

## Minor grams in Baltic: An introduction<sup>1</sup>

---

**AXEL HOLVOET**  
*Vilnius University*

Even though ‘minor gram’ is not an established notion in linguistics, and presumably will not become one, a glance at the list of contents of this volume will bring more clarity as to what is meant. The studies brought together here deal with phenomena that are usually absent from reference grammars because these often concentrate on the ‘major grammatical categories’ that participate in a system of correlations pervading the whole verbal or nominal domain, like tense, aspect, and mood, or number, case, and gender. For these categories it is easy to find a place in the conjugation and declension tables that (we often imagine) give us an idea of the grammatical structure of the language. Several types of arguably strongly or weakly grammaticalised units do not fit into the tables, either because they do not run through the whole grammatical system but function within a specific subdomain of it, or because they are in some way idiomatic and non-compositional, and the authors of grammars have been hesitant about including them in their descriptions, often relegating them to a footnote or to a small-print addendum to a section about some major category.

Nowadays our view of grammatical structure is informed by Construction Grammar, and we are now better equipped to investigate phenomena that, though displaying specific patterns of grammatical (morphological and syntactic) behaviour, appear idiosyncratic and therefore difficult to integrate in a broad grammatical description of a language. It is precisely those structures that gave the impetus for the rise of Construction Grammar (cf. the classical study by Fillmore, Kay & O’Connor 1988, followed by work in a similar spirit though in a slightly different tradition like Jackendoff

---

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank the authors of the articles contained in this volume, in particular Peter Arkadiev and Nicole Nau, for their comments on the introduction. The research published in this volume has received funding from the European Social Fund (agreement No. 09.3.3-LMT-K-712-01-0071) under grant agreement with the Research Council of Lithuania (LMTLT).

1997, and broader syntheses like Goldberg 1995 etc.). Our understanding of grammar is also informed by typology and grammaticalisation history, and the notion of the gram, a piece of grammatical marking shaped not so much by its position in a hypostasised system as by its place in a continuum of historical processes (a view convincingly argued in Bybee & Dahl 1989, Bybee, Perkins & Pagliuca 1994 etc.), is obviously more elastic than that of grammatical category (which is redolent of structuralist correlations) and easily accommodates both units intermediate between grammar and lexicon (constructional idioms) and functionally and lexically restricted grammatical or semi-grammatical forms. It is on these two types of linguistic units that this volume focuses. Another common thread running through all contributions in this volume is that they all deal, mainly or in part, with Baltic, while the context is always either typological or areal-typological. In view of the areal links, often indispensable for a correct understanding of the phenomena involved, ample attention is given to the neighbouring languages with which Baltic has interacted over the centuries, first of all Slavonic and Fennic. As the authors see it, this volume should be relevant to Baltic, Slavonic and Fennic scholars, typologists and general linguists.

Five ‘minor grams’ in the sense of ‘restricted grams’—basically optional grams functioning in a subdomain of the verbal system and standing apart from the major grammatical correlations—are identified and analysed in the volume. Four of them belong to the domain of tense and aspect, while one belongs to the domain of voice; and they all present a more general typological interest.

The aspectual domain is represented by Nicole Nau’s article “The Latvian continuative construction *runāt vienā runāšanā* ‘talk in one talking’ = ‘keep talking’”. This construction exploits a specific type of syntactic reduplication, a verb accompanied by a cognate action noun in the locative, to express continuative meaning, that is, to refer to a situation in which an activity is continued contrary to normal expectations of cessation or interruption:

- (1) Latvian (cited from Nau, this volume)

<i>Četru</i>	<i>stundu</i>	<i>laikā</i>	<i>es</i>	<i>principā</i>
four.GEN	hour.GEN.PL	time.LOC.SG	1SG.NOM	principle.LOC.SG
<i>rakstīju</i>	<i>vienā</i>	<i>rakstīšanā.</i>		
write.PST.1SG	one.LOC.SG	write.ACN.LOC.SG		

‘I kept writing for four hours more or less without interruption.’

