Rolandas Mikulskas. *Copular constructions in Lithuanian.* (Valency, Argument Realization and Grammatical Relations in Baltic, 4). Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2017. xvi + 280 pp. ISBN 978 90 272 5912 7 (Hb), 978 90 272 6742 9 (e-book).

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This book by Rolandas Mikulskas is an in-detail analysis of copular constructions (henceforth: ccs) in one Baltic language, Lithuanian. It is a typologically aware, cognitive-linguistic approach to a specific construction, or rather a set of interconnected constructions, with a synchronic emphasis as opposed to the more diachronically-oriented tradition of Lithuanian syntax. The author analyzes a wide range of ccs, including expressions where the predicative nominal is not in the nominative case, as well as expressions with less prototypical copula verbs such as *tapti* 'become', which express the inception of the identificational relationship. This approach allows him to discuss Lithuanian ccs in the wider context of semantically close construction types that often use the same verbs as ccs (most notably *būti* 'be'), including locative, existential, and possessive constructions. The author bases his analysis mainly on the framework of Cognitive Grammar (e.g., Langacker 1987, 1991, 2008), but incorporates additional insights from Construction Grammar, language typology, and also formal approaches such as generative linguistics and formal semantics. The work is thus very multi-faceted in terms of theory, and it gives the reader a thorough account of earlier research on copular constructions, not only in Lithuanian but in general linguistics as well.

The book begins with a detailed introduction to the field, including an overview of the state of the art in the grammatical analysis of Lithuanian. This is enlightening to an international reader who (like the present author) has little if any previous knowledge of the grammar tradition in Baltic. The Introduction is an unnumbered chapter that precedes the actual body of the work, and presents a brief summary of the research tradition, where, for historical reasons, ccs have typically been classified as nominal constructions. This is an approach Mikulskas argues against; instead, he approaches the field from a cognitive-linguistic perspective, combining insights of Cognitive Grammar and versions of Construction Grammar, in particular Croft's (2001) Radical Construction Grammar. In a construction-based approach it is acknowledged that the lexical meaning of the copular verb is schematic and flexible and adapts to the meaning of the clause-level construction in which the verb is used.

The author divides Lithuanian ccs into three main types: the ascriptional (or ascriptive) type, which includes ccs with adjectival complements (e.g. *Jonas yra **liūdnas*** 'John is sad'), and two types that take nominal (NP) complements: the class-inclusional cc (e.g. *Jonas yra **mokytojas*** 'John is a teacher') and the equative type, which is further divided into three subtypes according to their structural and functional properties: (1) descriptional-identifying (e.g. *Giedrė yra **aukščiausia mergina klasėje*** 'Giedrė is the tallest girl in [her] class'), (2) identificational proper (*Esu **tas Jonas, kuris vakar jums skambino*** 'I am that John who called you on the phone yesterday') and (3) specificational (*Aukščiausia mergina klasėje yra **Giedrė*** 'The tallest girl in the class is Giedrė'). The difference between (1) and (3) manifests itself as word order but is also related to the information structure and what the sentence presupposes. In type (3) the element which in type (1) is the predicative nominal ('the tallest girl in the class'), is located in the sentence-initial position and, according to Mikulskas, has the property of role definiteness: "the speaker already knows that in a finite list there is only one individual that conforms to the description of the said nominal" (p. 73). The identity of this individual is then expressed by the definite postverbal nominal, which shows the grammatical behavior of a subject by triggering subject–verb agreement. Specificational constructions are given a substantial amount of attention in the book, as the entire Part II is dedicated to them.

