

THE CONVERBIAL PARTICIPLE IN -DAMA- AND ASPECT OPPOSITIONS IN LITHUANIAN

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1. The functioning and the very nature of verbal aspect oppositions in Lithuanian is a controversial issue. While lexicographers usually refrain from marking aspect in verb entries¹ and some scholars do not consider aspect as one of the grammatical categories of Lithuanian², others argue that the language does possess the category of aspect.³ In the English translation of Ambrazas' Grammar the following description of this category is given:

Aspect is a semantic category of the Lithuanian verb expressed by derivational means, mainly by prefixation. Two aspectual meanings are distinguished: perfective and imperfective. The perfective aspect [...] comprises the notion of completed action, with an implication of its limit or achieved result. The imperfective aspect lacks this meaning; it views an action in its continuation.

Ambrazas, *Lithuanian Grammar* [2006: 234].

This basic definition curiously resembles the familiar definitions for this category in Slavic.

In his further clarifications of the category of aspect Ambrazas includes notions pertaining rather to *Aktionsart* and even tense, noting that:

[...] there are very few 'purely' perfective-imperfective pairs of prefixed vs. unprefixed verbs in Lithuanian like *daryti* : *padaryti*. The perfectivizing prefixes usually modify the lexical meaning of the verb [...]. The prefixed verbs can

¹ See e.g. *Dabartinės lietuvių kalbos žodynas* 1972; *Dabartinės lietuvių kalbos žodynas* 1993; *Lietuvių kalbos žodynas* 3–20, 1956–2002.

² 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.

³ See e. g. Paulauskienė 1994: 291, Ambrazas 1985: 199–202, 2006: 234, Holvoet and Čižik 2004 with the rich survey of research on the subject. Keydana [1998] investigating Old Lithuanian points to the prefix *pa-* as a marker of perfectivization.

denote the beginning of the action *dainuoti* : *uždainuoti*, the single event [...], renewing of an action [...]. [...] The perfective-imperfective contrast is often expressed by the opposition of tense forms.

Ambrazas, *Lithuanian Grammar* [2006: 234]

This approach makes practically all prefixed verbs bi-aspectual to the exclusion of “very few ‘purely’ perfective-imperfective pairs” which need to be investigated further.

Čižik & Holvoet admit in their research that the level of grammaticalization of the Lithuanian aspectual opposition is rather low but nevertheless they state in the English summary [2004: 170] that the opposition cannot be excluded from the description of Lithuanian:

Formally aspect is expressed at two different levels: the opposition of semelfactive and iterative (habitual) past tense forms (*rašė* ‘wrote, was writing’: *rašydavo* ‘used to write’) [...] is inflectional, whereas the opposition of imperfective and perfective stems – (*rašyti* : *parašyti*) belongs to derivational morphology. [...] The derivational opposition can reflect only ‘predicational aspect’ [...]. Finite verb forms can also express [...] ‘perspective aspect’ [...] closely bound up with the deictic category of tense. [...] Habitual meaning has clear aspectual marking in terms of ‘external aspect features’ [...], an habitual event consists of a series of single events which in themselves, may be either imperfective or perfective, but the series as a whole is viewed as unbounded.

Especially important for our study are the following remarks:

In non-finite verb forms where there is no temporal deixis providing a reference time, aspect oppositions are less pronounced and they are often neutralized [...], there are certain cases of conflict between predicational and perspective aspect.

Indeed, the two distinctions (that of ‘inherent aspect’ and that of ‘external aspect’) cannot pertain to a single category since their formal exponents can co-occur in a single verb form, in other words: the habitual past shows formal opposition to the simple preterit, with each term of the opposition either simple or prefixed.

It is obvious that in languages with a systematic obligatory aspect distinction, verbs of certain *Aktionsarten* tend to occur more naturally in certain aspectual forms, e.g. durative *Aktionsart* is frequently coupled with imperfective aspect whereas inchoative or resultative *Aktionsart* with perfective aspect. In grammars stating that aspect is a grammatical category of Lithuanian most examples of the allegedly aspectual opposition present distinct *Aktionsart*

distinctions as aspectual. Arkadiev [2011] argues convincingly that Lithuanian verb does not show aspectual opposition of perfective vs. imperfective.