As the author points out, this construction has a fairly abstract and regular meaning largely independent of the lexical input, a considerable level of productivity (though with a distinct preference for certain lexical

classes), a certain morphological variability (in terms of person and tense) and a high degree of syntagmatic cohesion. Though basically occupying the slot of a simple verb form, it has not become, and presumably will not become, a paradigmatic periphrastic verb form, a development for which it lacks, perhaps, the necessary predispositions because of its considerable inner syntactic complexity and corresponding prosodic heaviness. It has remained a relatively infrequent semi-grammaticalised structure in spite of the foundations for grammaticalisation having been laid. It is the only instance of such an advanced process of grammaticalisation among a large set of cognate and reduplicating constructions, which are also dealt with in Nau's article and build a natural background for a discussion of the 'V *vienā* V-*šanā*' construction. Cognate and reduplicating constructions are highly characteristic of Latvian (to a lesser extent also of Lithuanian), and functionally they are highly heterogeneous; the domain as a whole awaits a thorough study, for which Nau's article can form a convenient starting point. Also of interest for future research is continuative marking, which, as Nau points out, is insufficiently studied. It is an aspectual meaning of a low level of abstraction, comparable in some ways to progressive marking but, unlike the latter, without a notable tendency to develop into the more abstract aspectual meaning of imperfectivity. To define the place of the Latvian continuative among other grams going by that name in the literature, we would need a broad study that could lead to the formulation of a working definition of the continuative in general and of its subtypes. For Baltic, we would have to distinguish at least two subtypes: the Latvian construction dealt with by Nau expresses lack of expected cessation regardless of location in time, whereas the Lithuanian compound continuative prefix *tebe-* refers to a situation where continuation of a state or activity running counter to expectations of cessation is stated for a certain reference time R (which may coincide, in the case of the present tense, with speech time):

## (2) Lithuanian

<i>Grįžusi</i>	<i>į</i>	<i>Lietuvą</i>	<i>Rasa</i>	<i>parašė</i>
return.PPA.NOM.SG.F	to	Lithuania.ACC	PN.NOM	write.PST.3
<i>pirmąją</i>	<i>knygą</i> —	<i>ir</i>	<i>tebe-rašo</i>	<i>iki šiol.</i>
first.ACC.SG.DEF	book.ACC.SG	and	CNT-write.PRS.3	until now

'After her return to Lithuania Rasa wrote her first book—and she's still writing.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/gyvenimas/13/220567/olandijoje-gyvenusi-rasytoja-kulturinius-skirtumus-padede-isspresti-kompromisu-ieskojima>

The Lithuanian ‘continuative’ prefix *be-*3 is a component part of a minor gram restricted to Lithuanian and unknown to Latvian, the construction ‘*buvo + be-PPRA*’, where *be-* has progressive rather than continuative value. It is dealt with in Peter Arkadiev’s article “The Lithuanian “*buvo + be-present active participle*” construction revisited: A corpus-based study” and can be illustrated with the following example:

- (3) Lithuanian (from Arkadiev, this volume)

<i>Buvau</i>	<i>besipilanti</i>	<i>sau</i>	<i>trečią</i>
be.PST.1SG	CNT-RFL-pour.PPRA.NOM.SG.F	self.DAT	third.ACC.SG
<i>taurę</i>	<i>šampano,</i>		
glass.ACC.SG	champagne.GEN		

[*kai staiga Zuzana riktelėjo vairuotojui stabtelėti*].  
 ‘I was about to pour myself a third glass of champagne  
 [when suddenly Zuzana shouted ordering the driver to stop].’

In Lithuanian reference grammars such forms are described as part of a system of ‘inceptive’ or ‘continuative’ tenses (the latter term appears in Ambrazas, ed., 2006, 250–251), which seems to be an attempt to squeeze them into a tense correlation parallel to that of the simple and perfect (anterior) compound verb forms as in *parašė* ‘wrote’ vs *buvo parašęs* ‘had written’. In actual fact, forms of the type *buvo beparašęs/beparašanti* ‘was about to write (M/F)’ constitute a minor gram in their own right. They do not really have present-tense counterparts, as present active participles in the function of main predicate do not combine with the present-tense forms of ‘be’; instead, they occur without auxiliary in a basically inferential or mirative function:

- (4) Lithuanian

(Vytautas Landsbergis, <http://www.landsbergis.lt/articles/view/748/1>)

<i>O</i>	<i>atsitokėjęs</i>	<i>žiūri</i> —	<i>greta</i>	<i>jo</i> [...]
and	come.to.PPA.NOM.SG.M	look.PRS.3	next.to	3.GEN.SG.M
<i>be-sėdinti</i>	<i>lyg</i>	<i>jūros</i>	<i>išmesta</i>	
CNT-sit.PPRA.NOM.SG.F	as.if	sea.GEN.SG	throw.up.PPP.NOM.SG.F	

*mergelė*.  
 maid.NOM.SG

‘When he comes to, he looks up and lo! next to him a mermaid is sitting,  
 as if thrown up by the sea.’