The Introduction also includes a discussion of verbs that are typical in ccs. The most important and prototypical is the schematic copula *būti* 'be', which, according to the author (p. 70), originally had an existential meaning but was adapted to perform a copular function along with a few other verbs. These include verbs that designate a change of state (*tapti* 'become', *pasidaryti/darytis* 'become', *virsti* 'turn into'), locational verbs (*likti* 'stay; remain', *stoti* 'become' [lit. 'stand up']), and a few others. According to Mikulskas, a common feature for all these verbs is that they cannot be used independently (without a nominal). Such semantically schematic verbs then "become copulas when their earlier (source) construction becomes a copular construction with an assertion of identity between the designata of two linguistic expressions" (p. 6).

The main body of the work is divided into three parts, I–III. Part I is titled *Copular constructions and their grammatical context* and begins with Chapter 1, which gives an overview of the constructions in which the verb *būti* 'be' is used. These include different subtypes of ascriptive and equative copular constructions, which form part of a network of constructions which also comprises existential, locative and possessive constructions. All of these have a strong as-

sociation with the verb *būti* 'be', and the semantics of this verb is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. In contrast to some earlier approaches, Mikulskas emphasizes that the copular verb, though semantically highly schematic, is not void of meaning. However, its meaning is flexible and adapts to each construction in which it is used. The author points out that a syntactic feature common to all these constructions is that they have a complex predicate which consists not only of the verb but of the combination of the verb with a nominal, which then expresses most of the content of the predication. In CCS, the verb *būti* alternates between the meanings of (property) ascription (as in *Jonas yra liūdnas* 'John is sad'), (class) inclusion (as in *Jonas yra mokytojas* 'John is a teacher'), and the expression of referential identity between the subject and the predicative nominal, with the meaning of equation assigned to the verb (as in *Jonas yra tas mokytojas, kuris mums įdiegė meilę gimtajai kalbai* 'John is the teacher who instilled in us the love of our native tongue', examples from p. 30 of the book).

Chapter 3 represents a classification of Lithuanian CCS based on the division into ascriptive, inclusive and equative expressions (as in the examples given above). The author points out (p. 55) that equative expressions are not 'predicative' in the same sense as the two other types are, at least if predication is understood as the attribution of a feature to the subject referent. He then presents a detailed summary concerning the analysis of these subtypes of CCS in different linguistic traditions, from formal semantics and minimalism to typological and cognitive linguistics. He argues that, from the cognitive-linguistic point of view, a thorough account of copular constructions should not confine itself to expressions with the verb *būti* 'be', but also consider other verbal lexemes, such as *tapti* 'become', *pasidaryti/darytis* 'become', *virsti* 'turn into', *likti* 'remain; stay'. This is because in sentences of nominal, adjectival or prepositional predication they actually perform the same function as the verb *būti* by asserting identity between two entities.

Chapter 3 also (on pp. 69–82) discusses the nature of the relation of identity between the two entities designated by the nominals in CCS, as well as the referential properties of nominal complements. Mikulskas argues that a detailed analysis of the conceptual background of copular constructions enables us to assign to the same archetype of identity assertion both those sentences with *būti* that are generally recognized as instantiating this archetype, and those ones that have become functionally or structurally remote from the archetype. The common schematic meaning behind those subtypes of CCS in which the predicative nominal is headed by a noun is based on the phenomenon known as *type instantiation* in Cognitive Grammar (see also Langacker 1991: 51–73). It defines

the cognitive operation that distinguishes an individual from a set of entities conforming to a certain linguistic description. Mikulskas uses this notion to argue that "the concept of instantiation is important in that it explains the way in which the noun, whose primary function in the language is to refer to a thing (in other words, to carry the referential function), may be used as a predicate in the sentence" (p. 77). He argues that when a noun (or a nominal) is used in the predicative position, it becomes a relational part of speech. It signifies the relation between the description of the type provided by the noun lexeme and its (arbitrary) instantiation.

