

Verbal aspect in the acquisition of Latvian as a foreign language

Verba aspekts latviešu valodas kā svešvalodas apguvē

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The article addresses verbal aspect in the acquisition of Latvian as a foreign language. Latvian textbooks both in Latvian and in other languages, as well as Japanese learners' writings are analysed to explore this topic. The main issue is the use of verbs expressing the aspectual opposition *perfective / imperfective*, as well as the opposition *inchoative / stative*, and other *Aktionsart* prefixed verbs. Verbal aspect in Latvian is an implicit category. It is one of the few categories described in Latvian grammars but less frequently addressed in the textbooks of Latvian as a foreign language. The analysis shows that in the initial stage learners may use mostly imperfective non-prefixed verbs when denoting habitual situations in the present tense. The necessity of perfective prefixed verbs arises in the preterit, when learners describe a concrete, single situation that has taken place in the past. Without knowing the notion of aspectual opposition and corresponding perfective prefixed verbs, learners often use imperfective verbs. A similar situation is observed for the inchoative prefixed verbs, which learners replace with the imperfective stative verbs that they have already acquired. The use of other *Aktionsart* prefixed verbs seems difficult for learners and requires a higher, "native-like" level of proficiency.

Keywords: aspect; perfective; imperfective; stative; inchoative; prefix.

1. Introduction

In Latvian, verbal aspect is a lexico-grammatical category that is expressed not as rigid rules but, rather, as tendencies (Staltmane 1958, 266). It has been studied in terms of morphology (Kalnača 2013; Horiguchi 2014b) and word formation (Horiguchi 2013b). In Latvian linguistics, aspect is traditionally understood as the opposition of imperfective and perfective: *lasīt / izlasīt* 'read (ipf./pf.)', *zvanīt / piezvanīt* 'make a call (ipf./pf.)'. Imperfective verbs denote a durative and general situation, while perfective verbs represent a non-durative and concrete situation. The distinct markers of aspectual meanings are affixes, and the aspectual opposition is expressed mostly by the presence of a prefix. However, there is no

unified marker of perfectivity, since the semantic interaction between the prefix and the verb determines which prefix perfectivizes which verb. For the majority of verbs of motion and physical action, the opposition is established between the prefixed perfective verb and the non-prefixed verb with the adverb denoting the spatial semantics of the prefix: *iet ārā / iziet* ‘go out (ipf./pf.)’. The systematic nature of aspect opposition is weakened by a high degree of neutralization of the aspect opposition itself (Horiguchi 2014, 26–28).

The regularity of aspectual opposition is also minimized by the existence of a high number of prefixed verbs, the aspect of which is neutral or bi-aspectual: *apmeklēt* ‘visit’, *notikt* ‘happen’, and *pārbaudīt* ‘check’, which are derived, respectively, from the verbs *meklēt* ‘look for’, *tikt* ‘make it somewhere’, and *baudīt* ‘enjoy’. These prefixed verbs express one or another aspect contextually, although in some contexts, the aspect of the verb may remain ambiguous. In these prefixed verbs, prefixes are lexicalized and, therefore, individualized, and no regular derivational models for the prefixes can be developed.

In addition to the *perfective / imperfective* opposition, there is a range of various characteristics of action in terms of its phase, intensity, and number of times it is repeated, which are expressed by affixes and circumfixes and categorized as *Aktionsart*: *pa-lasīt* ‘read a little (attenuative)’, *no-dzīvot* ‘live for a certain period’, *sa-pirkt* ‘to buy in a great quantity (saturative)’, *ie-degt-ies* ‘light up (inchoative)’, *iz-staigāt-ies* ‘walk to one’s content’, *aiz-sēdēt-ies* ‘stay for a long time’ and *brauk-ā-t* ‘to drive about (iterative)’. Among these vast aspectual features, the notion of the aspectual opposition itself turns out to be unclear.

