

Preverbatation and narrativity in Lithuanian

The distribution of finite simplex and compound verbs in narrative main clauses

LEA SAWICKI

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

The article deals with the use of simplex and compound (prefixed) verbs in narrative text. Main clauses comprising finite verb forms in the past and in the past habitual tense are examined in an attempt to establish to what extent simplex and compound verbs exhibit aspect oppositions, and whether a correlation exists between the occurrence of simplex vs. compound verbs and distinct textual units. The investigation shows that although simple and compound verbs in Lithuanian are not in direct aspect opposition to each other, in the background text portions most of the verbs are prefixless past tense forms or habitual forms, whereas in the plot-advancing text portions, the vast majority of verbs are compound verbs in the simple past tense.

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1. The category of aspect in Lithuanian

The question whether aspect is one of the grammatical categories of Lithuanian has been under debate for many decades, with opinions ranging from unhesitating rejection of aspect as part of Lithuanian grammar to firm statements of its functioning in a manner much resembling the Slavic languages¹. As early as 1938 Safarewicz felt that the various approaches to the subject needed a detailed survey and

¹ Reklaitis (1980, 159) rejects the existence of a unique surface marker of aspect in Lithuanian, Smoczyński (1988, 859) remarks that as a consequence of the merger of the aorist and the imperfect there is no aspect opposition in Lithuanian; prefixation as a means of aspect marking is not mentioned. Paulauskienė (1994, 291) and Ambrazas (1985, 199–202), (2006, 234) argue for the opposition as a semantic category, while Holvoet and Čížik (2004) and Arkadiev (2009, n. 7) admit in their research that the level of grammaticalization of the Lithuanian aspectual opposition is rather low and Wiemer (2001, 39), comparing the features of Slavic aspect to that of Lithuanian, formulates the categorical statement that “грамматической категории вида он не обладает” (“it [Lithuanian] does not possess a grammatical category of aspect”).

classification². Despite a number of studies, some of them published recently, no consensus on the matter has been reached.

It has been suggested that aspectual oppositions in Lithuanian are more pronounced in the finite than in the non-finite verb forms (recently in Holvoet and Čížik 2004) and that a certain correlation exists between aspectual value and tense (e.g. in Ambrasas 2006, 235).

It seems no longer debatable that, given differences of oppositions discoverable in various verbal forms, a Lithuanian verb AS A LEXEME cannot be characterized by clear aspectual value³. The demonstrable observation that a COMPOUND verb may be opposed to a SIMPLE one in SOME verbal forms but not in others, or that an aspectual opposition may exist in SOME verbal lexemes but not in others, leads to the unavoidable conclusion that aspect is not one of the grammatical categories of Lithuanian that are obligatorily expressed. However, the numerous accounts and discussions of the category of aspect can be taken as evidence that linguists and users of the language have a strong feeling of some sort of functional and productive opposition⁴.

2. Aspect and text analysis

The investigation of the aspectual value of verbal forms in Lithuanian, which has so far yielded no generally accepted conclusions, may benefit from an analysis of a text of a single author, so as to avoid difficulties stemming from possible (and sometimes suggested) dialectal and idiolectal variation in the use of simple and compound verbs. Such a comprehensive investigation would require a full textual analysis taking into account the numerous morphological distinctions in the Lithuanian verbal system as well as the syntactic properties of various forms and their typical contexts. In this study, I shall limit myself to

² After reviewing the range of opinions on aspect in Lithuanian, Safarewicz (1968, 341–361), states in his conclusions that “Czasownik litewski [...] nie jest zdolny uwidocznić aspektu w żadnej formacji czasownikowej fleksyjnej z wyjątkiem praesens i opisowych formacji z przedrostkiem *be-*.” (“The Lithuanian verb is incapable [...] of expressing aspect in any inflected form except the present and the periphrastic formation with the prefix *be-*.”).

³ This fact led Dambriūnas (1959) to examine separately various tense forms and non-finite forms of the Lithuanian verb in search of aspectual oppositions.

⁴ Safarewicz (1968, 341, 360) mentions this ‘feeling’ in his survey.

the analysis of the distribution of simple and compound finite forms in a running narrative text.

Textlinguistic studies show that the opposition of perfective and imperfective verb forms is a prominent means employed in the text structuring of the Slavic narrative⁵. Since prefixation plays a crucial role in expressing the aspectual opposition in Slavic, it might prove fruitful to establish whether a similar function may be ascribed to the distinction between prefixed and unprefixed finite verbs in Lithuanian as well. I shall present the distribution of simple and compound verbs primarily in main clauses, since verb forms used in subordinate clauses, having additional functions, should be studied separately.

In textlinguistic analysis many types of textual units are distinguished. The first, most obvious division is between dialogs and narrative text portions; the two textemes differ in many of their features, e. g., in the use of tense forms, persons, modal elements and constructions, so that these two textemes — dialog and narrative — show different systems of oppositions. A narrative text (without going into nuances of classification) may comprise several types of textual units: passages relating chronologically ordered plot-advancing events, passages reporting background events (not necessarily chronologically ordered), descriptions of the scene, descriptions of the characters, or sketches of the situation. To these should be added possible narratorial comments, often comprising features of both dialog and narrative. Each of these units is characterized by a combination of specific linguistic features. Typically, among the most prominent features distinguishing various textual units are those pertaining to the verb forms employed.

When studying the function of simple and compound verbs in Lithuanian, it should be borne in mind that preverbatation (verbal prefixation) is first of all a means of SEMANTIC modification of the verbal lexeme. Lithuanian grammars and textbooks (e.g. Otrębski 1956:III, 310ff) enumerate and describe the functions of various preverbs and classify the compound verbs according to the type of modification ef-

⁵ See e.g. Bogdan and Sullivan (2009), Chvany (1985), Gasparov (1990), Thelin (1990), Paducheva (1996), Sawicki (2008). Hopper (1982, 16) explicitly defines aspect as “an essentially discourse-level, rather than a semantic, sentence-level phenomenon”. Thelin (1990, 75) advocates “the contemporary orientation of aspectology from sentence-based analyses towards discourse/situation-based analyses”.

fected by preverbatation⁶. At the same time, in SOME compound verbs, preverbatation is said to result EXCLUSIVELY in perfectivization, in other cases — in perfectivization which comes IN ADDITION TO SEMANTIC MODIFICATION (so in Ambrasas 2006, 234–235⁷). For many verbs of the latter type no aspectual opposition between simple and compound verb can be marked, as Lithuanian lacks a SYSTEMATIC mechanism (widely functioning in Slavic languages) for derivation of imperfective forms from prefixed verbs⁸. An aspect or aspect-like opposition appears to be detectable for some pairs of verbs (e. g., *rašiau* ‘I was writing’ : *parašiau* ‘I wrote/have written’ serving as one of Ambrasas’ examples), but verbs compounded with a ‘modifying’ prefix, such as *atrodyti* ‘to appear’ (vs. a simplex *rodyti* ‘to show’) would have to be considered exhibiting neutralization of the aspect opposition (see below). It should be noted, however, that such neutralization does not apply exclusively to prefixed verbs but can also be observed in simplex verbs which may allow both punctual and non-punctual interpretations⁹.

