then spread to other predicates. There is a well-known link between the domains involved: Heine & Kuteva (2007: 178) refer to “a universal strategy whereby predicates of the kind ‘it is enough/fitting/suitable/good (that)’ are grammaticalized to markers for necessity or obligation.”
 - Archaic Chinese *yi* ‘suitable, fitting’ develops into Classical Chinese *yi*, an auxiliary for deontic necessity (Kuteva et al. 2020: 414);
 - Tepehuán (Uto-Aztecan, Mexico) *jixbai’ na* ‘it is good’ becomes an expression for deontic possibility, i.e., permission (Kuteva et al. 2020: 220);
 - comparative evaluative constructions like English *you’d better*, French *il vaut mieux* etc. develop a modal value (Mitchell 2003, Patard & van der Auwera 2017 etc.).

From evaluative to desiderative

- Alongside a development of the type

'it would be a good thing to do x' → 'one should do x' (deontic)

there is a development

'it would be a good thing if x happened → 'I want x to happen' (desiderative)

Irish (from Noonan 2007: 135, glosses adapted)

<i>Is</i>	<i>maith</i>	<i>dhó</i>	<i>í</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>theacht.</i>
COP	good	to.him	her	COMPL	come.NZN

'It's good for him that she came.'

<i>Ba</i>	<i>mhaith</i>	<i>liom</i>	<i>í</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>theacht.</i>
COP.COND	good	with.me	her	COMPL	come.NZN

'I want her to come.'

Back to Lithuanian

- The shift from evaluative to deontic to desiderative is usually not amenable to external observation (and operationalization) because of pragmatic factors: politeness strategies (and cultural constraints) may impose the use of evaluative expressions of the type 'it would be good/better', where the deontic function is just a pragmatic inference.
- Herein lies the interest of the Lithuanian facts: the converbial construction spreads from evaluative higher predicates to predicates that are exclusively deontic or desiderative.

gerai būty

it would be a good thing

kad tik

if.only

pasilsėjus

have.a.rest.CVB

pasilsėjus

have.a.rest.CVB

(evaluative; desiderative

value is a pragmatic inference)

(desiderative)

From wish clauses to purpose clauses

- The spread of the converb from evaluative predications to wish clauses is also one of **INSUBORDINATION**: the converb clauses is originally a pseudo-conditional adverbial clause put to use a a complementation type with evaluative predicates. Wish clauses with *kad tik* 'would that, if only' are simple clauses (by the way, the English expressions *would that, if only* also point to insubordination).
- What now happens is **RESUBORDINATION**: the wish clause with *kad tik* (and subsequently also just *kad* 'that') becomes an adverbial purpose clause. Here is an example with the original *kad tik*:

Juozas Daumantas, *Partizanai*, 1950

<i>lš</i>	<i>bulvinės</i>	<i>buvo</i>	<i>išnešta</i>	<i>beveik</i>	<i>metras</i>
from	potato.shed.GEN.SG	be.PST.3	carry.out.PTCP.PST.PASS.N	almost	meter.NOM.SG
<i>gylio</i>	<i>žemės</i>	<i>j lauką,</i>	<i>kad</i>	<i>tik</i>	<i>suradus</i>
depth.GEN	earth[PL].NOM	outdoors	that	only	find.CVB
<i>tą</i>	<i>„bonkelę“.</i>				
that.ACC.SG	bottle.ACC.SG				

'A one meter deep layer of earth was carried out of the potato shed just to find that 'bottle''

Deontic questions

- The rise of deontic questions with the -us converb is not a surprising development once the transition from the evaluative to the deontic/desiderative domain has been accomplished. I can, however, say nothing about the details of this process because no corpus data are available.
- The converbial type of deontic question must have arisen alongside an earlier established infinitival type well known from Latvian and Slavic, and also from other languages (cf. French *Que vous dire? Où aller?*).
- Lithuanian has both types, but there is an interesting difference between them. Compare

<i>Kuo</i>	<i>jus</i>	<i>pavaišinti?</i>
what.INS	you[PL].ACC	treat.INF
<i>Kuo</i>	<i>jus</i>	<i>pavaišinus?</i>
what.INS	you[PL].ACC	treat.CVB
'What could I offer you?'		

Deontic questions

- The infinitival construction may, but need not, expect a reaction from the addressee—a directive speech act.
- The converbial construction does not expect a reaction from the addressee—it is purely deliberative. The speaker is, as it were, thinking aloud.
- This difference has a parallel in information questions, cf.
 - Who is knocking at the door?* (deliberative)
 - Who could be knocking at the door?* (inquisitive)
- This difference might be a persistence effect (Hopper): the deliberative value of deontic questions with the converb may reflect the evaluative origin of the converbial construction. An evaluative predicate assesses the relative merits of different lines of action without actually imposing an obligation of following a certain line of action on any person. The ‘internal deliberation’ effect of the converbial type of deontic questions might, in this sense, hark back to evaluative predication.

Problems with prescriptivism

- As mentioned above, the use of the *-us* converb in adverbial purpose clauses is now proscribed. It is not clear why, but it may be a side effect of another major fight of prescriptive grammarians, directed against the use of the infinitive in purpose clauses, which is suspected of arising from Polish or Russian influence (which is possible, though probably hard to prove):

!reikia *atlikti* *tyrimą,* *kad* *sužinoti ...*
be.needed carry.out.inf research.acc that find.out.inf
'Research should be done in order to find out...'
cf. Polish *żeby się dowiedzieć*, Russian *чтобы узнать*...

- In the heat of their fight, prescriptivists over-generalized the rule that purpose clauses may only be finite and may contain only the subjunctive (conditional) mood. As a result, the only non-finite purpose-clause construction that was undoubtedly authentically Lithuanian (and typologically interesting) was ousted from the language.

The broader relevance of the Lithuanian facts

- The interest of the Lithuanian facts consists in that it introduces discreteness into a domain where transitions are basically fluid.
- As Patard and van der Auwera point out in their study of French *il vaut mieux* etc., there are two problems with capturing the transition from evaluative to deontic:
 - pragmatics: the deontic 'meaning' may be a pragmatic inference;
 - persistence effects (Hopper): features of the source construction often manifest themselves even after a grammaticalization process has taken place.
- The persistence effect does seem to be present in Lithuanian in deontic questions, but the transition is otherwise discrete. It is a classic example of reanalysis (evaluative → deontic) followed by extension (of the converbial construction to the exclusively deontic/desiderative domain).

Thanks for listening!
Thanks for coming to Antalieptė!