Across languages, the aspect is one of the most discussed topics in the context of foreign language and second language acquisition, alongside the tense (e.g., Salaberry, Shirai 2002; Fuchs, Werner 2020). Both the tense and the aspect refer to the time of the situation. However, they differ in that the former indicates situation-external time and the latter deals with situation-internal time (Comrie 1976, 5). In the languages in which the tense undoubtedly consists of a grammatical category, the verbal aspect may be an implicit category in which aspectual meanings are interwoven with the lexical properties of the verb. In such cases, the verbal aspect is more difficult for learners to conceptualize and acquire, as it is not fully subject to systematization and paradigmaticization.

This article addresses verbal aspect and related problems in the acquisition of Latvian as a foreign language. Firstly, how textbooks for Latvian as a foreign language written in Latvian and other languages address aspect is briefly analysed. Secondly, the texts composed by learners of Latvian are used as empirical learner data. The focus is on the types of errors learners commit in relation to aspectual opposition and other aspect-related issues without previous input by teachers or textbooks.

The total of 35 authentic compositions have been examined in the current article. Texts were written by 18 Japanese learners of Latvian of different proficiency levels, estimated to range from pre-A1 to B1, during Latvian language courses from 2007–2014 at the Embassy of Latvia in Japan. Most of the texts

were essays and had been written when the learners prepared for a Latvian speech contest in Japan in 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016, and 2018. Learners may have written texts without the use of dictionaries when their proficiency was sufficient. They may also have used bilingual dictionaries, mostly English-Latvian. One text is taken from a *Facebook* post in Latvian written by a learner. Grammatical and orthographical errors, as far as they do not concern verbal aspect, are corrected for the sake of readability.

2. Verbal aspect in textbooks and dictionaries for Latvian as a foreign language

Regardless of what language they are written in, foreign language textbooks showcase the most explicit grammatical categories of the language, as well as its elementary lexicon. Latvian is a typical inflectional language with numbers, genders, cases, tenses, and other grammatical categories (Kalnača, Lokmane 2021). Unlike other grammatical categories concerning verbs, the aspect is one of the categories described in the academic grammars and textbooks for Latvian as a native language but is much less frequently mentioned in textbooks for Latvian as a foreign language. From the initial stage, learners of Latvian are required to become familiar with grammatical terms referring to inflection categories such as *plural*, *accusative*, and *imperative*. However, the terms *aspect*, *perfective*, and *imperfective* may even not appear throughout most of the textbooks for Latvian.

The majority of communicatively oriented textbooks for Latvian do not provide any explanation of aspect in a dedicated way (e.g., Moseley 1996; Svilāne Bartholomew 2009; Klēvere-Velhli, Naua 2012), which suggests that expression of aspect can be acquired “naturally” in the course of lexicon acquisition. Learners encounter a new perfective prefixed verb and then find its semantic correlation with the non-prefixed imperfective verb that they already know, and vice versa. Thus, there is no explicit introduction to enable form-meaning-function mapping by learners.

The newly published textbook for Latvian written in Latvian for the A2 level introduces the notion of aspectual opposition in the framework of “Grammar” using the aspectual pairs *pirkt / nopirkt* ‘buy (ipf./pf.)’, *maksāt / samaksāt* ‘pay (ipf./pf.)’ and others (Auziņa, Berķe, Lazareva, Šalme 2016, 36, 80, 84, 122, 138), while the prefixal derivation on the basis of spatial semantics is introduced in the “Lexicon” categories, as shown in the content of the textbook for the B1 level (Auziņa, Berķe, Lazareva, Šalme, Vaivade 2019, 4–5).

Aspect has been addressed to different degrees among semi-practical and semi-theoretical textbooks written in German (Priedīte, Ludden 1999, 204–206) and French (Petit, Petit 2004, 110–111). In a textbook for Japanese learners, it is mentioned that in Latvian, certain verbs have aspectual opposition expressed by prefixes, and special exercises are given (Horiguchi 2013a, 86–87, 93). The sentences used as exercises show the clear-cut semantic difference of the most

elementary aspectual pairs. The author argues that despite the implicitness of the aspect category in Latvian, a more active introduction to aspectual opposition is necessary (Horiguchi 2014, 11–12). In a textbook written in Russian, it is stated that in Latvian, the perfective aspect and the imperfective aspect are not as clearly contrasted as they are in Russian (Gružane, Eča, Sprogis 1995, 163). It is a well-known fact that it is easier for learners to conceptualize a given category if it exists in their native language.