Mikulskas expands this analysis even to complements of equative constructions, arguing that the only difference between these and predicative nominals expressing inclusion (as in *Whales are mammals*) is that in the equative construction definite nominals are used as complements, and their type is represented by the referent instantiated in reality and uniquely identified by the speakers. By contrast, adjectival predicative nominals simply express the predication of the sentence on their own, by directly assigning a property to the subject referent. Nevertheless, he argues that even such ascriptive ccs can be analyzed as identity predications, because they predicate the identity between two entities, one of which—an abstract bearer of an adjectival property—is just an implicit (unprofiled) element of the predicated relation, instantiated in the mind of the speaker or the hearer (p. 80).

In Chapter 4 the author introduces and discusses some 'peripheral' subtypes of ccs, including those where a proper name is used as the predicative nominal (*Esu **Jonas*** 'I am John'), and expressions with prepositional phrases (*Ši mergina yra **su manimi*** 'This girl is with me'). Part I of the book ends with Chapter 5, which sums up the main observations and presents some generalizations that follow. Regarding the construction types analyzed (ccs, existential, locative, and possessive constructions) the author argues (p. 91) that they may all be derived from two structural archetypes—the existential one and that of identity.

The whole Part II of the book, titled *Specificational copular constructions*, is dedicated to the specificational type of cc (illustrated by examples such as 'The tallest girl in the class is Giedrė'). In this construction, the preverbal nominal designates a person's profession, social role or exceptional status in a community, while the postverbal nominal specifies the identity of the person who performs the unique role (typically by expressing his or her proper name). Put briefly, the main purpose of the specificational cc is "to elaborate the identity of the unique performer of a certain role or to specify the reference thereof" (p. 169). Part II also addresses the historical background of this construction and

the problems of syntactic analysis associated with it. Special attention is given to the problem of subject assignment in these constructions.

Part II begins with Chapter 6, which discusses the position of the specificational cc in the overall classification of copular clauses. The author points out that the arrangement of referential properties in the nominals in this construction is a rigid one. Such properties include *role definiteness* ('the tallest girl in the class') and individual definiteness ('Giedrė'), with a fixed topic-comment structure: the nominal with role definiteness is always the sentence-initial topic, and the one with individual definiteness is the comment. In purely formal terms, the specificational cc is an 'inverted' version of the descriptional-identifying cc ('Giedrė is the tallest girl in the class'), but according to the author, the reversed word order in these constructions is not an instance of pragmatic fronting of the topic or focusing of the comment but rather "reflects opposite communicative perspectives predetermined by different contextual presuppositions" (p. 97). In other words, the specificational cc is an instance of elaboration of the sole performer of a certain role defined on the basis of a certain category of referents. In grammatical terms, such constructions are known for the cross-linguistic alternation that concerns the assignment of the subject function to one nominal or the other.

Chapter 7 presents a detailed account of pseudoclefts such as *Ko aš nemėgstu, tai cepelinų* 'What I dislike is potato dumplings', which the author classifies as a subtype of the specificational construction. According to him (p. 120), Lithuanian pseudoclefts are generally used "in a specific context to express a restriction or an exception". Chapter 8 then addresses the problem of subjecthood in the specificational cc: whether the subject is the preverbal or the postverbal nominal. Both have some features typical of a subject but lack some others. The preverbal nominal is topical, typically represents given information and functions as the starting point of the predication (in the sense of Langacker 2008, 372–373). According to Mikulskas, the preverbal nominal defines a certain role and presupposes the existence of a unique performer of that role, which the construction specifies. Thus it has at least discourse properties typical of a subject, but even in grammatical terms the assignment of subject status to the initial nominal might be justified by constituency: it seems that the verb of the sentence forms a closer phrase with the nominal that follows it, similar to a verbal phrase or even a complex predicate (p. 134). On the other hand, in Lithuanian (as in many other morphologically rich languages that use case marking to indicate grammatical functions), it is the postverbal nominal that is marked as the grammatical subject by verb agreement and case marking. For example,

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in *Klubo prezidentas esu* (/ **yra*) *aš* 'The president of the club is me' (example 290 on p. 136) the verb 'be' agrees with the sentence-final 1st person pronoun and would be ungrammatical in the 3rd person. Another syntactic feature that supports the analysis of the sentence-final nominal as the subject is that the case marking of the initial nominal alternates between the nominative and the instrumental (*Mokyklos direktorius / direktoriumi (pernai) buvo Jonas Petraitis.* '(Last year) the headmaster [NOM/INS] of the school was Jonas Petraitis', ex. 291 on p. 136), which is a feature typical of predicative nominals but not of subjects.