Notwithstanding the striking resemblance of form, the comparison with Slavic might be misleading; possible parallels could be sought in other Indo-European languages using verbal prefixation, e.g. in Greek or Germanic¹⁰.

There is no doubt that two of the most prominent functions of preverbatation are spatial indications (especially with verbs of motion

⁶ Otrębski treats the verbal prefixes together with prepositions grouping verbs in which a prefix has a common meaning, e.g. “...*ap(i)* oznacza, że czynność obejmuje przedmiot ze wszystkich stron...” (“... *ap(i)* denotes that an action encompasses the object from all sides ...”).

⁷ Ambrasas presents a group of prefixed verbs that “... carry the meaning of a completed action and in this respect they are contrasted with the unprefixed verbs...” but also other groups, e.g., “prefixed derivatives each having a perfective sense together with other different meanings...” or verbs that “have a perfective meaning in the past and future tense forms but they are imperfective in the present...” together with “... a group of unprefixed verbs of dual aspectual character...”.

⁸ The derivational suffix *-inè-* is productive for forming markedly iterative verbs (with or without a shade of diminutivity). Its purely imperfectivizing function can rarely be shown. Geniušienė (1997, 240) states most clearly that “In a limited number of instances this suffix is used as an imperfectiviser of prefixed verbs, without expressing iterativity or the diminutive meaning...”. Similar conclusions can be found in the study of verbs of speech by Kardelis and Wiemer (2002, 60, 75).

⁹ E.g. *Dvylikti metai baigėsi, o Baltaragis vis dar negalėjo nusiraminti* [...] [xiv] can be interpreted both as ‘Twelve years **were coming to an end** and Baltaragis still couldn’t find any peace [...]’ or as ‘Twelve years **went by** and...’. Cf. Wiemer (2001, 40).

¹⁰ Cf. the classification of Classical Greek compound verbs in Rosén (1962, 161–173).

and position) and indications of Aktionsart. The latter, comprising a long array of additional information about the specific modes of action/activity or about its course, pertains to the action/activity itself rather than to the way it is being viewed, namely to its being viewed as a completed action/activity, i.e., perfective, or as an action/activity in process, i.e., imperfective. In other words, unlike aspect, Aktionsart is a non-obligatory indication of the specific way things are happening. Unlike the number of terms in the opposition of aspect, which is fixed in a given language, the number of Aktionsarten that can be distinguished in a given verb varies according to its semantics.

The two distinctions, that of aspect and that of Aktionsart, have some points where they converge: a verb of a markedly durative Aktionsart may be perceived in the framework of aspect as IMPERFECTIVE, and one of a markedly punctual, semelfactive, terminative, complete, ingressive, inchoative etc. Aktionsart as PERFECTIVE. This, together with the fact that aspect and Aktionsart often share part of their means of expression, adds to the confusion between the two distinctions.

Aspectual distinctions are known to be employed in Slavic, as in other languages, in the structuring of narrative text units; roughly speaking, perfective verbs are most typically used in FOREGROUND text portions to relate chronologically ordered plot-advancing events, whereas imperfective verbs occur in BACKGROUND text portions, such as descriptions of various kinds, non-chronologically ordered events, certain types of comments on events and the like. This distribution of aspectual forms in narrative text is not plainly arbitrary, but is clearly connected with the fact that perfective verb forms include the notion of BOUNDEDNESS and as such are chronologically chainable. Series of imperfective verb forms, on the other hand, do not point to a chronological sequence.

It is obvious that an aspectual value of verbal prefixation can be sought only in cases where an opposition can be shown to exist between a simplex and its compound. A priori not capable of aspectual indication are:

1. semelfactive (mostly derived) verbs, especially those denoting sudden short bodily movement — these cannot be durative irrespective of preverbatation;
2. verbs with prefixes modifying or even sharply altering the seman-

tics of the verbs, so that the content of the compound verb cannot be perceived as the sum of the content of the simplex and the prefix.

The question of the distribution of simple and compound finite verbs in various textual units of Lithuanian narrative must be addressed with such limitations in mind. The data for this study are taken from Kazys Boruta's *Windmill of Baltaragis*¹¹.

3. Scenery description

The novel *Baltaragio malūnas* opens with a distinct narrative unit — an introductory description of the scenery where the plot of the novel takes place. This unit is characterized by such typical features as numerous presentative sentences with the grammatical subject in the rhematic final position:

- (1) *Ant Udruvės ežero stataus skardžio **stovėjo*** [stand-PST-3] *Baltaragio vėjinis malūnas.* [i]¹²
'On the steep precipice of lake Udruvė **stood** Baltaragis' windmill.'¹³
- (2) *Žemai pakalnėje **tyvuliavo*** [spread.out-PST-3] *skaidrus Udruvės ežeras [...].* [i]
'Low in the valley **spread out** the limpid lake of Udruvė.'

A few other environments are similarly described further in the novel. As the scenes described are not always completely motionless, finite verbs occur in many clauses. As a rule, verbs in main descriptive clauses are in the simple past tense, and are UNPREFIXED:

- (3) *Pro murziną langelį **skverbėsi*** [penetrate-PST-3] *saulės spindulys, aplinkui **zirzė*** [buzz-PST-3] *musės, o voras kampe tinklą **spendė**. Ant stalo **mėtėsi*** [lie.about-PST-3] *išblaškytos kortos, o krėse klebonas **knarkė*** [snore-PST-3] [...]. [iii]

¹¹ Kazys Boruta, *Baltaragio malūnas arba kas dėjosi anuo metu Paudruvės krašte*, Anthology of Lithuanian classic literature, collections of digitized texts (www.antologija.lt).

¹² The quoted passages are followed by chapter numbers.

¹³ The English translations of the passages cannot always convey the structure of the original; this applies especially to the rendering of verb forms.

