The Lithuanian copula: Overtness and the assertion of existence
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1. Introduction

The present tense copula in Lithuanian is said to be able to be dropped freely (Gronemeyer 1997, others)

(1) Mūsų vaikai (yra) mūsų ateitis
our children be3P.PRES our future
‘Our children are our future.’

(2) Mūsų vaikai *(buvo/būs) protingi
our children be3P.PAST/FUT smart
‘Our children were/ will be smart.’

Thesis: The overt copula is associated not only with tense, but also with the speech act of assertion of existence.

- Its distribution can be accounted for by assuming it is a π head bearing an existential operator.
- It must move to T to be pronounced, while its null counterpart need not.

Distribution of overt and null copula across the following constructions:
1. Copular sentences (Higgins 1973) (i.e. an identity relation is asserted)
2. The Genitive of Negation (i.e. negation of the existence of a subject)
3. Evidential constructions (i.e. existence of an event is not asserted)

2. Data

2.1 Copular sentences

Interpretation:
- Higgins [1973]: Four-way split
  - Predicational, specification, identification, identity/equative

Copula is optional:

(3) Mūsų vaikai (yra) mūsų ateitis
our children be3P.PRES our future
‘Our children are our future.’

Copula is necessary:

(4) Vagis *(yra) Jonas.
thief be3P.PRES Jonas
‘The thief is Jonas.’

(5) Tai vietas *(yra) Bostonas.
that place be3P.PRES Boston
‘That place is Boston.’

(6) Melas *(yra) melas.
lie be3P.PRES lie
‘A lie is a lie. (It’s not important the size.)’

2.2 The Genitive of Negation (GenNeg)

Interpretation:
- Borschev & Partee (2002): Negation of the existence with respect to a location
- Kagan (2012): Irrealis Genitive includes GenNeg and Intensional Gen
  - Genitives denote properties.
  - Genitives lack existential commitment (p80)

Copula is necessary:

(7) a. Danos nėra čia
Dana neg.is here
‘Dana isn’t here.’

b.*Danos ne čia
Dana neg here
‘Dana isn’t here.’

Null copula is permitted in non GenNeg contexts:

(8) Dana ne čia, čia Maria
Dana neg here, here is Maria
‘It’s not Dana who is here, it’s Maria’
2.3 Evidential constructions

Interpretation:
- Geniušienė (2006): Speaker does not assert an event or state, but infers or reports one
  - “Statement is inferred from some evidence of a prior (or simultaneous) event… or hearsay” (p. 54)

Two main types:
- The reportative (9)
  - Employs the active, agreeing participle
  - Subject is NOM
  - Tėvas esąs pavargęs
    - ‘Father, it is said, is tired’ (Gronemeyer 1997: 98)

- The inferential (10)
  - Employs the passive, non-agreeing participle
  - Subject is GEN
  - Tėvo nuraminta vaikas
    - ‘The father must have calmed down the child.’

Table 1: Lithuanian participials (subset) from padaryti ‘do’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice</th>
<th>Non-perfect (progressive)</th>
<th>Perfect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>padar-qs (m)</td>
<td>padaręs (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>padar-anti (f)</td>
<td>padarusi (f)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>padaro-mas (m)</td>
<td>padar-tyas (m)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>padaro-ma (f, n*)</td>
<td>padar-tya (f, n*)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Lithuanian neuter nouns have been assimilated into the feminine declensions.

Copula is not allowed:
- Overt finite copula cancels reportative reading
- Null (11b) allows for both readings

(11) a. Tėvas yra pavargęs
    - ‘Father is tired’

b. Tėvas pavargęs
    - Tėvas pavargęs
    - ‘Father (it is said) is tired’ (Gronemeyer 1997: 98)

- Overt finite copula in (12) also interferes with the inferential reading
  - Resultative reading left
  - Some dispute (see Gronemeyer 1997 vs. Lavine 2010)

(12) Vaiko *yra *buvo sudužyta puodelis
    - childgen buvo brokPassPART.NEUT cupnom
    - ‘The child apparently broke the cup’ (Lavine 2010: 126)
    - Wiemer (2006): -ma interpreted more as an “impersonal passive”