To approach the problem from a cross-linguistic perspective, the author then proceeds to a comparison of (mostly European) languages, with a special emphasis on Lithuanian vs English, and discusses a number of relevant differences in the assignment of the subject status in the specificational CC. He argues (in Section 8.4) that the apparent synonymy but different grammatical structure of such constructions in different languages poses a problem for cognitive linguistics. He points out that while both topic and subject are notions that evoke a reference point (see Langacker 1993 for the notion), their nature as reference-point expressions is different: a topic is always "an extrinsic element to its established interpretative dominion, functionally motivated by the logic of discourse", while a subject is "an element that is both structurally internal to the clause and conceptually intrinsic", and its function as a reference point is to be primarily associated with the way of conceptualization of the process profiled by the verb (p. 153).

In Cognitive Grammar, the assignment of the subject function to a nominal is based on conceptualization, in particular on focal prominence and trajector/ landmark alignment (Langacker 2008, 210). In Cognitive Grammar, the subject is a nominal whose profile corresponds to the trajector of a profiled (clause-level) relationship. Thus, according to Mikulskas (p. 162), a subject elaborates the position of the trajector and becomes the starting point for the conceptualization of the propositional content expressed by the sentence. Since the verb *būti* 'be' has no independent lexical meaning, the disposition of trajector and landmark indicated by the asymmetry of the predication is predetermined by other factors. Mikulskas offers two alternative solutions (p. 165–166). In the first one, the trajector is, *contra* morphosyntax, identified with the sentence-initial nominal that has role-definiteness. In such a case the sentence-final nominal, which is morphosyntactically marked as the grammatical subject, is "only a morphosyntactic reflex unimportant for conceptualizing the content of the construction under discussion, 'inherited' in the Lithuanian type of construction, from a corresponding predicative construction" (p. 165). Alternatively, and adhering more

rigorously to Cognitive Grammar and its content requirement (see Langacker 2008, 24–26), it can be argued that the morphosyntactic subject unambiguously designates the trajector. In the latter case, the author argues, "the selection of the trajector is not too helpful in conceiving the content of the specificational proposition, or, rather, is helpful indirectly, because in such cases it can only be the starting point when the content of the corresponding predicative construction is conceptualized" (p. 166). In other words, the author is inclined towards the first analysis where the sentence-final nominal, which is morphosyntactically the subject of the specificational cc, is neither a starting point for the designated relationship nor a clause-level trajector.

The first solution is not without problems, because it results in a situation where a grammatical subject is not the (clause-level) trajector. This is problematic because the very definition of a subject in Cognitive Grammar is that it is a trajector (e.g., Langacker 1987, 493 gives the definition of subject as "a nominal whose profile corresponds to the trajector of a relation"). The status as a starting point, on the other hand, is not criterial to a subject, and, indeed, there are many different kinds of starting points in a clause-level expression, with discourse topicality and givenness being only one kind. On the other hand, there are non-topical, discourse-new subjects in many kinds of constructions, also in English (consider so-called locative inversion as in *Into the kitchen ran a cat*). Another case in point is the Lithuanian opposition between locative (sv) vs existential (vs) constructions (e.g. *Stalčiuje / prie knygos yra sąsiuvinis* 'In the drawer / next to the book is an exercise-book', ex. 52 on p. 20), which would have been interesting to compare with the postverbal subjects of the specificational cc. It seems that the existential subject likewise lacks the function of a starting point, but its subjecthood is not questioned by Mikulskas. The problem could also be approached by explicitly distinguishing grammatical, semantic, and discourse properties of subjects (this is the approach of Huumo and Helasvuo 2015 in their analysis of Finnish subjects) and showing, in a wider perspective, how Lithuanian (non-canonical) subjects behave in general.