‘Through the dirty window a ray of sun **penetrated**, [all] around flies **were buzzing** and a spider in the corner **was spinning** a web. On the table cards **were scattered** and in the chair the vicar **was snoring** [...].’

- (4) *Ant malūno kalno buvo giedras vakaras, tiktai pakalnėje kaip jūra liūliavo* [wave-PST-3] *rūkas, [...]. Prie malūno stovėjo* [stand-PST-3] *vežimas [...], o pro seklyčios langelį mirguliavo* [flicker-PST-3] *žiburėlis. [xxvi]*

‘There was a clear evening on the windmill hill, only in the valley fog **was waving** like the sea [...]. By the windmill **stood** a cart [...] and through the window little lights **were flickering**.’

- (5) *Pro lėtai besisukančius malūno sparnus pamažu krito* [fall-PST-3] *pirmos snaižės ir mirguliavo* [flicker-PST-3] *šviesiomis žvaigždutėmis. [...]. Pro sniego ūką stingo* [freeze-PST-3] *pakalnėje ežeras, ir pakrančių pušynų viršūnės dengėsi* [cover. oneself.up-PST-3] *baltomis drobulėmis. [xi]*

‘Through the slowly turning wings of the windmill little by little first snow flakes **were falling** and **were flickering** like little stars. [...] Through the fog of snow the lake at the foothill **was freezing** and the tops of the pine trees **were being covered** with white sheets.’

In some instances the durativity of the verbs is highlighted by adverbials, e.g.:

- (6) *NUO NEATMENAMŲ LAIKŲ mosavo* [swing-PST-3] *jis savo dideliais sparnais [...]. [i]*

‘FROM TIMES IMMEMORIAL it [the windmill] **had been swinging** its big wings [...].’

- (7) [...]. *ežeras VISĄ LAIKĄ skalavo* [swash-PST-3] *pakrante, o malūnas VIS stovėjo* [stand-PST-3] *kaip stovėjęs ant pakriūtės, jo sparnai sukosi* [turn-PST-3], *ir jis NUOLATOS ūžė* [hum-PST-3]. [i]

‘[...] the lake **was CONSTANTLY hitting** on the shore but the windmill **was STILL standing** as it had been standing on the cliff, its wings **were turning** and it **was PERMANENTLY humming**.’

The unprefixing verbs in these passages do not signal any kind of endpoint (or starting point, etc.). Their durativity can be marked externally by adverbs and adverbial phrases, as in (6) and (7), but also by the fact that they may be in opposition to various punctual verbs, compound or derived (e.g. *mosavo* ‘was swinging’ in (6) vs. *mostelėjo* ‘swung (a single swing)’). Sometimes, however, among simplex verbs also past tense forms of a compound verb may occur in descriptive passages:

- (8) *Tarp kalnų tyvuliavo* [spread.out-PST-3] *ežerai ežeriukai, kelias išsisukinėjo* [wind-PST-3] *pro ežerų alkūnes,ėjo* [go-PST-3] *tilteliais [...], kilo* [rise-PST-3] *į kalnus, leidosi* [descend-PST-3] *į pakalnę ir painiojosi* [become.entwined-PST-3] *begaliniuose vingiuose.* [xx]

‘Between the hills lakes and lakelets **spread out**, the road **winded** by the bends of the lakes, **went** through little bridges, [...] **rose** to the hills, **descended** to the valley and **got entwined** in endless turns.’

In the compound *išsisukinėjo* ‘winded’ the prefix is adverbial; the effect of punctuality produced by preverbatation is here cancelled out by the derivational suffix *-inė-*. The verb is in this instance not specifically iterative, in any case not more iterative than the other four verbs co-occurring with it. The common feature of all the verbs in the sentence is non-punctuality.

Another verb form frequent in descriptive passages is the HABITUAL PAST¹⁴ both from simplex (9) and compound (10) verbs, e.g.:

- (9) *jo sparnai, [...], sukdavosi* [turn-HAB-PST-3] *nuo mažiausio vėjelio [...].* [i]

‘[...] its wings [...] **turned** with the smallest wind [...].’

- (10) *Tas jo užimas susiliedavo* [mingle-HAB-PST-3] *su ežero murmėjimu [...].*

‘This humming of his **mingled** with the murmur of the lake [...].’

Habitual past tense verbs, whether formed from simple or from com-

¹⁴ The habitual past tense (also sometimes referred to as ‘frequentative’ in the literature) is a term pertaining to the morphological form and not necessarily to its function.

pound verbs¹⁵, do not denote one specific event; although each of the repeated events may have an endpoint, the series indicated by the tense form is not bounded in any way.

These verb forms do not constitute a chain of events; rather, each of them separately relates a characterizing feature to the verb's subject; together they form a tableau not devoid of motion and sound. The linear order of presentation does not involve any chronology, or indeed any happening at all.

Towards the end of the novel, in its epilog, the description takes a present tense form suggesting that the description remains valid at the time of narration¹⁶:

- (11) *Kiek toliau nuo malūno akmenų krūvos stovi [stand-PRS-3] pusiau į žemę įsmukęs akmuo, labai panašus į suakmenėjusį žmogų. [...] prieš aušrą atgyja [come.to.life-PRS-3] Baltaragio akmuo ir per jo veidus nurieda [roll.down-PRS-3] stambios akmeninės ašaros. [xlvi]*

‘A bit farther from the pile of stones of the mill **stands** a stone, half sunken into the earth, much resembling a person turned to stone. [...] Before dawn the stone of Baltaragis **comes to life** and down his cheeks **roll** large stone tears.’

In this present tense description no aspectual value can be ascribed to preverbatation. In the compound *atgyja* ‘comes to life’ the prefix significantly modifies the semantics of the verb (the simplex *gyti* denotes a process of healing); in the verb of motion *nurieda* ‘roll down’ the prefix is adverbial denoting that the motion has reached its endpoint. Both compound verbs are punctual, but their present tense suggests an iterative reading and the temporal *prieš aušrą* ‘before dawn’ is interpreted as ‘EVERY morning before dawn’.

¹⁵ Geniušienė (1997, 231) observes that “In perfective verbs which have no imperfective correlates, and in dual aspect verbs... the past frequentative tense form serves as a means of imperfectivising...”.

¹⁶ The issue of other usages of present tense in the narrative of the novel is not addressed here.