<sup>3</sup> In affirmative clauses continuative *be-* must be combined with *te-*, as in *te-be-rašo* ‘is still writing’, but *te-* does not appear in the negative form *ne-be-rašo* ‘is not writing any more’.

The past-tense construction is discussed in an earlier article by Arkadiev (2011), where it is characterised as an avertive, i. e., a gram describing ‘narrowly averted’ events. This earlier description was, however, based mainly on elicitation (with limited use of corpus material) and therefore inconclusive. The present study, based on an almost full set of examples of the construction attested in the liTenTen web-based corpus of Lithuanian, allows the author to revise his earlier analysis on a firmer empirical basis. While avertive uses clearly predominate, the construction also has proximative and progressive functions. A similar cluster of functions is found, within Lithuanian, in the past-tense forms of derived imperfectives in *-inėti*; it is illustrated, in its avertive use, in (5):<sup>4</sup>

## (5) Lithuanian

<i>Pora</i>	<i>jau</i>	<i>išeidinėjo,</i>	<i>kai</i>	<i>jie</i>
couple.NOM.SG	already	go.out.IPFV.PST.3	when	3.NOM.PLM
<i>tarpduryje</i>	<i>sutiko</i>	<i>kino</i>	<i>žvaigždę.</i>	
doorway.LOC.SG	meet.PST.3	cinema.GEN.SG	star.ACC.SG	

‘The couple was about to go outside when they met the movie star in the doorway.’<sup>5</sup>

We do not know the relative frequencies of progressive, proximative and avertive uses of the past-tense forms of verbs in *-inėti*, and it would probably be instructive to get comparative quantitative data. Verbs in *-inėti* are, of course, not restricted to the past, and in other tense forms they can have only progressive or proximative uses, which might provide support for similar readings in the past tense as well. In their purely imperfectivising use these verbs are, at any rate, relatively young, whereas the construction ‘be’ + present active participle is already attested in 16th-c. texts. We do not have a historical corpus for Lithuanian, and even if it existed, the thematically and stylistically restricted character of the corpus of older written texts would probably not allow us to reconstruct the details of the construction’s developmental tendencies. Its restriction to the past tense is interesting, and it is hard to avoid viewing this fact in connection with the prominence of avertive readings.

<sup>4</sup> These derived imperfectives are iterative in origin and their non-iterative (progressive) uses are frowned upon by Lithuanian prescriptive grammarians.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.tv3.lt/naujiena/pramogos/940977/paulo-walkerio-poelgis-pries-mirti-sugraudino-milijonus-stai-kokio-zmogaus-netekome>

“An elusive experiential tense construction in Latvian” by Anna Daugavet and Axel Holvoet deals with a Latvian minor gram not identified hitherto as a gram in its own right: the compound past tense forms with the auxiliary *tikt*.

- (6) Latvian (Jaunsudrabiņš, cited from Daugavet & Holvoet, this volume)

<i>Manu</i>	<i>naudu</i>	<i>pazīna</i>	<i>visi</i>	<i>mājas,</i>
my.ACC.SG	money.ACC	know.PST.3	all.NOM.PL.M	home.GEN.SG
<i>ļaudis,</i>	<i>jo</i>	<i>es</i>	<i>bieži</i>	<i>par</i>
people[PL].NOM	because	1SG.NOM	often	about
<i>tiku</i>	<i>runājis.</i>		<i>to</i>	<i>it.ACC</i>
<b>tikt.PST.1SG</b>	<b>talk.PPA.NOM.SG</b>			

‘The whole house knew about my ‘money’, for I had often talked about it.’

In Latvian reference grammars these forms are described as a mere variety of the past tense or the perfect with the auxiliary *tikt* ‘become’ instead of *būt* ‘be’. In this article they are identified as a distinct gram, an instance of what has been called the experiential. Like the experiential perfect, experiential tenses combine the feature of indefinite location in time with that of referring to an event-type rather than to an event-token. Unlike the experiential perfect, however, the experiential does not necessarily take speech time as a reference point from which the event is viewed—a feature that has been formulated as the ‘current-relevance’ value of the perfect. Rather, an experiential may have different kinds of time frames. It is clear, however, that the Latvian experiential has extended beyond the domain of a type-focusing experiential and acquired the additional function of a non-narrative and non-resultative past tense referring to event tokens with more precise but still relatively loose location in time.