Another important source of language acquisition is dictionaries. However, traditionally neither explanatory nor bilingual dictionaries address aspectual meaning in an explicit way. In the early sixties of the 20th century, Velta Staltmane (1961, 205–206) considered the possibility of labelling every verb in terms of aspect and refer a verb of one aspect to that of another aspect, which was not implemented after all. Today, it remains customary not to tag verbs in the terms of aspect in Latvian lexicography, and two aspectually correlated verbs are not referred to each other.

In bilingual dictionaries, aspectual opposition is indicated for verbs, for example, in Russian and Polish, which both have verbal aspect as a grammatical category. Latvian verbs are typically explained by an aspectual pair of verbs: Latvian *samazināt* ‘diminish’ → Russian *umen’shit’* (pf.) / *umen’shat’* (ipf.), Polish *zmniejszyć* (pf.) / *zmniejszać* (ipf.) (Ceplīte et al. 2008, 908; Sarkanis et al. 2011, 1188). The same approach is observed in a Latvian–Czech dictionary, which, in principle, follows the Russian and Polish examples due to the common Slavic aspect system (Škrabals 2012, 131; 2016, 104–109).

Consequently, a question arises: can a learner acquire Latvian without being conscious of the aspectual opposition and other aspect-related issues? On the one hand, the implicitness of a semantic category relieves learners from the cognitive effort required to memorize grammatical rules. On the other hand, implicitness of the aspect category makes it difficult for learners to conceptualize the semantic difference that may arise when they use some verbs in certain contexts.

3. Empirical analysis

Analysis of texts composed by learners as well as observation of how learners learn the Latvian grammar and lexicon allows us to provide some remarks on Latvian verbal aspect from the perspective of teaching and learning the language.

In the acquisition of vocabulary, learners first learn non-prefixed imperfective verbs such as *rakstīt* ‘write’, *darīt* ‘do’, and *pirkt* ‘buy’ and then the corresponding prefixed perfective verbs *uzrakstīt*, *izdarīt*, and *nopirkt*, and so on. This aligns well with the fact that non-prefixed verbs are primary in relation to prefixed verbs in terms of derivational sequence. Even knowing that in Latvian the stress falls on the first syllable (correctly *úrakstīt*, *ízlasīt*), some learners make mistakes by stressing the second syllable of the prefixed verbs (*uzrákstīt*, *izlásīt*) because they have previously learned the non-prefixed verbs and programmed the stress

as, for example, *rākstīt* and *lāsīt*. Some learners may be capable of associating newly encountered prefixed verbs such as *apmeklēt* ‘visit’ and *iepazīties* ‘become acquainted’ with the non-prefixed verbs they have already learned (*meklēt* ‘look for’, *pazīt* ‘know (someone)’). However, the prefixes in the given verbs are lexicalized, and the degree of derivational motivation is low, which may lead to these prefixed words being stressed correctly.

The acquisition of verbal aspect is related to the acquisition of verbal prefixes. Compared to aspectual meanings, the spatial semantics of prefixes are more concrete and, therefore, easier to conceptualize. This can be observed with verbs denoting physical activity, for example, verbs of motion such as *iet* ‘go on foot’, *nākt* ‘come’, and *kāpt* ‘climb’. Prefixal derivatives are semantically transparent: *ieiet* ‘enter (go in)’, *sanākt* ‘come together’, *izkāpt* ‘get off’.

Our analysis of learners’ writings shows that during the initial stage of learning, a learner may perform quite well without using prefixed perfective verbs. Of the three tenses, the present tense is acquired first. As seen in (1), learners use imperfective non-prefixed verbs or bi-aspectual verbs to denote habitual situations when they talk about their hobbies and everyday life or denote a situation that is happening at the time.