In Chapter 9, which sums up part II, the author argues: "The fact that in different languages in specificational copular constructions the features of 'morphosyntactic' subject are acquired by nominals with different semantic functions considerably complicates a conceptually grounded definition of the subject in sentences representing the constructions under discussion, and this poses a serious challenge to a fundamental principle of Cognitive Grammar— the content requirement" (p. 172). This passage seems to ignore a fundamental tenet of Cognitive Grammar which states that semantics is language-specific to

a considerable degree (Langacker 1987, 2) and based on conceptualization. Thus it is only plausible that specificational constructions in, say, English and Lithuanian, are not fully synonymous but differ in their assignment of the subject function (and thus the clause-level trajector status) to one nominal or another.

In Part III (*The expression of aspect in copular constructions*), the focus is on the aspectual semantics of ccs. Mikulskas argues that due to the impoverished semantics of copular verbs, the clause-level aspectual nature of ccs rests on the construction itself and on the context. He points out that since the aspectual interpretation of the copular verb often depends on the nature of the situation designated by the whole construction, its corresponding aspectual meaning may be derived from the aspectual meaning of the complex predicate or even of the whole construction.

Part III begins with Chapter 10, which presents an overview of aspect in Lithuanian ccs. In addition to expressions using the basic copula verb *būti* 'be', which essentially designates a stative relationship, the author discusses examples with other copular verbs that express a change of state. These include *tapti* 'become', *pasidaryti/darytis* 'get, grow, become', *virsti* 'turn into' and *likti* 'remain', which, according to the author, may be considered "aspectual versions of the copula" (p. 176). Even in expressions based on *būti* 'be' the aspect of the whole construction is shaped by aspectual derivatives of the copular verb (e.g., aspectual prefixes) and its tense forms, as well as by the nominals, their morphosyntactic encoding (e.g., nominative vs instrumental), and adverbial elements designating recurrent states, continuativity, anteriority and other such aspect-related meanings.

In Chapter 11 the focus is on the morphosyntactic encoding of copular constructions. These are examined against Leon Stassen's (1997) influential work on intransitive predications. Mikulskas argues that the chosen strategy of morphosyntactic encoding of predicates sets limits to the possibilities of aspectual expression. The analysis shows that the nominal encoding strategy, especially the variety with a non-verbal copula in identificational sentences (e.g., *Vakarinė — tai Aušrinė* 'The Evening Star is the Morning Star'), offers the least possibilities for the expression of aspect: according to the author, these usually convey 'atemporal' or 'omnitemporal' general truths, which are thereby also valid currently (at the time of speaking). In terms of aspectual expression, the widest possibilities are provided by inclusive and ascriptive sentences.

The focus of Chapter 12 is on aspect in different types of copular constructions. At first sight it may seem that in terms of aspect, copular expressions always designate a state (such as 'The house is red'). Mikulskas demonstrates

that there is in fact a remarkable alternation in the aspectual nature of CCs, even in clauses based on the stative verb *būti* 'be'. This is because in addition to the copular verb's own aspectual contour, clause-level aspect depends on other elements such as tense, adverbials, the semantic frame of the profiled event, the semantics of the predicative nominal and the perspective chosen by the speaker. An illustrative example of how tense affects aspectual interpretations is given on p. 214: while the present-tense expression *Vyras jai **yra** neištikimas* 'Her husband is unfaithful (to her)' is stative, the past-tense expression *Vyras jai **buvo** neištikimas tris kartus* 'Her husband was unfaithful (to her) three times' actually designates an aspectually bounded event which repeats itself over time. Furthermore, dynamic copular verbs such as *tapti* 'become', *virsti* 'turn into', *pasidaryti/darytis* 'become' are obviously dynamic in aspect: they designate "a change of state, status or shape of the subject referent" (p. 225). According to Mikulskas, such verbs can be regarded as aspectual counterparts of the basic copula verb *būti*, in particular because they are used in essentially the same copular constructions as *būti*. He argues that such verbs have grammaticalized into the copular function from constructions in which they designated a change of location, surfacing or emerging of an entity. In the copular construction they have become more and more desemanticized, and express, in addition to the aspectual meaning of a change of state, the general function of assertion of identity.