(13) Vakar kambaryje buvo šokama
    - yesterday roomloc be1PAST dancePassPART.NEUT
    - ‘(Apparently) yesterday in this room there was dancing.’ (Wiemer 2006: 35)

2.4 Summary of data

Table 2: The distribution of the overt copula

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construction</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Overt copula</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Predicational copular</td>
<td>Assignment of property</td>
<td>Optional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specificational copular</td>
<td>Identity relation</td>
<td>Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identificational copular</td>
<td>Identity relation</td>
<td>Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equative copular</td>
<td></td>
<td>Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive of Negation</td>
<td>Non-existence w.r.t. location</td>
<td>Necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reportative evidential</td>
<td>Non-assertion of event</td>
<td>Not allowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inferential evidential</td>
<td></td>
<td>Not allowed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Towards a solution

3.1 Two structures?

Symmetrical small clauses (Moro 2000, Pereltsvaig 2007, Citko 2011, a.o.)
- Null copular clauses do not have a copula?

- Overt copulas are a Pred or its head?

3.2 Two be’s?

Identity vs Predication vs I (Higgins 1973, Rapoport 1987, Babyonyshev and Matushansky 2006, a.o.)
- Assuming Heycock and Kroch (1999): Specificational copular clauses are and equatives
  - Be of predication - λp. λx [P(x)]
    - Null copula?
  - Be of identity - λp. λx [x = y]
    - Overt copula?

Problem:
- How to account for the overt copula in GenNeg?

3.3 Existential be

Claim: Copula in T (pronounced copula) is associated with asserting existence

Proposal: Lithuanian has two functional copular heads (à la Bowers’s (2001) Pred)
- π with = raises to T to for morphological reasons
  - For GenNeg and non-predicational copulas = has morphological form

Stage-level with overt:

(16) Tu esi keleivis, sėdintis greta, tas, kuris į orą laidai pastabas...
    You’re a passenger sitting side by side, the one who in the air make remarks
    (Vytautas Magnus University (VMU) corpus)

Stage-level with null:

(17) ...kaip ir kodėl atsitiko, kad dabar jie bėgiai...
    how and why happened, that now they’re fugitives...
    (VMU corpus)

(Forced) Individual-level with overt:

(18) Žmogus, besidomis verbaliniais klausimais, yra žiūrovis...
    person interested verbal questions is spectator
    ‘A person, interested in verbal questions, is a spectator.’
    (VMU corpus)

(Forced) Individual-level with null:

(19) Štai įs jis keleivis, aukso ieškotojas, kailinių žvėrelių medžiotojas...
    here he is, a traveler, gold hunter, trapper...
    (VMU corpus)
4. Analysis

Existential copula $\pi$:
- Raises to $T$ to be pronounced
- Existentially binds state (GenNeg) or identity relation (non-predicational clauses)

Null copula $\pi_0$:
- No morphological requirement to raise to $T$

### 4.1 Obligatory overt copula

Non-predicational copular clauses have an overt copula

(20) Vagis ???? (yra) Jonas
    thief is Jonas
    ‘The thief is Jonas.’

Subjects of specificationa copular are presupposed (Mikulskas 2014)
- Move to higher position TopP, or FinP (see Bondaruk 2013)
- Inversion over DP in Spec $\pi$P (see Moro 2000, Den Dikken 2006)

### 4.2 Optional null copula

$\pi_0$ head remains low and is not pronounced
- $T$(ense) cannot be expressed overtly, clause bears default [PRES] tense

(21) Mūsų vaikai $\varnothing$ mūsų ateitis
    our children$_{nom}$ be$_{nom}$PRES our future$_{nom}$
    ‘Our children are our future.’
4.3 Obligatory null "copula"

Evidentials: Auxiliary or copula?

- Inferential evidential as a passive (Gronemeyer 1997, Wiemer 2006, Geniušienė 2006, a.o.)

(22) Evidential: Vagies nusikirsta visi kopustai.
\[ \text{thief} \text{cut} \text{down} \text{all} \text{cabbages} \]
'(Evidently), a thief cut down all the cabbages.'