- (1) *Ko vēl es daru svētdienā? Nu tā, es
 what.ACC else I.NOM do.PRS.1SG Sunday.LOC.SG well I.NOM
 sportoju sporta klubā. Es lasu romānus,
 do_sports.PRS.1SG sport.GEN.SG club.LOC.SG I.NOM read.PRS.1SG novel.ACC.PL
 skatos televīziju un klausos mūziku.
 watch.PRS.1SG TV.ACC.SG and listen.PRS.1SG music.ACC.SG
 ‘What else do I do on Sunday? Well, I do sports at a sports gym. I read novels,
 watch TV, and listen to music.’*

For the present tense, learners have less need for perfective verbs, which are used to denote a quantified action executed daily such as *Katru dienu es izlasu 2 avīzes* ‘Every day I read two newspapers’ or *Es izlasu 2 avīzes dienā* ‘I read two newspapers a day’. Perfective verbs in the present tense may also be used in a narrative when a writer represents several consecutive actions that have happened in the past. However, since the use of perfective verbs requires plausible stylistic proficiency, such text is rarely produced at the beginner’s level.

The need for perfective prefixed verbs arises when a learner starts to acquire past tense forms and describes a preterit action or successive actions. In the past tense, the aspectual opposition actualizes to a greater degree than in the present tense. However, a learner who is not yet familiar with aspectual opposition and the perfective counterpart has no choice but to use the non-prefixed imperfective verb, which is in his/her vocabulary. In (2) and (3), the perfective *nozaga* and *nopirku* are more appropriate because the situation is a single event. Regarding (2), the verb *gāju* ‘(I) went’, the past tense form of *iet* ‘go’ would conventionally be replaced by the prefixed verb *aizgāju* to denote the past single event as the former can designate a process in the past: ‘I was on the way to somewhere’. In addition, in (3),

the averitive expression *gandrīz vai* ‘almost, be close to’ usually requires a perfective verb. In (4), a learner posts a picture of her book about Latvia on her *Facebook* page using the imperfective *rakstīju* ‘I wrote’. This could be replaced by the perfective *uzrakstīju*, which accentuates the result shown in the picture but not the process.

- (2) *Es gāju uz veikalu un pirku grāmatu.*
 I.NOM go.PST.1SG to store.ACC.SG and buy.PST.1SG book.ACC.SG
 ‘I went to a store and bought a book.’
- (3) *Manu maku gandrīz vai zaga kabatzaglis.*
 my.ACC.SG purse.ACC.SG almost steal.PST.3 pickpocket.NOM.SG
 ‘A pickpocket was close to stealing my purse.’
- (4) *Rakstīju jaunu grāmatu par Latviju.*
 write.PST.1SG new.ACC.SG book.ACC.SG about Latvia.ACC.SG
 ‘I wrote a new book about Latvian.’

The aspectual opposition is not observed among the stative verbs since their lexical meaning excludes a perfective interpretation of the state. However, there are certain stative verbs that, being prefixed, express an inchoative notion for the action. For example, the Latvian verb *zināt* ‘know’ indicates only state regardless of tense, while the prefixed verb *uzzināt* means ‘get to know, recognize, learn’. Instead of the latter verb, if it is not yet encompassed in their vocabulary, learners have no choice but to use the non-prefixed verb, as shown in (5)–(6). These learners wanted to mark the inchoative semantics by using the adverb *pirmoreiz* ‘for the first time’ and its adverbial *pirmo reizi* with the same meaning.

- (5) *Kad zināju par Latviju pirmoreiz, es biju vidusskolā. Tad mēs dziedājām Selgas Mences “Ieviņa”, un es zināju par Latvijas vēsturi.*
 when know.PST.1SG about Latvia.ACC.SG for_the_first_time I.NOM
 be.PST.1SG highschool.LOC.SG then we.NOM sing.PST.1PL Selga.GEN.SG
 Mence.GEN.SG Ieviņa.ACC.SG and I.NOM know.PST.1SG about
 Latvia.GEN.SG history.ACC.SG
 ‘When I learned about Latvia for the first time, I was at high school. Then we sang Selga Mence’s “Ieviņa”, and I got to learn about the history of Latvia.’
- (6) *Es dzīvoju un mācījos latviešu valodu Rīgā 1993. gadā. Šajā laikā es zināju Latvijas valsts karogu pirmo reizi.*
 I.NOM live.PST.1SG and study.PST.1SG Latvian.GEN.PL language.ACC.SG
 Riga.LOC.SG year.LOC.SG this.LOC.SG time.LOC.SG I.NOM know.PST.1SG
 Latvia.GEN.SG state.GEN.SG flag.ACC.SG first.ACC.SG time.ACC.SG
 ‘I lived and learned Latvian in Riga in 1993. At that time, I got to know the Latvian national flag for the first time.’

