

The Biennial of Czech Linguistics
Conversion/Zero-derivation: Aspects of the theory
Charles University, Prague, September 18, 2024

Jurgis Pakerys
(Vilnius University)

Defining conversion in Baltic

Outline

1. Baltic languages
2. Defining canonic conversion
- 3. Identity of form**
 1. Full identity
 2. Change of the inflection
 3. Change of the base
- 4. Word-class change**
 1. Non-problematic cases
 2. Word-class retention
5. Conclusions
6. References



1. Baltic languages

- Indo-European > Balto-Slavic > Baltic
- Lithuanian, Latvian (±Latgalian, †Old Prussian)

The problems of defining conversion in Baltic are similar to the ones found in Slavic and other inflectionally rich languages

Latest remarks on conversion in Baltic in English:

- Navickaitė-Klišauskienė (2016: 3120–3121)
- Kalnača & Lokmane (2021: 66, 73, 137–140)
- Stundžia (2016: 3091, 3102–3104)

2. Defining canonic conversion

Canonical typology (Corbett 2005)

“In a canonical approach, we take definitions to their logical end point and build theoretical spaces of possibilities. Only then do we ask how this space is populated.”

2. Defining canonic conversion

Conversion is a word-formation process characterized by two **canonical features/requirements**:

- (A) Identity of form
- (B) Word-class change

(1) *bottle*_N → *bottle*_V English

Bauer (1983: 32), Bauer & Valera (2005), Valera (2015: 322), etc.

3.1 Identity of form: full identity

No problems in the case of non-inflecting word-classes:

- (2) *šalia* _{Adv} → *šalia* _{Prep} Lithuanian
'close by' 'next to'
- (3) *blakus* _{Adv} → *blakus* _{Prep} Latvian
'close by' 'next to'

- The change is only syntactic, no change of morphology

3.1 Identity of form: full identity

What about inflecting word-classes?

(1) *bottle*_N → *bottle*_V English
*bottle-s*_N *bottle-s*_V
*bottl-ed*_V

- **Full morphological identity is impossible:** different word-classes have different morphological inflectional exponents, cf. Štekauer et al. (2012: 219)

3.1 Identity of form: full identity

What about inflecting word-classes?

(1) *bottle*_N → *bottle*_V English
*bottle-s*_N *bottle-s*_V
*bottl-ed*_V

Solution: **Identity of citation form**

Problem: Citation form is not a language-internal category and depends on the descriptive tradition

3.2 Identity of form: change of inflection

Same base/stem, different inflectional material

(4)	<i>apklaus-ti</i> _V	→	<i>apklaus-a</i> _N	Lithuanian
	interview-INF		interview-NOM.SG	
	‘interview’		‘survey’	

- The change is both syntactic and morphological

Štekauer et al. (2012: 219-221), Valera (2015: 330–331) on stem-based conversion

3.2 Identity of form: change of inflection

Change of inflection by reduction of the paradigm, e.g.:
Adj → N, 2 gender paradigms → 1 gender paradigm

(5)	<i>vec-āk-i</i> Adj	→	<i>vecāk-i</i> N	Latvian
	old-COMP-NOM.PL.M		parent(M)-NOM.PL	
	‘older’		‘parents’ (via intermediate stage ‘the older ones’)	

- The change is syntactic in its essence and has repercussions in morphology (restriction of the paradigm)

3.2 Identity of form: change of inflection

To address the change of inflection in conversion explicitly, yet another requirement may be added:

- (C) No dedicated derivational markers

Štekauer et al. (2012: 213–224) on conversion as a subtype of word-formation without addition of derivational material

3.3 Identity of form: change of the base

Another step away from the prototype: no change > change of the inflection > change of the base

Root vowel alternation (as *i* → *a* in [6]), also consonant alternation, syllable accent alternation, base truncation

(6)	<i>atrink-ti</i> _V	→	<i>atrank-a</i> _N	Lithuanian
	select-INF		selection-NOM.SG	
	‘select’		‘selection’	