- (7) Latvian (Rainis, cited from Daugavet & Holvoet, this volume)

<i>Tiku</i>	<i>Tev</i>	<i>vakar</i>	<i>rakstījis</i>
tikt.PST.1SG	2SG.DAT	yesterday	write.PPA.NOM.SG.M
<i>uz</i>	<i>jauno</i>	<i>dzīvokli.</i>	
to	new.ACC.SG.DEF	residence.ACC.SG	

‘I did write to you yesterday at your new address.’

The event referred to in such situations is situationally anchored, but what is at stake is just the fact of its having occurred, abstracting away from its narrative context and its result. In this respect the construction becomes similar in function to the Russian factual imperfective aspect, which is often used to affirm or negate the occurrence of an event in the past regardless of its results:

- (8) Russian (Sergej Dovlatov, RNC)  
 [*Posylaju tebe dva stiška.*]  
 Odin (pervyj) ja uže  
 one.ACC.SG.M first.ACC.SG.M 1SG.NOM already  
 posylal tebe,  
 send[IPFV].PST.M.SG 2SG.DAT  
 [*no Ty ego, po vsej vidimosti, ne polučil...*]  
 ‘[I’m sending you two little poems.] I already sent you one of them  
 (the first), [but you evidently didn’t receive it...]’

This tendency, as well as the similarity to the Russian factual imperfective, is noted, for other languages, by Dahl (1985), who wonders whether this factual use is still an extended use of the experiential or whether it could be viewed as a distinct gram. Latvian seems to provide one more piece of evidence for the rise of token-focusing factual uses as a natural extension from experiential meaning, and the parallel of the Russian imperfective aspect points to a line of development from ‘type-focusing’ to ‘past factual’, which could perhaps be recognised as a minor ‘focal meaning’ in the domain of the past.

Another past-tense construction is dealt with, this time from a cross-linguistic perspective, in “Absentives and ambidirectionals: Motion-cum-purpose constructions with ‘be’ and the infinitive in Baltic and elsewhere” by Axel Holvoet and Vaiva Žeimantienė. The absentive is defined by de Groot (2000) as a construction type referring to a person’s absence from the deictic centre for the purpose of engaging in an activity specified by an infinitive:

- (9) German  
 Anna ist schwimmen.  
 PN be.PRS.3SG swim.INF  
 ‘Ann has gone swimming.’

The notion of absentive has been criticised in the literature because the putative absentives show many uses that do not meet the definitional criteria listed in de Groot’s 2000 article where the notion was originally proposed. Another problem is that, as pointed out by Vogel (2007), putative absentives often have only (or basically only) a past-tense variety, while the opposite (an absentive restricted to the present) is not attested. This naturally leads to the assumption that the constructions involved have originally only past time reference and may then optionally spread to the present. On this assumption, Holvoet and Žeimantienė propose the notion

of ambidirectional, a type of constructions (or usage types of grammatical forms with a broader array of functions) describing two-way motion-cum-purpose in the past.

- (10) Lithuanian (cited from Holvoet & Žeimantienė, this volume)

<i>Ten</i>	<i>aš</i>	<b><i>buvau</i></b>	<i>vieną kartą</i>	<i>žiemos</i>
there	1SG.NOM	<b>be.PST.1SG</b>	once	winter.GEN.SG
<i>metu</i>	<b><i>slidinėti</i></b>	<i>su</i>	<i>šeima</i>	<i>ir</i>
time.INS.SG	<b>ski.INF</b>	with	family.INS.SG	and
<i>draugais.</i>				
friend.INS.PL				

‘I’ve been there once for skiing in the winter together with my family and friends.’

The authors point out that past-tense constructions like these should be viewed in the context of past-tense motion constructions, involving motion verbs or, when these are lacking, an implicit element of motion manifesting itself by directional marking on noun phrases. An example could be the past-tense uses of the so-called verbs of indeterminate motion in East Slavonic, which have a function similar to the construction with ‘be’ in (10):

- (11) Russian

<i>My</i>	<i>xodili</i>	<i>kupat’sja.</i>
1PL.NOM	go.INDET.PST.PL	bathe.INF
‘We have been swimming.’		