In (7), a learner who has learned the prefixed verb properly uses it to mark the inchoative semantics. In (8), the opposition of state and the inchoative may be neutralized, and both verbs can be used due to the semantics of desire and quantity expressed respectively by *vēlētos* ‘would like to’ and *vairāk* ‘more’.

- (7) *Ap šo laiku es uzzināju Latviju*
 around this.ACC.SG time.ACC.SG I.NOM learn.PST.1SG Latvia.ACC.SG
pirmo reizi.
 first.ACC.SG time.ACC.SG
 ‘Around that time, I got to know Latvia for the first time.’

- (8) *Tagad es vēlētos turpināt adīšanu un uzzināt*
 now I.NOM wish.COND continue.INF knitting.ACC.SG and learn.INF
vairāk par Latvijas cimdiem.
 more about Latvia.GEN.SG mitten.DAT.PL
 ‘Now I would like to continue knitting and learn more about Latvian mittens.’

Inchoative/state opposition is found for another verb of state, *interesēties* ‘be interested.’ Instead of the prefixed verb *ieinteresēties* ‘get interested’ or in combination with the phasal verb *sākt* ‘start’, *sāku interesēties* ‘I started to become interested’, a learner uses the verb in the inchoative meaning with the adverb *tad* ‘then’ to introduce a new situation.

- (9) *Mums bija daudz lekciju par šo tēmu.*
 we.DAT be.PST. 3 many lecture.GEN.PL about this.ACC.SG theme.ACC.SG
Tad es interesējos par Baltijas valstīm.
 then I.NOM be_interested.PST.1SG about Baltics.GEN.SG state.DAT.PL
 ‘We had a lot of lectures on this topic. Then I became interested about the Baltic countries.’

A similar situation is observed for the non-prefixed imperfective verb of state *domāt* ‘think’. While it usually refers to a durative process of thinking, the prefixed verbs *nodomāt* and *padomāt* refer to the point at which the idea comes to a speaker’s mind. However, since learners have not yet acquired the prefixed verbs, they use the non-prefixed verb. As in (9), a learner seems to compensate for the lack of a prefix with the help of the conjunction *un* ‘and’ and particle *tad* ‘then’ to signal a new situation.

- (10) *Un tad domāju,*
 and then think.PST.1SG
ka es biju aizmirsusi to.
 that I.NOM be.PST.1SG forget.PTCP.NOM.SG it.ACC.SG
 ‘And then I thought that I had forgotten it.’

There are also examples of incorrect usage of prefixed verbs. In (11), the prefixed perfective verb is used together with the phasal verb *turpināšu*

‘I will continue’ despite the syntactic restriction that phasal verbs relate to the imperfective verbs, though no textbooks explain this rule in an explicit manner. In (12), the prefixed verb *uzbraukt* ‘go up/drive up’ is thus incorrectly used instead of the non-prefixed verb *braukt* without any spatial specification or the other prefixed verb, *aizbraukt*, the prefix *aiz-* meaning ‘far away’. It is possible that the prefix *uz-* is chosen by analogy of the preposition in the same form, *uz* ‘on, to’. In (13), the prefixed verb *izmācījās* ‘learned thoroughly’ can be replaced by another prefixed verb, *iemācījās* ‘learned (pf.)’. Since this learner has studied Russian, he may have used this prefixed verb by analogy with the Russian equivalent *vyuchit*,’ in which the Russian prefix *vy-* corresponds to the Latvian *iz-*.

- (11) *Man ir jāmācās vairāk. Tātad, es turpināšu*
 I.DAT be.PRS.3 study.DEB more so I.NOM continue.FUT.1SG
iemācīties latviešu valodu.
 study.INF Latvian.GEN.PL language.ACC.SG
 ‘I have to study more. So, I will continue to study Latvian.’