4. Description and presentation of characters

Similar means are used to introduce protagonists of the novel. The introduction may comprise typically characterizing nominal clauses with anaphoric *tai* and copula:

- (12) *Tai buvo viso Paudruvės kaimo pati smagiausia mergina [...].*
‘It was the most joyful girl of the whole village of Paudruvė [...].’ [i]
- (13) *Tai buvo tikra išdykėlė, našlio tėvo išpaikinta vienturtė [...].*
‘It was a real jester, the spoiled only daughter of a widower father [...].’ [i]

However, the portrayal of characters is more often presented by verbal predications with either simplex state verbs or actional verbs:

- (14) *Senas našlys taip mylėjo* [love-PST-3] *savo vienturtę, kad [...].*
[i]
‘The old widower **loved** his only daughter so [much] that [...].’
- (15) *Jai visas gyvenimas atrodė* [seem-PST-3] *kaip linksma jaunystės išdaiga, o jos kiekviena žingsnyje juokėsi* [laugh-PST-3] *aštuoniolika nerūpestingų metų.* [i]
‘To her [the] whole life **seemed** a cheerful joke and in her every step **laughed** [her] eighteen carefree years.’
- (16) *O Marcelė nieko nepaisė* [pay.attention-PST-3], *viskas ją linksmino* [delight-PST-3] *ir jos širdį džiugino* [gladden-PST-3]. *Ji nė kiek nesijautė* [NEG-feel-PST-3] *esanti ištekęsusi [...].* [xi]
‘But Marcelė **did not pay attention** to anything, everything **delighted** her and **gladdened** her heart. She **didn’t feel** in the least a married woman [...].’

Here, again, as in the presentation of the surroundings, none of the verbal predicates is perceived as pertaining to a specific event, to a specific point in time or to any turn in the development of the plot. The finite verbs in main clauses, all in the past tense, are either simplex, like *juokėsi*, with its non-specificity further highlighted by *jos kiekviena žingsnyje* ‘in her every step’, or compound, like *atrodė*. The compounds

are not marked here for punctuality: *atrodė* does not form an Aktionsart opposition to *rodė* since the two differ in transitivity (*rodė* is transitive, *atrodė* intransitive). As in many other cases the prefix is incapable of denoting aspect if it serves as a marker of another distinction. For the same reason it cannot distinguish Aktionsart¹⁷. Compound verbs with prefixes that sharply alter the semantics of the verbs (or which never occur without a prefix at all) cannot BY THEMSELVES mark a passage either as presenting a chronologically ordered chain of events forwarding the plot, or as having a descriptive or background nature. The non-punctual reading of *atrodė* is possible only when the context is considered. For some verbal lexemes derivation may be a means for creating a punctual/non-punctual distinction, as in *rodyti* ‘show’ : *įrodyti* ‘prove’ (punctual) : *įrodynėti* ‘to prove’ (non-punctual).

Another verb form employed in portrayal of the characters is the habitual past tense, both from simplex and compound verbs. Here again, the habitual past verbs do not denote any specific event, but rather serve to provide a general description of TYPICAL behavior of the character at a given point of the story:

- (17) *Linksma, nerūpestinga Jurga iškliūdavo* [get.out-HAB-PST-3] *laisva iš visų meilės pinklių ir dar smagiau kvatodavo* [giggle-HAB-PST-3]. [i]
 ‘Happy, carefree Jurga [as a rule] **got out** from all love traps and **laughed** even more.’
- (18) *Kinkydavo* [harness-HAB-PST-3] *Girdvainis savo obuolmušius [...] ne į karietą, [...] bet į [...], už piršlį pasiimdavo* [take-HAB-PST-3] *ne liežuvingą ūkininką, bet [...], o pats apsilkdavo* [put.on-HAB-PST-3] *ne išeginiais drabužiais, bet [...], persijuosdavo* [gird.oneself-HAB-PST-3] *pančiu, [...], įsistodavo* [step.into-HAB-PST-3] *į klumpes ir [...] nurūkdavo* [rush.ahead:HAB-PST-3] [...]. [v]
 ‘Girdvainis **would harness** his dappled horses not to a carriage [...] but to a [...], as his matchmaker **would take** not

¹⁷ In his semantic analysis, Arkadiev (to appear) shows that the lack of aspectual opposition for verbs of the inceptive-stative class is not a coincidence as “there is an intricate connection between the actional properties of Lithuanian verbs... and the possibility for certain tense forms to be combined with the imperfective viewpoint.”

a sharp-tongued farmer but [...], he **would put on** not [his] festive clothes but [...], **gird** himself with a rope [...], **get** into [his] clogs and [...] **would rush ahead** [...].’

Description of characters is often part of a more general presentation of the situation at a given point of the plot.

5. Background of events and presentation of situation

To the background passages belong also expositions of ongoing activities or processes denoted by simplex past tense verbs:

- (19) *Baltaragis klausėsi* [listen-PST-3] *ir šypsojosi* [smile-PST-3] [...], *o jaunieji iš viso negirdėjo* [NEG-hear-PST-3], *ka seniai kalba, nes jie tarp savęs akimis kalbėjo* [speak-PST-3]. [xx]
 ‘Baltaragis **was listening** and **smiling** [...], and the young ones **didn’t hear** at all what the old were talking [about] because they **were speaking** to each other with their eyes.’

The verbs do not narrate any events and do not move the plot forward; nothing is brought here to any conclusion and the activities or processes do not lead DIRECTLY to a following event; rather, they present the situation, or give an indication of the atmosphere or of the state of mind of the characters.

Durativity is often further strengthened in these instances by the adverbial *vis* ‘still, constantly’ modifying the verb:

- (20) [...] *duktė vis verkė* [cry-PST-3] *ir laukė* [wait-PST-3], *o jaunikis vis negrižo* [NEG-come.back-PST-3] [...]. [xxvii]
 ‘[...] the daughter **was STILL crying** and **waiting** and the young man **STILL wasn’t coming back** [...].’
- (21) [...] *vis akyse vaidenosi* [appear-PST-3] *Marcelė, visur girdėjo* [hear-PST-3] *jos skambantį juoką ir matė* [see-PST-3] *gundančią šypseną*. [vii]
 ‘[...] **CONSTANTLY** Marcelė **appeared** to him, **EVERYWHERE** he **heard** her ringing laughter and **saw** [her] seductive smile.’