East Slavonic does not have absentives with ‘be’ as in (9) and (10), which is not surprising considering that the function of the two constructions is exactly similar; one must, however, abandon the notion of absentive and focus on that of two-way motion in the past in order to see the correspondence. An absentive reading obtains when an ambidirectional is used with ‘outward-point focus’, i. e. when the subject-mover’s location at the outward point of the motion event is used as a time frame, and the subject-mover’s absence from her or his default location is stated by an external observer. The marking of two-way motion in the past obviously seems to have a certain grammatical relevance that deserves to be studied in greater detail.

A minor gram in the domain of voice is discussed in “The agentive construction in Baltic and Fennic” by Axel Holvoet, Anna Daugavet, Birutė



Spraunienė and Asta Laugalienė. ‘Agentive construction’ is the name given in Finnish scholarship to a construction identifying the agent by means of a possessive strategy in adnominal and secondarily also in predicative position, without this strategy being used in a corresponding passive construction—unlike what we observe in English agent phrases with *by*, which occur in both positions (*the house built by Tom* and *the house was built by Tom*). An agentive construction of this type is also observed in Latvian, where the passive is basically agentless:

- (12) Latvian (cited from Holvoet, Daugavet, Spraunienė & Laugalienė)

<i>Pilsētas</i>	<i>iedzīvotāju</i>	<i>iemīļota</i>	<i>tikšanās</i>
city.GEN.SG	dweller.GEN.PL	love.PPP.NOM.SG.F	meeting.GEN.SG
<i>vieta</i>	<i>skvērā</i>	<i>ir</i>	<i>strūklaka</i>
place.NOM.SG	square.LOC.SG	be.PRS.3	fountain.NOM.SG

[– *meitenes skulptūra ar liliju*].

‘A meeting place on the square beloved by the city dwellers is the fountain [in the shape of a girl with a lily.]’

Historical evidence shows that a construction of this type has given rise to an agented passive in Lithuanian; in Latvian, however, such an extension has not taken place, and in Finnish as well, the agentive construction has not been put to use for the creation of an agented passive: what is called the passive in Finnish is actually an impersonal construction, and though Latvian has a real passive, the possessive-based agentive construction has not been integrated into it. This means that the agentive construction of Latvian and Finnish must be dealt with as a construction in its own right. This is the main purpose of the article, which concentrates on the Latvian agentive construction. Its lexical input is not actually restricted to agentive verbs, and the genitival agent phrase is correspondingly not always an agent. In virtue of its structure and its semantic features, the agentive construction shows a certain affinity with the resultative (stative) passive, though it has distinctive features of its own. For this reason a study of the agentive passive can shed more light on the resultative passive, and on the possibility of expressing the agent in it. In this way, this study on the agentive construction is also a contribution to the study of the passive as a family of constructions.

The two remaining phenomena dealt with in the volume belong to the category of constructional idioms. One of them, the ‘take and V’ construction, is widespread in the languages of Europe and has therefore already received some attention in the literature (Coseriu 1966 is a pioneering work).

The article “Pseudocoordination with ‘take’ in Baltic and its neighbours” by Nicole Nau, Kirill Kozhanov, Liina Lindström, Asta Laugalienė and Paweł Brudzyński offers a corpus-assisted investigation of this construction in Baltic and the neighbouring Slavonic and Fennic languages. Their article is the first corpus-based study of the formal and semantic variability of this construction within one compact area—a cluster of north-eastern European languages belonging to different families. They show that the construction manifests a considerable degree of both language-internal and cross-linguistic variety with regard to such syntactic and morphosyntactic features as aspect, placement of negation, presence or absence of a conjunction etc., but also with regard to lexical input, paradigmatic variability (the array of grammatical forms in which the construction is found) and semantic features. In the Baltic languages ‘take and V’ is well represented both in terms of frequency and versatility and of lexical input, extending to verb classes hardly attested in the construction in other languages, viz. unbounded state and activity verbs. The meaning of the construction is elusive and though several authors have voiced the intuition that there must be a semantic invariant from which the manifold contextual shades of meaning can be derived, it remains difficult to pinpoint. There is, for example, a striking difference between directive contexts (with the imperative), where the suggestion is one of sudden and resolute action, and narrative contexts (with mainly past-tense forms), where the effect is one of unexpectedness and apparent lack of logical motivation. This is shown by examples (13) and (14) from Latvian:

- (13) Latvian (from Nicole Nau *et al.*, this volume)

<i>Vienkārši</i>	<b><i>ņem</i></b>	<b><i>un</i></b>	<b><i>nesmēķē!</i></b>
simply	<b>take.IMP.2SG</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>NEG.smoke.IMP.2SG</b>
‘Just don’t smoke!’			