- (12) *Es gribu teikt liels paldies vēstniecībai, jo*
 I.NOM want.PRS.1SG say.INF big thank_you embassy.DAT.SG because
jūs man devāt iespēju uzbraukt uz Latviju.
 you.NOM.PL I.DAT give.PST.2PL chance.ACC.SG go.INF to Latvia.ACC.SG
 ‘I want to say thanks to the embassy since you gave me a chance to go to Latvia.’

- (13) *Viena studente no Moldovas ļoti labi*
 one.NOM.SG student.NOM.SG from Moldova.GEN.SG very well
izmācījās latviešu valodu.
 learn.PST.3 Latvian.GEN.PL language.ACC.SG
 ‘A student from Moldova acquired Latvian very well.’

Compared to the aforementioned aspect opposition, the expression of *Aktionsart* is more language-specific and even individual-specific, which means that the use of *Aktionsart* verbs requires “native-like” proficiency to a greater degree. Learners can theoretically understand *Aktionsart* meanings, though it is still difficult to use prefixed verbs in a text as native speakers do. Many *Aktionsart* expressions are stylistically connotated and expressed in a more subjective way. Moreover, they can be alternatively denoted with the help of analytic means. For example, the attenuative prefix *pa-* can theoretically be replaced with the non-prefixed verb with adverbial meaning ‘a little’. The same is true for the use of diminutive noun forms. Learners whose first language does not possess an explicit category of diminutiveness may wonder why, if diminutives denote smallness, is diminutiveness not just expressed in an analytic way with the adjectives *small* or *tiny*?

The prefix *pa-* in connection with verbs of speech assigns the meaning of concrete, semelfactive action. Alternatively, the prefix *pa-*, with its initial

attenuative semantics, could be regarded as a perfectivizer of the non-prefixed counterpart (Horiguchi 2015, 245). In (14), the non-prefixed verb in the present tense could be replaced by the prefixed verb *pastāstīšu* or the non-prefixed verb *stāstīšu*, both in the future tense. In (15), the non-prefixed verb *jautāt* ‘ask’ could be replaced with *pajautāt*.

(14) *Šodien es stāstu par japāņu virtuvi.*
 today I.NOM talk.PST.1SG about Japanese.GEN.PL cuisine.ACC.SG
 ‘Today I am going to talk about Japanese food.’

(15) *Vispirms es gribētu jautāt, kas tas ir.*
 First_of_all I.NOM want.COND ask.INF what it.NOM.SG be.PST.3
 ‘First of all, I would like to ask what it is.’

The prefix *no-* is a productive marker of perfectivity (Horiguchi 2013a, 49–50). At the same time, this prefix is often observed with such performative verbs like *nolasīt* ‘read’ and *nocītēt* ‘cite’, which are used when a speaker is about to perform the action in front of the listeners. The non-prefixed verb *dziedāt* in (16) can thus be replaced with the *no-*verb.

(16) *Beigās es gribētu dziedāt “Miglā asaro logs,” iztekt (correctly: izsakot) visiem pateicību par visu.*
 end.LOC.PL I.NOM want.COND sing.INF fog.LOC.SG tear.PRS.3
 window.NOM.SG express.PTCL all.DAT.PL gratitude.ACC.SG
 for all.ACC.SG
 ‘In the end, I would like to sing “The Window is Crying in the Fog”, expressing my gratitude to all for everything.’

Finally, we must note the synonymous verbs *sacīt* and *teikt* ‘say’, which are among the most elementary verbs. Though their semantics do not differ, they are distributed by tense and moods and are related, to some extent, to aspect as well. The verb *sacīt* is used in the present tense and the debitive and imperative moods and is interpreted as imperfective. The verb *teikt* is mainly used in the past and future tense, the infinitive form, and the conditional mood, and is regarded as perfective. This distribution also applies to the prefixed verbs derived from these verbs: *nosacīt / noteikt* ‘determine’, *izsacīt / izteikt* ‘express’, *piesacīties / pieteikties* ‘apply’ and so on. In the aforementioned (16), a learner commits an error, forming an indeclinable participle from the verb *izteikt*, but it should be formed from the verb *sacīt* – *izsakot*. In (17), the infinitive *sacīt* would be replaced by the verb *teikt*.