The adverbial *vis* preceding an adverb or an adjective serves also to emphasize the gradual nature of processes denoted by the simplex verb:

- (22) *Udruvėš ežere kasdien VIS daugiau rinkosi* [gather-PST-3] *vandens [...]. [xxxii]*
 ‘In the lake of Udruvė every day MORE AND MORE water **was gathering** [...].’
- (23) [...] *malūnas VIS dažniau stovėjo* [stand-PST-3] *sustingęs [...]. [xi]*
 ‘[...] MORE AND MORE often the windmill **stood motionless** [...].’
- (24) *O duktė kasdien VIS gražesnė darėsi* [become-PST-3] [...]. [i]
 ‘And the daughter **was becoming** MORE AND MORE beautiful every day [...].’
- (25) *O gandai apie Baltaragio malūną VIS LABIAU ir plačiau sklido* [spread-PST-3]. [v]
 ‘And rumors about Baltaragis **were spreading** MORE AND MORE widely.’
- (26) *Uršulė kasdien VIS dievobaimingesnė darėsi* [become-PST-3]. [vi]
 ‘Uršulė **was becoming** MORE AND MORE devout every day.’

It should be noted, however, that the activities or processes marked unequivocally as ongoing by *vis* (+ comparative adverb) may be indicated not only by simplex but also by COMPOUND verbs, which in this context lose their punctuality:

- (27) [...] *VIS iš galvos jam neišėjo* [go.out-PST-3] *tas pažadas Pinčukui [...]. [xiv]*
 ‘[...] this promise to Pinčukas **STILL did not get out** of his head [...].’
- (28) *Ir saulė VIS daugiau apšvietė* [light.up-PST-3] *trobą [...]. [x]*
 ‘And the sun **was** MORE AND MORE **lighting up** the hut [...].’
- (29) *O metai bėgo po metų, ir Pinčukas VIS labiau priprato* [get. accustomed-PST-3] *prie Baltaragio malūno. [xvi]*
 ‘But years went by and Pinčukas **was getting** MORE AND MORE **used** to the windmill of Baltaragis.’
- (30) *Udruvėš ežere kasdien VIS DAUGIAU rinkosi* [gather-PST-3]

vandens, [...] o Jurgos krūtinėje pritvino [swell-PST-3] *VIS DAUGIAU prieštaraujančių jausmų [...].* [xxxii]
 ‘In the lake of Udruvė every day MORE AND MORE water **was gathering**, [...] and in Jurga’s chest MORE AND MORE contradictory feelings **were rising** [...].’

In (30) the adverbial *vis daugiau* ‘more and more’ pertains not to the verbs themselves but to their respective objects; also in this case the adverbial points to a gradually developing process.

One of the textual functions of the background passages is to describe CIRCUMSTANCES of the events and to set the scene for what is to happen next. In the first chapter of the novel a long sequence of subordinate temporal clauses, recounting events that precede the main plot events, is followed by a simple verb denoting the ensuing ‘state of affairs’ as the plot begins:

- (31) *O nuo to laiko, kai [...] niekas nedrįso* [NEG-dare-PST-3], *net ir drąsiausieji, važiuoti su piršliais pas Baltaragio dukterį.* [i]
 ‘And since that time when [...], nobody **had dared**, not even the boldest, to go with matchmakers to the daughter of Baltaragis.’

The simple verb of the main clause, *drįso*, can have several interpretations: it can denote the state of being bold, the inchoative act of making bold (either as a single change of state or repeatedly), but its negated form coupled with *nuo to laiko* ‘since that time’ can be understood only as non-punctual and its agent *niekas* ‘nobody’ points to distributive, hence iterative, reading. The situation described in this sentence is important background information which does not belong to the plot but without which the plot cannot be fully understood.

The situation existing before the plot commences or between consecutive steps in the plot developments is with extreme frequency expressed by clauses comprising HABITUAL past tense verbs.

Before the events of the plot are narrated, a long passage comprising almost exclusively habitual past tense forms gives the BACKGROUND whose relevance to the events will emerge later on. Irrespective of the internal structure of the verbs, in this particular instance they all refer to repeatable, non-individualized events which are not part of the central development of the plot. The fact that the events denoted by

the habitual past in (32) and (33) are outside the main story-line is additionally marked by lack of identification of individual human agents of the verbs. They are referred to only by very general indications such as *niekas* ‘nobody’ *vienas po kito* ‘one after another’ or *kiti* ‘others’¹⁸:

- (32) *Vienas po kito važiuodavo* [drive-HAB-PST-3] *jaunikiai su piršliais į Baltaragio malūną, bet neįstengdavo* [NEG-be.able-HAB-PST-3] *atvažiuoti. Vos tik privažiudavo* [drive.up-HAB-PST-3] *prie šakoto Udruvės ežero, ir patys nesuprasdavo* [NEG-understand-HAB-PST-3], *kaip paklysdavo* [...]. [i]
 ‘One after another young men were traveling with matchmakers to Baltaragis’ windmill but were unable to arrive [...]. As soon as they would come near the branched lake of Udruvė they didn’t even understand themselves how they got lost [...].’
- (33) *Sklido* [spread-PST-3] *gandai, kad* [...]. *Kiti net spėliodavo* [speculate-HAB-PST-3], [...]. *Dar kiti, ... tvirtino* [assert-PST-3], *kad* [...]. [vi]
 ‘Rumors were spreading that [...], others even assumed [...]. Still others claimed that [...].’

In other instances, specific agents occur but the actions denoted by habitual past verbs remain unspecific and, as such, cannot pertain to particular events; a series of such verbs does not form a chain of ordered events irrespective of their being simplex or compound verbs; note that in (34) all the verbal LEXEMES are punctual either by prefixation or by derivation but the TENSE form renders the linear order of the verbs not necessarily corresponding to any pertinent order of actions:

- (34) *Uršulė piktai žybteldavo* [flash-HAB-PST-3] *akimis ir* [...] *smarkiau subarškindavo* [rattle-HAB-PST-3] *puodais. Kartais pa-*

¹⁸ Roszko and Roszko (2006, 170–171) stress in their conclusions the generality conveyed by the form: “The meaning of ‘always’ contained in the semantic structure of the sentence guarantees that the process which is being described (in a sentence with a past frequentative form) consists of a number of states or events, systematically recurring within a specified lapse of time which, in recipient’s mind, seems sufficiently long to allow drawing general conclusions.” However, in another part of their study they term the form ‘iterative’: “The form of past frequentative, referred to as ‘iterative past tense’ in Lithuanian literature, is an unambiguous indication of iterativity in the past...”.

žiūrėdavo [glance-HAB-PST-3] *Baltaragis* [...], *o kartais* [...] **išeidavo** [go.out-HAB-PST-3] *į malūną*. [vi]
 ‘Uršulė angrily **flashed** her eyes and [...] loudly **rattled** with the pots. Baltaragis sometimes **glanced** [at her] [...], and sometimes [...] **went out** to the windmill.’