- (14) Latvian (*ibid.*)

<i>Pasniedzēja</i>	<b><i>ņēma</i></b>	<b><i>un</i></b>	<b><i>neieradās</i></b>
teacher[F].NOM.SG	<b>take.PST.3</b>	<b>and</b>	<b>NEG.appear.PST.3</b>

*uz eksāmenu!*

to exam.ACC.SG

‘The teacher did not turn up at the exam!’ (unexpectedly, untypically)

It is to be hoped that this study will inspire similar corpus-based research for other areas of Europe where the construction is known, such as Romance and North Germanic.

“Insubordinated concessive imperatives: an areal constructional idiom type” by Axel Holvoet, Anna Daugavet and Liina Lindström deals with an underinvestigated non-directive use of the imperative in Baltic and in the neighbouring Slavonic and Fennic languages as well as in Yiddish. It is part of a syntactically extremely fluid construction, the function of which is to characterise a situation by hyperbolically describing the consequences one might imagine flowing from it.

- (15) Lithuanian (cited from Holvoet, Daugavet & Lindström, this volume)

<i>Kai</i>	<i>tik</i>	<i>mėgini</i>	<i>pakurti,</i>	<i>rūksta</i>	<i>kaip</i>
when	only	try.PRS.2SG	make.fire.INF	smoke.PRS.3	like
<i>iš</i>	<i>pragaro,</i>	<i>nors</i>	<i>bėk</i>	<i>iš</i>	<i>namų.</i>
from	hell.GEN.SG	CONC	run.IMP.2SG	from	home[PL].GEN

‘Every time you try to light a fire, there is a hellish smoke which makes you want to run away.’

The name proposed for the construction reflects its putative origin as reconstructed by the authors. The marker *nors* (and its counterparts in the other languages dealt with, like Latvian *kaut*, Russian *xot*’ etc.) may be a concessive subordinator or a scalar particle, but its scalar value is one that is elsewhere encountered only in imperatival concessive clauses. Therefore the authors hypothesise that the structure *nors* + imperative is historically an insubordinated imperatival concessive clause subsequently embedded in a consecutive clause to yield the present-day meaning of ‘imaginable consequence’. The syntactic reconstruction is rendered difficult by the massive ellipsis the construction has, in different varieties, undergone in the individual languages where it has taken root. Viewed cross-linguistically, the construction does not have a single invariant formal feature apart from the non-directive imperative, but the formal features facilitating its identification form a network of family resemblances, and the constructional meaning is stable and distinctive, much more so than the ‘take and V’ construction, in comparison to which it is, on the other hand, much more fluid in formal structure.

The formulation ‘minor’ gram used in the title of this volume should not be taken to mean ‘peripheral’, and the volume should not be viewed as a collection of footnotes to the grammars of the languages dealt with. The ‘major’ categories like tense, mood, aspect and voice can also be profitably viewed as families of constructions connected sometimes by common morphology and sometimes by an assumed affinity of meaning.

The former applies, for instance, to the passive, where the passive participle connects a set of constructions typically comprising at least a dynamic and a resultative passive, personal and impersonal passives, etc. In Latvian, the agentive construction described in this volume would also count as a member of the family of passive constructions, as it shares its passive morphology; it is found to be complementary to the resultative passive and to interact with it, and moreover it serves as a basis for the apparently ongoing process of creation of a new agentive dynamic passive in Latvian. A family of aspectual constructions, on the other hand, could only be defined on the basis of semantic criteria: in Baltic it includes the oppositions of simplex and prefixed lexical stems (the type Lith. *rašyti* : *parašyti*), but as these are of relatively limited extent in Baltic as compared to Slavonic, the aspectual domain is partly served by a variety of minor constructions involving prefixation (Lithuanian continuative *be-*), suffixation (Lithuanian verbs in *-inėti*), constructions involving case forms of verbal nouns (the Latvian continuative construction “*V vienā V-šanā*” dealt with by Nau in this volume) etc.