The most prominent marker of perfectivization in the Slavic languages is verbal prefixation. This mechanism is said to function in an identical way in Lithuanian as well. The formal means seem indeed to be strikingly similar. It should, however, be noted that prefixation is a mechanism encountered in all Indo-European languages but its employment varies greatly in different languages and their chronological stages, so that the precise function of verbal prefixation, or prevervation, has to be established specifically for Lithuanian in various contexts [Sawicki 2010].

1.1. One such context that can be regarded as diagnostic for examining prefixation as a formal means for marking aspectual oppositions is a deverbal participial form in *-dama-* that as a non-finite form neutralizes the influence of tense on its semantics.

The form in *-dama-*, termed half-participle in Lithuanian, is productively derived from the infinitive stem. It is a converb denoting an action that is co-agential and simultaneous with an action denoted by the finite verb of the clause. It presents an accompanying, secondary occurrence, usually perceived as the circumstance of the main action. As such the half-participle is by its very nature not expected to be punctual. Consequently in a significant majority of cases the verbs which form half-participles are un-prefixed verbs, not suspected of punctuality or perfectivity. However compound, prefixed forms are not excluded. In the novel *Baltaragio malūnas* such forms cannot be regarded exceptional since they make up about 1/3 of all occurrences of the *-dama-* converbs.

2.1. The most notable class of *-dama-* converbs with verbal prefixes comprises those derived from verbs of motion, e.g. *išėiti* “to go out” or causative verbs of motion, i.e. transitive verbs of causing motion e.g. *išleisti* “to let out”. With these verbs the prefix has an explicitly adverbial function and as a rule pertains to the spatial parameters of the motion: its direction, point of origin or its way. In these cases no aspectual value can be ascribed to the preverb since the compound verb does not form an aspectual pair with any existing un-prefixed verb as the corresponding simple verb is devoid of reference to the spatial parameters of motion. This is true for Slavic verbs of motion as well: none of the preverbs occurring with verbs of motion has a solely perfectivizing value (with the possible exclusion of the preverb *po-*, Lith *pa-*, a preverb not typical for verbs of motion, see below). However in Slavic a productive mechanism exists for deriving imperfective forms from prefixed verbs, a mechanism crucial

for a fully functional systemic category of aspect. In Lithuanian no such mechanism is found and consequently a prefix is not in itself a marker of perfectivity. In the following sentences the prefixed converb in *-dama-* remains durative and the prefix is adverbial.

1. – *Kai kelias pabėgs, – atsakė išvažiuodama Marcelė [...].* VII⁴ “– When the road will run off – answered Marcele driving **off** [...].”
2. – *O gal nelaimė? – [...] gundė Jurga, išsisukinėdama iš Girdvainio glėbio.* XXIII “– And maybe for unhappiness? – Jurga was [...] teasing [him] while slipping **out** of Girdvainis’s embrace.”
3. *Pamatysime, – atsakė Anupras, [...], tarsi į tolimą ir pavojingą žygį išsirengdamos.* XX “We shall see – answered Anupras [...] as if preparing for a far and dangerous expedition.”
4. *Tada Jurgutis tiktai susiėmė už galvos ir griuvo, nusirisdamas čia pat į pasuolę⁵.* XXVI “Then Jurgutis only clutched at his head and fell rolling **down** under the bench.”
5. – *Ką tu čia prasimanai, Jurguti? – stabtelėjo prabėgdama Jurga.* XVII “– What are you blabbing, Jurgutis? – Jurga running **by** stopped for a moment.”

In sentences 1-3 the preverb *iš-* denotes outbound motion, *nu-* in 4 – motion down and *pra-* in 5 – the course of motion.

2.2. The example below shows the same function of prefixation in a transitive verb of causing motion:

6. – *Kas jį ten žino? – atsakė Baltaragis, išsitraukdamas iš kišenės sidabrinį rublį.* XXXIII “Who knows [that about] him? – answered Baltaragis pulling a silver rouble **out** of his pocket.”
7. – *Na, tai ir padėk tau dieve, – tarė kalvis, išleisdamas kaimyną, [...].* XXXIII “Well, so God help you – said the smith letting **out** the neighbor [...].”

⁴ All data comes from the novel *Baltaragio malūnas arba kas dėjosį anuo metu Paudrūvės krašte* by Kazys Boruta. The Roman numerals refer to chapter numbers. The English translation is kept as close as possible to the original.

⁵ Example 4 is an interesting case where the main verb is un-prefixed, whereas the converb, although belonging to the class of verbs of motion, bears a prefix which does not specify spatial parameters. In addition, in terms of textual structure it is the converb that denotes the more salient development in the narrative as it denotes the outcome of the fall.