- (35) *Malūnininkas*, [...] **sėdėdavo** [sit-HAB-PST-3] *per dienas ant malūno slenksčio ir žiūrėdavo* [look-HAB-PST-3], [...] *į kitą ežero krantą*. *O pavakare*, [...] **neišturėdavo** [NEG-endure-HAB-PST-3] *Baltaragis net ant malūno slenksčio, pakildavo* [stand.up-HAB-PST-3] *ir bėgiodavo* [run-HAB-PST-3] *nuo malūno prie ežero, nuo ežero prie malūno* [...]. *O kartais* [...] **paleisdavo** [let.loose-HAB-PST-3] *malūno gėrnas*, [...]. *Malūnas net kaukdavo* [roar-HAB-PST-3] *visais balsais*, [...] *bet vis tiek Baltaragiui nenustelbdavo* [NEG-subdue-HAB-PST-3] *piršlių varpelių*. *Malūno užime susiliedavo* [merge-HAB-PST-3] *tie skambalai* [...] *ir jis nežinodavo* [NEG-know-HAB-PST-3], *ką bedaryti*. [vii]

‘The miller [...] **would be sitting** during the day on the threshold of the windmill and **would be looking** [...] at the other bank of the lake. And in the evening [...] Baltaragis **couldn’t stand** it any longer, **got** up and **ran** from the mill to the lake, from the lake to the mill. Sometimes [...] he **would set the millstones in motion** [...]. The mill **roared** with a full voice [...] but still for Baltaragis it **did not drown** the matchmakers’ bells. These bells **merged** with the humming of the mill and he **didn’t know** what to do.’

It seems that a frequentative past is not a form that can be used to construe a plot or to tell a story; rather, it is used to sketch the situation and to prepare the background for a following plot development. The most pronounced feature of the frequentative past tense is not its denoting repeated action (as is the case of derived iteratives) but its lack of specificity.

In background passages simple past tense forms of simplex verbs and verbs in the habitual past often co-occur, as in (36). The verbs in the simple past are of non-punctual simplex verbs, mostly non-actional, such as *mokėjo* ‘knew how’ (36), *negalėjo* ‘couldn’t’ (37), *tylėjo* ‘was silent’ (45), but also verbs denoting continuing processes or activities

with no conclusion, such as *suko* ‘was turning’ (38). In the habitual tense form all types of verbs occur, simplex and compound, durative and punctual:

- (36) [...] *bet ji mokėjo* [know.how-PST-3] *viską juokais paversti. Skraidė* [fly-PST-3] *kaip paukščiukė iš trobos į malūną, iš malūno į paežerę, Baltaragis* [...] *nespėdavo* [NEG-keep.up-PST-3] *jos sekti* [...]. [xi]
 ‘[...] but she **knew** how to turn everything into laughs. She **was flying** [about] like a little bird, from the hut to the mill, from the mill to the lake, Baltaragis [...] **didn’t keep up** with her [...].’

Although compound verbs in the simple past tense are rare in such background passages, they are not completely excluded:

- (37) *Pats Baltaragis numanė* [guess-PST-3], *bet nieko negalėjo* [NEG-be.able-PST-3] *padaryti*. [i]
 ‘As to Baltaragis, he **guessed** [sc. what was going on] but **could not** do anything.’
- (38) *Jis su malonumu suko* [turn-PST-3] *malūno sparnus už vėją, prižiūrėjo* [attend-PST-3] *girnas ir atlikdavo* [perform-PST-3] *visus kitus darbus* [...]. [xvi]
 ‘With pleasure he **was turning** the wings of the windmill in place of the wind, **watched** the millstones and **performed** all other tasks [...].’

The compound verbs usually are of the ‘semantically modified’ type in which the opposition of durative and punctual Aktionsarten is neutralized. In (37) *numanė* ‘guessed’ can have both a punctual and a non-punctual reading in view of its simplex *manė* ‘thought’. No new developments are presented in these passages by either the simplex or the compound verbs, and no sequence is expressed by their linear order; e.g. *prižiūrėjo* ‘was watching’ in (38) has to be understood as equally non-punctual as the habitual *atlikdavo* ‘was performing’, especially in the environment of durative simplex *suko* ‘was turning’.

A background passage, supplying information necessary for understanding events narrated further in the text, can sometimes take the form of a chain of narrative events. In a long background passage a

new character, Girdvainis, is presented. The passage gives information about him by relaying past events preceding the actual appearance of the character on the scene but relevant for the plot developments involving him:

(39) *O tuo metu [...] Daugnorų kaime, gyveno [live-PST-3] Jurgis Girdvainis, [...] buvo apvažiavęs [...] aplinkui [...] savo obuolmušiais žirgais. Tuos [...] žirgus paliko [leave-PST-3] jam [...] tėvas ir įsakė [command-PST-3] juos saugoti kaip savo akį [...]. Sūnus šventai saugojo [keep-PST-3] tėvo prisakymą [...]. [...] Per tuos obuolmušius visą ūkį apleido [neglect-PST-3] [...]. [v]*

‘And at this time [...] in the village of Daugnorai **lived** Jurgis Girdvainis, [...] he had traveled [...] around [...] on his dappled steeds. His father **left** him [...] these [...] steeds and **commanded** [him] to guard them as his own eyes [...]. The son **kept** his father’s command faithfully [...]. Because of the dapple-grey [horses] he **neglected** the whole farm [...].’

In this passage, in addition to the simplex *gyveno* ‘lived’ and *saugojo* ‘guarded’, several compound verbs also occur. These are verbs which do not form semantically close pairs with any simplex, e.g. transitive *paliko* ‘left’ vs. intransitive simplex *liko* ‘stayed’, *įsakė* ‘ordered’ vs. simplex *sakė* ‘said’ and *apleido* ‘neglected’ vs. *leido* ‘let’. In this case, however, the compound verbs, unlike those in (37) and (38), have to be interpreted as punctual and their respective clauses as presenting chronologically ordered EVENTS. This part of (39), although belonging to a larger background-sketching textual unit, has the form of a (secondary) plot unit — a digression.

6. Plot-advancing passages

The backbone of a narrative text, its foreground, is constituted by a chain of events presented in a strict chronological order, so that the linear arrangement of event indications corresponds to successive developments of the plot from its starting point to its conclusion. In some narratives, especially literary ones, there can be more than one chain of events, each with its own starting point and its own conclusion.