Štekauer et al. (2012: 222), Valera (2015: 328–329) on conversion without formal identity

4.1 Word-class change: non-problematic cases

As mentioned above:

<i>šalia</i> _{Adv} ‘close by’	→	<i>šalia</i> _{Prep} ‘next to’	Lithuanian
<i>blakus</i> _{Adv} ‘close by’	→	<i>blakus</i> _{Prep} ‘next to’	Latvian
<i>apklaus-ti</i> _V ‘interview’	→	<i>apklaus-a</i> _N ‘survey’	Lithuanian
<i>atrink-ti</i> _V ‘select’	→	<i>atrank-a</i> _N ‘selection’	Lithuanian
<i>vec-āk-i</i> _{Adj} ‘older’	→	<i>vecāk-i</i> _N ‘parents’	Latvian

4.2 Word-class change: word-class retention

Problematic: if (B), word-class change, is violated, we are not dealing with conversion *sensu stricto*

Only (A), identity of (base) form, and (C), no dedicated derivational markers, are fulfilled

(7) *generol-as*_N → *generol-ė*_N Lithuanian
general(M)-NOM.SG general(F)-NOM.SG
'general (male)' 'general (female)'

. Valera (2015: 331–331) on conversion without word-class change

4.2 Word-class change: word-class retention

In the cases featuring alternation of the base, only requirement (C), no dedicated derivational markers, is fulfilled

- (8) *púod-as*_N → *puõdži-us*_N Lithuanian
pot-NOM.SG potter-NOM.SG
'pot' 'potter'

Syllable accent alternation: acute → circumflex

Stem-final consonant alternation: *d* → *dž(i)*

5. Conclusions

- **Conversion in Baltic** may be defined as a word-formation process where:
 - No dedicated derivational markers are employed
 - (1) inflectional markers, (2) base stem, and (3) word-class may change
- The observed phenomena in Baltic form **a continuum with respect to canonical conversion** which can be still usefully defined as a word-formation process characterized by:
 - Identity of form
 - Word-class change

Thank you!

jurgis.pakerys@flf.vu.lt



5. References

Bauer, Laurie. 1983. *English Word-Formation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139165846>).

Bauer, Laurie & Salvador Valera. 2005. Conversion or zero-derivation: an introduction. In Laurie Bauer & Salvador Valera (eds.), *Approaches to conversion/zero-derivation*, 7–17. Münster, New York, etc.: Waxmann.

Corbett, Greville G. 2005. The canonical approach in typology. In Zygmunt Frajzyngier, Adam Hodges & David S. Rood (eds.), *Linguistic diversity and language theories*, 25–49. Amsterdam: Benjamins (<https://doi.org/10.1075/slcs.72.03cor>).

Kalnača, Andra & Ilze Lokmane. 2021. *Latvian Grammar*. Rīga: University of Latvia Press (<https://doi.org/10.22364/latgram.2021>).

5. References

Stundžia, Bonifacas. 2016. Lithuanian. In Peter O. Müller, Ingeborg Ohnheiser, Susan Olsen & Franz Rainer (eds.), *Word-Formation: An International Handbook of the Languages of Europe*, vol. 5, 3089–3106. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter (<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110424942-001>).

Štekauer, Pavol, Salvador Valera & Lívia Körtvélyessy. 2012. *Word-Formation in the World's Languages: A Typological Survey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511895005>).

Valera, Salvador. 2014. Conversion. In Rochelle Lieber & Pavol Štekauer (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Derivational Morphology*, 154–168. Oxford: Oxford University Press (<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199641642.013.0010>).

5. References

Valera, Salvador. 2015. Conversion. Peter O. Müller, Ingeborg Ohnheiser, Susan Olsen & Franz Rainer (eds.), *Word-Formation: An International Handbook of the Languages of Europe*, vol. 1, 322–339. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter

(<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110246254-019>)