(17) *Pirmkārt, es vēlos sacīt jums liels paldies!*
 first I.NOM wish.PRS.1SG say.INF you.DAT.PL big thank_you
 ‘First of all, I want to say thank you so much!’

4. Conclusions

In Latvian, verbal aspect is an implicit category that is not provided in textbooks for Latvian as a foreign language. When learners are not provided with an explanation of the aspect either by a teacher or by their textbooks, or when they simply have not yet learned the verbs, learners acquire aspect-related means during lexicon acquisition and by having their errors corrected. Apart from aspectual opposition, inchoative verbs are necessitated once learners begin to use the elementary verbs of state like *zināt* ‘know’ and *interesēties* ‘be interested’. Compared to the *perfective / imperfective* opposition and inchoative semantics, the use of *Aktionsart* verbs requires a higher, “native-like” proficiency of the language. Generalizing the tendency of aspectual opposition is a great challenge; however, explaining the aspect in didactics is a necessary task.

All the verbs analysed in this article are in the simple tense. The aspectual opposition is also related to the tense opposition *simple tense* and *compound tense*, by which some aspectual pairs, in our opinion, are distributed. For example, a non-prefixed verb in the present perfect is used to denote the marital status of a person or their circumstances of birth: *Viņš ir precējies* ‘He is married’, *Viņa ir šķīrusies* ‘She is divorced’, *Viņa ir dzimusi Rīgā* ‘She was born in Riga’. However, the corresponding past event is expressed by the perfective counterparts in the simple past tense: *Viņš apprecējās* ‘He (got) married’, *Viņa izšķīrās* ‘She (got) divorced’, *Viņiem piedzima meita* ‘Their daughter was born / They gave birth to a daughter’. Thus, the aspectual opposition for these verbs should be mentioned when learners acquire the compound perfect tense.

In this article, we did not examine how the grammar of learner’s first language may affect the acquisition of Latvian verbal aspect, because all the learners of Latvian in this research have studied English and the effect of the Japanese aspect system does not appear to be evident. Nevertheless, it is our future task to enlarge our corpus by collecting more data from learners with different linguistic backgrounds and considering the influence of their first and other languages.

Abbreviations

1	1 st person
2	2 nd person
3	3 rd person
ACC	accusative
COND	conditional mood
DAT	dative
DEB	debitive
GEN	genitive
INF	infinitive
LOC	locative
NOM	nominative
PL	plural

PRS	present
PTCP	participle
PST	past
SG	singular

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Kopsavilkums

Raksta mērķis ir apskatīt verba aspektu un ar to saistītus jautājumus, kas rodas latviešu valodas kā svešvalodas apgūvē. Rakstā tiek analizēti latviešu valodas mācīblīdzekļi latviešu un citās valodās, kā arī apgūvēju veidotie teksti. Galvenā uzmanība pievērsta verbu lietojumam aspekta opozīcijās *perfektīvs / imperfektīvs* un *inchoatīvs / statīvs*, kā arī citu akcionārsarta nozīmju sakarā.

Verba aspekts latviešu valodā ir implicīta kategorija. Tā ir viena no retajām kategorijām, kas tiek aprakstīta gramatikās, bet maz tiek skarta latviešu valodas kā svešvalodas mācīblīdzekļos. Analīze atklāj, ka apguves sākumposmā apgūvēji iztiek bez priedēkļverbiem, bieži izsakoties par ierastām situācijām tagadnē. Nepieciešamība pēc perfektīvā priedēkļverba rodas, kad apgūvēji apraksta vienreiz notikušu konkrētu situāciju pagātnē. Vēl nezinot aspekta opozīcijas jēdzienu un attiecīgu perfektīvo priedēkļverbu, apgūvēji bieži lieto imperfektīvos pamatverbus. Līdzīga situācija ir vērojama inchoatīvajiem priedēkļverbiem. Tos apgūvējiem nākas aizstāt ar imperfektīvajiem pamatverbiem, ko viņi jau ir apgūvuši. Citu aspektuālu priedēkļverbu lietojums apgūvējiem šķiet grūtāks, un tam nepieciešamas augstākas valodas iemaņas.

Atslēgvārdi: aspekts; perfektīvs; imperfektīvs; statīvs; inchoatīvs; priedēklis.



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