Chapter 13 and the following (unnumbered) chapter "General conclusions" sum up the main results of part III and the whole study, respectively. The author argues that in the cognitive analysis of copular constructions the predication is in each case performed through assertion of a relation of identity between two entities. This is a novel characterization, which in more traditional terms might be expected to apply only to so-called identificational CCs where the referents of two definite nominals (the subject and the predicative) are one and the same individual (e.g., *Maironis — tai Jonas Mačiulis* 'Maironis is Jonas Mačiulis'). However, Mikulskas argues that the expression of identity can be extended to CCs of the inclusive type (e.g., 'John is a teacher'), in which the subject referent is identified with an arbitrary representative of a type description provided by the predicative nominal. Even in CCs of the ascriptive type, where the adjectival predicative as such designates a property of an entity ('The house is red'), it attributes this property to the subject referent; thus in its semantic structure a place always exists for the bearer of the property it expresses. When the property is predicated of the subject referent, the abstract bearer of the property implied in the cognitive model of the adjective is instantiated, for purely structural

purposes, in the domain of a certain taxonomic level, and it is virtual, like in the inclusive construction. It is with this instantiation of the bearer of the abstract property that the relation of identity of the subject referent is established, by attributing this property to it in the ascriptive copular construction. Thus, according to the author, a cognitive-linguistic analysis allows us to treat all types of copular constructions as instantiations of the archetype of identity, and to assign to copular verbs used in all types of constructions a common function of assertion of identity between two entities, or the meaning of 'identity', thereby distinguishing them from the same lexemes used in locative, existential or possessive constructions.

Put briefly, the book by Mikulskas is a detailed Cognitive Grammar account of Lithuanian copular constructions, but it also takes into consideration results and viewpoints of other traditions, including Construction Grammar, language typology and formal approaches. The book is thus quite multi-faceted in terms of theory. On the other hand, the use of the descriptive apparatus of Cognitive Grammar is relatively light and relies on its core terminology. The book also lacks pictorial illustrations typical of works based on Cognitive Grammar. The plus side of this is that reading the book does not require previous knowledge of Cognitive Grammar.

As regards the data used, the work relies almost exclusively on self-constructed examples, which (together with glosses and translations) are easy to follow for a reader who does not know Lithuanian. The minus side of this is that the book has very little to say about how the ccs are actually used, how frequent each of them is, or how they behave in actual contexts. For example, it would be interesting to know how well the distinction between descriptional-identifying and specificational ccs works for data from actual usage, where there is more alternation and the actual context and information structure affect the choice of word order. A lesser point of criticism is that the author uses footnotes abundantly, and many of them are very long. This interrupts the reading of the main text over and over again.

In spite of such minor critical remarks, I found the book to be a treasure chest for a linguist who is interested in the syntax of a morphologically rich language, in particular copular constructions but also case marking and aspect, which are somewhat neglected features in most analyses of copular constructions. Personally, I was fascinated by the case alternation in the marking of the predicative nominal (nominative vs instrumental), which is strikingly similar to what the case is in my native language, Finnish (nominative vs essive, for a recent account, see Hynönen 2017). It is to be greeted with pleasure that there

is now an up-to-date, thorough, and typologically aware analysis of Lithuanian copular constructions available to the international readership.

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