Since practically every verb in Lithuanian can be prefixed by one or another of its dozen prefixes, it is not surprising that where a chain of foreground events is narrated, it is typically the punctual compound verbs that occur, as such punctual verbs are compatible with chaining, i.e. they can express the fact that events occur in a sequence where the commencing of one event presupposes the termination of the previous one:

- (40) [...] *Uršulė persižegnojo* [cross.oneself-PST-3] *ir Baltaragi peržegnojo* [cross-PST-3]. [ii]
 ‘[...] Uršulė **crossed** herself and **made a sign of a cross** on Baltaragis.’
- (41) [...] *žirgai įlėkė* [jump.into-PST-3] *į kiemą ir paauksuota karieta sustojo* [stop-PST-3] *prie rūtų darželio*. [ii]
 ‘[...] the steeds **darted** into the yard and a gilded carriage **stopped** by the rue garden.’
- (42) [...] *žirgai* [...] *pašoko* [leap-PST-3] *iš vietos, sudundėjo* [rumble-PST-3] *žemė, ir karieta nulėkė* [dart.away-PST-3] [...]. [ii]
 ‘[...] the steeds [...] **leaped up**, the earth **rumbled** and the carriage **darted away** [...].’

In each of the above examples (40–42) the two acts are undoubtedly performed in a sequence; it should, however, be noted that this reading is conditioned not only by the compound form of the verbs but also by their semantics. In the following example no clear sequence is denoted and in fact both verbs pertain to single inchoative events:

- (43) *Baltaragis kažkodėl apsidžiaugė* [rejoice-PST-3] *ir net pralinksmėjo* [cheer.up-PST-3] [...]. [ii]
 ‘Baltaragis for some reason **rejoiced** and even **cheered up** [...].’

A compound verb may even relate to a preceding one as an elaboration:

- (44) *Tiktai vieną dieną* [...] *atsitiko* [happen-PST-3] *nuodėmė — netyčia išsprūdo* [slip.out-PST-3] *iš jos lūpų baisus žodis* [...]. [ii]
 ‘Only one day [...] a sin **happened** — unintentionally a terrible word **slipped from** her mouth [...].’

Especially salient for the narrative structure is the shift from a series of durative and frequentative verbs, employed in various descriptive passages, to a punctual, most often compound, verb signalling a plot development:

- (45) [...] *tėvas vis dažniau užsidarydavo* [shut.oneself.up-HAB-PST-3] *malūne*, [...]. [...] *dabar, kartais pamatęs nuliūdusią dukterį, graužėsi* [fret-PST-3] *iš to gailėsčio ir tylėjo* [be.silent-PST-3] *kaip žemė*. #¹⁹ *Tada visa burna prakalbėjo* [start.speaking-PST-3] [...] *Uršulė* [...]. [i]
 ‘[...] the father more and more often **was locking himself** in the mill [...]. [...] now, sometimes looking at his sad daughter he **was tormented** with pity and **was silent** like the earth.
 # Then Uršulė [...] **spoke up** with her full mouth [...].’

The above passage occurs toward the end of the first, introductory, chapter in which no events occur. Only toward the end of the chapter the markedly punctual verb *prakalbėjo* occurs marking the beginning of the plot developments. Throughout the narrative such shifts from durative to punctual are an extremely frequent tool for marking that ‘something is happening’:

- (46) *Bėgo* [run-PST-3] *į vieną pusę, į kitą, ir vis priešingoje pusėje žvangė* [neigh-PST-3] *obuolmušiai*. # *Apsisuko* [turn.about-PST-3] *Girdvainiui galva besisukinėjant, ir jis nubėgo* [take.off-PST-3] *tiesiai per laukus*. [xxiv]
 ‘He **was running** to one side, then to another, and still at the opposite side the dappled horses **were neighing**. # He **became dizzy** from turning his head and he **ran [took off running]** straight into the fields.’
- (47) *Klebonas knarkė* [snore-PST-3] [...], *o musės zujo* [dash-PST-3] *aplink burną*, [...]. # *Uršulė mostelejo* [wave-PST-3] *ranka, baidydama muses, o klebonas nustojo* [stop-PST-3] *knarkęs ir apsidairė* [look.about-PST-3] *mirksėdamas*. [...] *Uršulė pabučiavo* [kiss-PST-3] *klebonui ranką ir pradėjo* [start-PST-3] *pasakoti apie viso savo amžiaus skriaudas* [...]. [iii]

¹⁹ The sign # marks a shift to a plot-advancing foreground passage.

‘The vicar **was snoring** [...] and the flies **were flying** around his mouth [...]. # Uršulė **waved** her hand scaring the flies and the vicar **stopped snoring** and **looked around** blinking. [...] Uršulė **kissed** the vicar’s hand and **started** telling about all her long lasting grievances [...].’

- (48) *Pagalvojo, gal tikrai senis skerdžius medžioja kiškius [...]. Ir STAIGA šovė* [dash-PST-3] *jam į galvą gera mintis.* [xvii]
 ‘He thought [that] maybe the old shepherd is hunting for hares [...]. And SUDDENLY a good idea **struck** him.’

In (46) the foreground events are ‘becoming dizzy’ and ‘taking off’ with the ‘running about’ and the ‘neighing’ as their background; in (47) the foreground events are ‘waving’, ‘kissing’ and ‘starting (to tell)’ with ‘snoring’ and ‘flying’ as the background, and in (48) the ‘striking (of a good idea)’ is a foreground event additionally marked by *staiga* and the sentence initial *ir*.

In the narration of PLOT ADVANCING EVENTS, in addition to frequent compound verbs, simple verbs of various types and of various functions also occur. Most conspicuous are derived semelfactive verbs in *-telėti*:

- (49) *Pro langą šmėkštelėjo* [flash-PST-3] *lyg šikšnosparnis, [...]. Jurga krūptelėjo* [shudder-PST-3] *ir pasižiūrėjo į Girdvainį* [...]. [xx]
 ‘Through the window [something] like a bat **flashed** [...]. Jurga **shuddered** and looked at Girdvainis [...].’

The verb *tvieksti* is durative in its usual meaning ‘to shine’; however when it signifies ‘striking a blow’ as in (50) below it has to be interpreted as punctual and thus as suitable to denote a plot-advancing event:

- (50) [...] *Uršulė staiga apsisuko* [turn.about-PST-3], *tvieskė* [deal-PST-3] *tokį antausį, kad* [...]. [ii]
 ‘[...] Uršulė suddenly **turned around**, **gave such a blow** that [...].’