One more reason for which the ‘major’ categories must be broken down into ‘minor grams’ is that they tend to be unstable over time. Chains of semantic shifts leads to increasing polysemy, with which linguists have, over time, attempted to cope in different ways—with the aid of structuralist ‘general meanings’ or ‘semantic invariants’ (Jakobson 1931) or with radial networks in the spirit of cognitive linguistics (as in Brugman & Lakoff 1988). But a consequence of the constructional approach is that meanings in different types of use of a category will also be defined as construction-specific, foregoing the need for both invariants and network-like representations, neither of which are likely to be part of a speaker’s knowledge of language. The changes that grammatical forms undergo also occur in constructions, so that grammaticalisation must at the same time be viewed as constructionalisation (see Traugott & Trousdale 2013).

Thus, for different reasons, we must conclude that studying minor grams is a good way of enhancing our understanding of the major categories. It is probably also the best way of viewing these categories in their areal context, as minor grams are the natural domain of cross-linguistic interaction; the present volume, in which areal links figure prominently, shows this in an eloquent way. It is with all this in mind that we put the

present volume in the reader's hands, hoping that it may give an impetus to further similar-minded research into various typologically and areally relevant grammatical features of the Baltic languages.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ACC – accusative, ACN – action noun, DAT – dative, CNT – continuative, CONC – concessive subordinator or scalar particle, DEF – definite, F – feminine, GEN – genitive, IMP – imperative, INDET – indeterminate, INF – infinitive, INS – instrumental, IPFV – imperfective, LOC – locative, NEG – negative, NOM – nominative, PL – plural, PN – personal name, PPA – past active participle, PPP – past passive participle, PPRA – present passive participle, PRS – present, PST – past, RFL – reflexive, SG – singular

## REFERENCES

- AMBRAZAS, VYTAUTAS, ed. 2006. *Lithuanian Grammar*. 2nd revised edition. Vilnius: Baltos lankos.
- ARKADIEV, PETER M. 2011. On the aspectual uses of the prefix *be-* in Lithuanian. *Baltic Linguistics* 2, 37–78.
- BRUGMAN, CLAUDIA & GEORGE LAKOFF. 1988. Cognitive topology and lexical networks. In: Steven Small, Garrison Cotrell & Michael Tanenhaus, eds., *Lexical Ambiguity Resolution*, San Mateo, CA: Morgan Kaufman, 477–508.
- BYBEE, JOAN L. & ÖSTEN DAHL. 1989. The creation of tense and aspect systems in the languages of the world. *Studies in Language* 13.1, 51–103.
- BYBEE, JOAN L., REVERE PERKINS & WILLIAM PAGLIUCA. 1994. *The Evolution of Grammar. Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World*. Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press.
- COSERIU, EUGENIU. 1966. *Tomo y me voy*. Ein Problem vergleichender europäischer Syntax. *Vox Romanica* 25, 13–55.
- DAHL, ÖSTEN. 1985. *Tense and Aspect Systems*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- DE GROOT, CASPER. 2000. The absentive. In: Östen Dahl, ed. *Tense and Aspect in the Languages of Europe*. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 693–719.
- FILLMORE, CHARLES J., PAUL KAY & MARY C. O'CONNOR. 1988. Regularity and idiomatcity in grammatical constructions. The case of *let alone*. *Language* 64.3, 501–539.
- GOLDBERG, ADELE. 1995. *Constructions: A Construction Grammar Approach to Argument Structure*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- JACKENDOFF, RAY. 1997. Twistin' the night away. *Language* 73.3, 534–559.
- JAKOBSON, ROMAN. 1931. Zur Struktur des russischen Verbums.  
In: Roman Jakobson, *Selected Writings II*, The Hague: Mouton, 3–15.
- TRAUGOTT, ELIZABETH CLOSS & GRAEME TROUSDALE. 2013.  
*Constructionalization and Constructional Changes*. Oxford:  
Oxford University Press.
- VOGEL, PETRA. 2007. *Anna ist essen!* Neue Überlegungen zum Absentiv.  
In: Ljudmila Geist & Björn Rothstein, eds., *Kopulaverben und Kopulasätze:  
Intersprachliche und intrasprachliche Aspekte*. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter,  
253–284.