2.3. Of course, not all preverbs occurring with verbs of motion denote spatial relations; the preverb *pa-* in the following passage has an adverbial meaning of an action of a “rather short duration”, “a single movement”; in this case, however, the verb, although denoting a movement of a kind, is not a verb of motion in the grammatical sense of the word as it lacks directionality of any sort:

8. – *O kas jį vilioja? – atsakė, **patraukdamas** pečiais.* “And who invites him? – he answered, shrugging his shoulders.”

Verbs of other classes also often contain directional preverbs, especially verbs denoting the use of senses, such as looking or listening, which may be perceived as having direction or target:

9. – *Ką tu sakai? – nepatikėjo Girdvainis, **įsižiūrėdamas** į keistą nuskurdėlį.* XXX “– What are you saying? – Girdvainis couldn’t believe [it] looking (intently) at the strange weakling.”
 10. – *Kas? – nutirpo tėvas, **žiūrėdamas** į dukrą ir **įsiklausydamas**.* XXXII “– What? – the father froze looking at his daughter and listening (intently).”

In some cases the prefixation may result in transitivisation (cf: *žiūrėti* in 10, and *apžiūrėti* in 11):

11. – *Ar tikrai ji ragana? – vėl paklausė tas ponaičiukas, iš visų pusių **apžiūrėdamas** sugriuvusią Uršulę.* XLI “– Is she really a witch? – this young man asked again looking **over** the despaired Uršulė **from all sides**.”

3. Adverbially employed preverbs are found in a wide variety of converbial forms derived from verbs belonging to different semantic classes:

12. [...] *piktai dėbelėjo Uršulė ir nusiuko, **sukeldama**⁶ sijonu dulkes.* XXV “[...] Uršulė was glancing angrily and turned away raising **up** dust with her apron.”
 13. – *Girdėjau, – atsakė **užrašydamas** klebonas.* XXIV “– I heard – answered the priest writing [it] **down**.”

⁶ Not all preverbs can be adequately translated into English; in this case the preverb *su-* can be understood as denoting inchoativity.

14. – *Taigi*, – *tarė*, **užtraukdamas** *dūmą*. XXIX “– So – he said inhaling smoke.”
15. – *Ne*, – *atsikirto Girdvainis*, **atgaudamas** [...]. XX “– No – cut Girdvainis **regaining** [his] pride [...].”

4. In a number of cases, no function can be ascribed to the prefixation of the converbs since the compound verbs from which these converbs are derived do not enter into any kind of opposition with un-prefixed verbs. The semantic gap between the simple and compound verb in these cases is often so wide that neither aspectual nor adverbial shade of meaning is conceivable for the preverb:

16. *Prisėdo šalia jo Baltaragis*, **atsidusdamas** [...]. XXIX “Baltaragis sat down close to him sighing [...].” (there is no corresponding reflexive simplex verb but cf. *dusdamas* “suffocating”)
17. *Ne pono*, – *sako apmirdama Uršulė*. II “– Not of a master – said Uršulė fainting [feeling faint]” (cf. *mirdama* : “dying”)
18. *Tiktai širdis krūptelėjo*, *lyg ką nujausdama*. V “But her heart twitched as if presaging something.” (cf. *jausdama*: “feeling”)
19. *Tokia dievo valia!* – *tarė atsisveikindama*. XII “It’s God’s will! – she said bidding good-bye.” (cf. *sveikindamasi*: “greeting, welcoming”)

5. Prefixed *-dama-* converbs are most frequently formed from negated verbs. It is clear that where the prefixation marks the verbal form as punctual, the negation cancels out punctuality, so that the opposite of a punctual (e.g. terminative, resultative, inchoative, semelfactive, etc.) action denotes refraining from action and is in fact markedly durative. In these cases it is the negation that makes the verb compatible with durativity and suitable for derivation of *-dama-* forms.

20. [...] *Raupys*, [...] *nudūmė tiesiai į Prūsus*, *niekur nesustodamas nei atsikvėpdamas*. XXVIII “[...] R. [...] fled straight to Prussia **not** stopping even to take a breath. [i.e. continuing running]”
21. – *O tavo jaunoji*, *girdėjau*, *tavęs nesulaukdama*, *jau su kitu rengiasi vestuves kelti*. XXVIII “– And your bride, I’ve heard, **without** waiting for you [i.e. refraining from waiting], already prepares herself to set a wedding with another.”
22. *Tavo klaidintojas*, – *tas ramiai atsakė*, *net nesujudėdamas*. XXX “Your deceiver – it answered **not** even making a move [i.e. staying still].”