(23) Passive with GEN Agentive by-phrase
Visi kopustai buvo nusikirsti vagies.
\[ \text{all} \text{cabbages} \text{cut} \text{down} \text{by} \text{thief} \]
'All the cabbages were cut down by a thief.'

- Lavine (2000, 2010): Inferentials are not passives
  - GEN is a true subject: It can bind anaphors and is sensitive to anti-subject effect of pronouns (Vikner 1985)

(24) a. Inferential: Motinos sudeginta savo / jos namas
\[ \text{mother} \text{burned down} \text{her} \text{house} \]
'Mother apparently burned down her own house.'

b. Passive: Motinos buvo sudeginta savo / jos namas
\[ \text{mother} \text{burned down} \text{her} \text{house} \]
'Mother burned down her own house.'

- Evidentials are formed from unaccusatives

(25) Ledo staiga išštripta.
\[ \text{ice} \text{melted} \text{suddenly} \]
'The ice must have suddenly melted.'

(26) Vaiko "*yra /*buvo" sudaužyta puodelis
\[ \text{child} \text{broke} \text{the} \text{cup} \]
'The child apparently broke the cup' (Lavine 2010: 126)

Evidentials with copulas:

- \( \pi \) stops in \( V_{\text{PART}} \)

(27) a. Inferential
Jo buita/*buvo kareivio.
\[ \text{he} \text{was} \text{soldier} \]
'(They say) he was a soldier.'

b. Reportative
Tėvas (esąs) pavargęs
\[ \text{father} \text{is} \text{tired} \]
'Father, it is said, is tired' (Gronemeyer 1997: 98)

(28) Tevas yra pavargęs
\[ \text{father} \text{is} \text{tired} \]
'Father is tired'

- Therefore, no auxiliary is expected
  - No need to assume that T is non-finite (contra Lavine 2010), esp. given that reportative subjects are NOM

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4.4 Final note on AUX

The present tense of auxiliary būti ‘be’ is also optional

(29) Jis (yra)/*(buvo) padaręs viską.
   ‘He has/had done everything.’

Proposal: vieto AUX also does not have ꞌ

• Only obliged to move to T when [PAST] or [FUT]

5. Conclusion

The Lithuanian copula is not “dropped” at random:

(30) Mūsų vaikai (yra)/*(buvo/būs) protingi.
    ‘Our children are/were/ will be smart.’

Existential copula π

• Raises to T be pronounced
• Existentially binds state (GenNeg) or identity relation (non-predicational clauses)

Null copula π0

• No morphological requirement to raise to T

Both copulas raise to T so that [PAST] or [FUT] can be pronounced

6. Extensions

6.1 Pronominal copula

Lithuanian has a pronominal copula tai

(31) a. Darius tai gydytojas
    Darius is a doctor

Pronominal copula tai and it do not occur together

• Even in individual-level predicates, unlike the dual copula in Polish (Citko 2008)

(32) *Darius tai yra gydytojas
    Darius is a doctor.

• They only seem to co-occur in topicalization/cleft constructions where tai is not a copula

(33) Šokoladas – tai yra geras desertas
    ‘Chocolate, that’s a good desert.’

Pronominal tai only selects DP predicates

• Parallel to Russian pronominal èto (Markman 2008)

(34) *Darius tai meilus
    ‘Darius is nice.’

Conclusion: While the verbal copula is associated with higher clausal material (eg. speech acts),
the pronominal only mediates a predicate-argument relation.

6.2 Possessive constructions

Russian presentational copula est’ is ungrammatical with qualified nouns

• Speaker is not asserting the existence of eyes, but that their eyes have the property of being blue

(35) a. U menja (*est’) golubye glaza.
    ‘I have blue eyes.’

b. U menja est’ glaza. Russian
    ‘I have eyes.’

Copula of similar Lithuanian possessive construction can be dropped

• Non-existent π0 does not interfere with reading as in (34b)

(36) Onutės (yra) žalios akys.
    Ann has green eyes

Copula of similar Lithuanian possessive construction can be dropped

• Non-existent π0 does not interfere with reading as in (34b)
References


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