

Middle marked intransitives and intransitives with the “complex formant” in Lithuanian: a corpus-based study

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In Lithuanian, middle marked intransitives form a minor group of middle marked verbs (less than 10% of all middle marked verbs in Lithuanian; figures based on DCL). Some intransitive middles have a so-called “complex formant”, i.e. the middle marker always goes in conjunction with a prefix (e.g., *su-si-draugauti* ‘become friends’ : *draugauti* ‘be friends’). In any case, the middle marker is considered to add some additional sense to the meaning of the intransitive verb, e.g., ‘for one’s own pleasure’, as in *pa-si-vaikščioti* ‘have a walk’ : *pa-vaikščioti* ‘walk for a while’ (cf. Geniušienė 1987: 137). The corpus research shows that middle marked intransitives are dispersed through various situation types typically associated with the middle semantics (cf. Kemmer 1993: 16-20; Haspelmath 2003), namely: grooming and body motion (e.g., *gulti-s* ‘lie down’ : *gulti* ‘idem’, *už-si-lipti* ‘climb up’ : *už-lipti* ‘idem’), naturally reciprocal events (e.g., *šnairuoti-s* ‘squint at each other’ : *šnairuoti* ‘squint’), spontaneous events (e.g., *debesuoti-s* ‘cloud over’ : *debesuoti* ‘idem’), emotion/cognition middles (e.g., *nu-si-bosti* ‘bore smb’ : *nu-bosti* ‘idem’), facilitative middles (e.g., *dirbti-s* ‘work (with ease)’ : *dirbti* ‘work’).

In order to explain the curious redundancy of the middle marked intransitives (the middle marker is an intransitivizer itself), here they are considered as having two semantic roles expressed by a single syntactic subject (cf. Gerritsen 1986: 88), which corresponds to the notion of the higher participant distinguishability (Kemmer 1993: 69-70). Given that the transitivity scale consists of the transitive, middle, and intransitive verbs, it is concluded here that the addition of the middle marker to an intransitive verb “transfers” it to the middle domain, but from the opposite side in comparison to the transitive verbs.

This poster aims at representing the semantic groups of the middle marked intransitives and intransitives with the “complex formant” in Lithuanian and determining frequency and distribution related differences between the middle marked intransitives and their unmarked counterparts, based on the data from The Corpus of Contemporary Lithuanian (CCLL).

References

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