23. *Uršulė stabtelėjo, nepertraukdama kalbėti rožančių, [...]. XXXVIII* “Uršulė stopped **without** interrupting telling her beads [i.e. continuing ...] [...].”
24. *Kad bent kas užėity, - pasigedo Šešelga, neramiai žvilgčiodamas į duris ir pats vos neišbėgdamas. XLIII* “If only someone would drop in – remarked Šešelga glancing nervously at the door and with difficulty **not** running away himself [i.e. refraining from running away, staying].”

5.1. It is worth noticing that the verb *rasti*, always punctual, whether simplex or compound, occurs (in our corpus) in the form of a *-dama-* converb only when negated (note the unprefixated *nerasdami* “without finding” in 28):

25. *[...] per dieną praklaidžiojo, nieko nesurasdamas, temstant apsistojo pirmoje kryžkelėje ir apsinakvojo. XXX* “[...] during the day he wandered around **not** finding anything, when it was getting dark, he stopped at the first cross-road and spent the night.”
26. *Dabar žmonėms paaiškėjo, kodėl taip ilgai Girdvainis pas mergas važinėjo, savo nesurasdamas, [...]. XXV* “Now it became clear to the people why Girdvainis kept traveling to girls for so long, **not** finding one of his own [...].”
27. *Tai ir klaidžiojo rudens darganose [...], ieškodamas savo obuolmušių ir niekur jų nesurasdamas [...]. XXVII* “So he wandered in the rainy weather of autumn [...] looking for his drapple-grey horses and **not** finding them anywhere [...].”
28. *[...] piršliai [...] atsidurdavo [...] Paudrūvės pelkėse, kuriose ligi aušros kankindavosi, nerasdami kelio I* “[...] the matchmakers would find themselves [...] in the swamps of Paudrūvė, where until dawn they would struggle **without** finding the way.”

6. Prefixed half-participles occur very frequently as converbs accompanying verbs in the habitual (frequentative) past-tense. In this context the repeatability of action denoted by the tense form of the finite verb marks it as taking place time and again over some period in the past; the accompanying circumstantial converb relates to the same period, even if the prefix would in other syntactic environment grant punctuality to a verb. With verbs in a habitual (frequentative) past-tense the *-dama* form can be considered as the circumstance of the whole set of actions, i.e. of the complex, prolonged event consisting of a series of incidents treated as identical.

29. [...] vis dažniau **išeidavo** į bažnyčią, kartais net visą dieną **sugaišdavo**, tuo nepaprastai **pradžiugindama** Baltaragį. VI “[...] **more and more often** she **used to go** to the church, sometimes she **would** even **waste** the whole day [there] making Baltaragis unusually happy by that.”
30. Senas našlys taip mylėjo savo vienturtę, kad dieną naktį akių nuo jos **nenuleisdavo**, kartais visas **nušvisdamas** tarsi nepaprastos laimės apšviestas, o kartais taip **nuliūsdamas** ir **susirūpindamas**, [...]. I “The old widower loved his only daughter so much that day and night he **wouldn’t let her out of his sight**, sometimes brightening up [...] and sometimes getting so sad and worried that [...].”
31. Tai matydamas, tėvas vis dažniau **užsidarydavo** malūne, kažką galvodamas ir nieko **nesugalvodamas**, tikrai dar labiau **pražildamas**. I “Seeing that, the father more and more often **used to shut himself** in the mill, thinking about something and devising nothing, only getting grayer even more.”
32. atsirėmusi ant rankų, **sustingdavo** užsisvajodama [...]. XXXII “[...] having leaned on her hands, she **used to become still** while dreaming [...].”
33. Tikrai jis kartais **nustelbdavo** [...] Jurgutį, **susiliedamas** su jo šešėliu ir pavirsdamas bene vienu veikėju [...]. XLVIII “But sometimes he drowned out [...] Jurgutis, merging with his shadow and as if turning into one character [of the story][...].”

7. The *-dama-* converb derived from prefixed verb is sometimes employed to denote a process gradually leading to a certain state. This role is especially pronounced when the converb co-occurs with the explicit adverbial indication *vis labiau* “more and more” as in 34 or *visa* and *visai* “completely” as in 35 and 37.