In some cases a simple verb may acquire a punctual interpretation due to its adverbial context. The verb *dingo* can denote ‘gradual disappearing’ as a prolonged process but in (51) the adverb *staiga* ‘suddenly’ makes only the punctual reading possible:

- (51) *Tada sužairavo* [flash-PST-3] *dangus kryžiumi, ir viskas STAIGA dingo* [disappear-PST-3]. [ii]
 ‘Then the sky **flashed** with a cross and everything **SUDDENLY disappeared.**’

On the other hand, in a punctual context an unmodified durative simple verb is often employed as an indication of a situation following the event expressed by a punctual verb or even stemming from it, especially when the two clauses are connected by the conjunction *ir*. In these cases the two verbs, the compound and the simplex, denote together a single event:

- (52) *Puolė* [fall-PST-3] *Šešelga ant kelių ir prašė* [ask-PST-3] *pasigai-
lėti, bet anas smarkusis vyras užmetė* [throw-PST-3] *kilpą ant
kaklo ir taip įveržė* [tighten-PST-3], *kad [...].* [xxxiv]
 ‘Šešelga **fell** on his knees and **asked** for mercy but that strong
man **threw** a loop on his neck and **tightened** [it] so that [...].’
- (53) *Supyko* [get.angry-PST-3] *Uršulė ir DAUGIAU nekalbėjo* [NEG-
talk-PST-3] *su Baltaragiu [...].* [ii]
 ‘Uršulė **got angry** and **did not speak** with Baltaragis ANY
MORE [...].’
- (54) *Uršulė visai sumišo* [get.confused-PST-3] *ir nežinojo* [NEG-
know-PST-3], *ką sakyti.* [iii]
 ‘Uršulė **got confused** and **didn’t know** what to say.’
- (55) [...] *tas ištrūko* [escape-PST-3] *ir lakstė* [run.about-PST-3]
aplinkui [...]. [ii]
 ‘[...] he **got free** and **was running** about [...].’

Although the question of distribution of simplex and compound verbs in subordinate clauses is not being addressed at this point, it is important to note that some subordinate temporal ‘when-clauses’ are not only part of the foreground, but denote events especially salient for the plot. In these clauses the verbs are punctual, often compound. The punctuality of the verb is often stressed by an adverbial:

- (56) *Jau buvo* [AUX-PST-3] *matyti* [see-INF] *ant kalno Baltaragio
malūnas, kai STAIGA iš Paudrūvės pelkių pakilo* [rise-PST-3]
nepermatomas rūkas ir viską užliejo [suffuse-PST-3] [...]. [xx]

‘The windmill of Baltaragis **was** already **visible** on the hill when SUDDENLY from the Paudruvė swamp a thick fog **rose** and **covered** everything [...].’

- (57) *Klebonas iš pradžių klausėsi* [listen-PST-3], *stebėjosi* [wonder-PST-3], *žadėjo* [promise-PST-3] *ištirti ir pagalvoti, o paskui STAIGA nei iš šio, nei iš to supyko* [get.angry-PST-3], *treptelėjo* [stamp-PST-3] *koja [...] ir prabilo* [start.speaking-PST-3] [...]. [iii]

‘The vicar at first **was asking** [questions], **wondered**, **was promising** to investigate and to ponder and afterwards he SUDDENLY out of the blue **got angry**, **stamped** his foot [...] and **said** [...].’

- (58) *Bet nespėjo* [NEG-be.in.time-PST-3] *Pinčukas ištrūkti, kai tiesiai jam į tarpukaktę trenkė* [hit-PST-3] *žaiabas*. [xlvi]

‘But Pinčukas **didn’t manage** to tear himself free when lightning **hit** him straight in the middle of his forehead.’

- (59) *Bet nespėjo* [NEG-be.in.time-PST-3] *Šešelga viską gerai apgalvoti, kai ištiko* [occur-PST-3] *naujos ir daug didesnės nelaimės* [...]. [xxxvi]

‘But Šešelga **didn’t manage** to think everything over properly when a new and much bigger disaster **occurred** [...].’

- (60) *Šešelga buvo* [AUX-PST-3] *bebėgas* [CNT-run-PA.PRS.NOM.SG.M] *ieškoti Pinčuko [...] patarimo, kai pro duris įėjo* [enter-PST-3] *kažkoks nepažįstamas vyras* [...]. [xliii]

‘Šešelga **was about to run** looking for Pinčuk’s advice [...] when through the door **entered** a stranger [...].’

- (61) *JAU baigė* [finish-PST-3] *siūti odą, liko tiktai maža skylutė po uodega, kai Raupys atsipeikėjo* [recover-PST-3] *ir ėmė prašyti pasigailėti*. [xxxiv]

‘They **were** ALREADY **finishing** sewing the skin, only a little hole remained under the tail, when Raupys **came to his senses** and began begging for mercy.’

The temporal clauses belong to foreground especially when they FOLLOW the main clause AND when their verb is compound or otherwise explicitly punctual while the verb of the main clause is durative.

7. Conclusions

It seems that, although simple and compound verbs in Lithuanian are not in direct aspect opposition to each other, in the background text portions DESCRIBING the scene, the situation or the nature and behavior of the characters most of the verbs are PREFIXLESS or HABITUAL. The rare compound verbs in the simple past tense which have a simplex counterpart occur in contexts that can disambiguate them as non-punctual. In the PLOT-ADVANCING text portions the ratio of simple and compound verbs is reversed and it is the simplex verbs that need a specific context to become suitable for forming chains of chronologically ordered events.

If we take into account that compound verbs (which have a simplex counterpart) are as a rule capable of indicating a specific point of an event, a default reading would involve punctuality, often, but not always, finitivy, terminativity or the like. Such verbs are expected to occur in passages relating plot-advancing events in the narrative.

The distribution of finite forms of simplex and compound verbs in the simple past tense and the habitual past tense comprises, of course, only one layer of narrative structure. Its comprehensive analysis has to include the interplay of these forms with the narrative present tense and with the complex system of non-finite formations, as well as numerous other signals of narrative structure.

Lea Sawicki

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Department of Linguistics

Mount Scopus, IL-91905 Jerusalem

mslea@mscc.huji.ac.il

ABBREVIATIONS

AUX — auxiliary, CNT — continuative, HAB — habitual, INF — infinitive, M — masculine, NEG — negative, NOM — nominative, PA — active participle, PRS — present, PST — past, SG — singular

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