34. Pamatysime, – atsakė Anupras, **vis labiau susirūpindamas**, tarsi į tolimą ir pavojingą žygį **išsirengdamas**. XX “We shall see – answered Anupras getting **more and more** worried as if preparing for a far and dangerous expedition.”
35. Baltaragis jos ir laukė, **visai pražildamas** ir **sulinkdamas**. XXVII “Baltaragis expected it, going **completely** grey and bending **down**.”
36. – Nieko, – atsakė **išbaldamas** Baltaragis. XXIX “– [It’s] nothing – answered Baltaragis turning pale.”
37. – Jau, – pasakė duktė, **visa išbaldama** kaip drobė. XXXII “– It’s here – said the daughter turning **all** pale as a sheet.”

8. The value of the *-dama-* converb seems to be independent of the form of the finite verb in the clause. It can accompany verbs in the simple past tense, in the frequentative past, as well as in the present tense. This is true to an equal extent for simple and prefixed converbial forms with the two often co-occurring in a single clause. In all instances (except example 4 above) it denotes the less salient of the two occurrences, the circumstantial indication, the background or the secondary, accompanying action, process or state.

38. *Nors ir skubėjo Anupras ateiti, bet atėjęs delsė, tarsi apgalvodamas savo žygį ir iš naujo jį persvarstydamas.* XXIX “Although Anupras had hurried to arrive, having arrived he waited as if thinking **through** his expedition and turning it **over** in his mind.”
39. – *Ne, – atsakė Jurgutis [...] baisiai išsigandęs, vos atgaudamas žadą.* XXX “– No – answered Jurgutis [...] terribly frightened, barely **regaining** his voice.”
40. *Tai slidinėdamas, klupdamas ir vėl atsistodamas pagaliau temstant Anupras pasiekė Paudruvės kraštą ir Baltaragio malūną.* XXIX “Slipping, tripping and getting up again Anupras at last at dusk reached the land of Paudruvė and Baltaragis’s mill.”
41. *Susirūpinęs Visgirda pastovėjo valandėlę lyg šermenyse, galvodamas apie gyvenimo šuolius [...] ir susimąstęs nuėjo pamažėle, vis atgal atsigręždamas ir svarstydamas, ką čia dabar daryti.* XXXI “Worried, Visgirda stood for a while as if at a wake thinking about the leaps of life [...] and lost in thought he slowly left, again and again looking back and pondering what to do now.”

The converbs *klupdamas* and *atsistodamas* in 40, and *atsigręždamas* in 41 denote iterative actions; *galvodamas* and *svarstydamas* in 41 are plainly durative.

8.1. In none of the cases does the prefixation of the *-dama-* converb bear any aspectual value and it is rather pronouncedly adverbial in the broad sense of the word, including adverbial indications of the *Aktionsart* type. If the category of aspect is to be discovered in Lithuanian, it should be sought not in the verbal system of the language as a whole but in a specific part of it – the system of the past tense finite verb.

Even verbs arguably forming so called ‘pure aspectual pairs’ such as *daryti* : *padaryti* “make, produce” cannot be shown to express perfectivity in the prefixed form of the converb. The converb may rather be considered in these instances a non-punctual circumstantial form, marked as resultative and

denoting an accompanying action leading to completion. Such examples do not occur in our corpus, but consider a randomly chosen example from the Lithuanian version of Wikipedia:

Valstybė konfiskavo ir aukcione pardavė proskribuotų žmonių turtus, taip padarydama Sulą ir jo rėmėjus nepaprastai turtingais. “The State confiscated the wealth of the outlawed and then auctioned it off, **making** Sulla and his supporters vastly rich”.

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The Converbial Participle in -dama- and Aspect Oppositions in Lithuanian
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The nature of aspectual opposition in Lithuanian is a controversial issue. The question of aspect as a grammatical category in Lithuanian is here addressed through the study of the converbial participle in *-dama-*, a form derived from the infinitive and denoting an action accompanying the main action (or process, etc.) of the sentence.

The converb in *-dama-*, employed as an expression of circumstances, is not expected to be punctual or perfective. Nevertheless, in the novel *Baltaragio malūnas* by Kazys Boruta about 1/3 of all occurrences of the *-dama-* converb, the forms are derived from prefixed verbs but cannot be considered perfective. Special attention is given to *-dama-* converbs of verbs of motion, and to the converb accompanying habitual and negated verbs.