

A SHORT GRAMMAR OF LATVIAN
BY TERJE MATHIASSEN (Slavica Publishers, 1997, 236 p.)

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Prof. Mathiassen's Short Grammar of Latvian [Latv] completes the second part of the description of modern Baltic languages began in his Short Grammar of Lithuanian (1996) [Lith]. Both books are written according to the same model and they can really be called twins, as is suggested by the author (p. 17). The composition of the Latvian Grammar corresponds exactly to that of the Lithuanian one. A detailed comment on the Lithuanian Grammar was presented in [Andronov, 1997a], which is why I do not consider it necessary to repeat the general characteristics. Most of the remarks given on the Lithuanian Grammar apply to the Latvian one as well. So I am going to concentrate here mostly on the problematic points of the book, which are open to discussion.

Two introductory remarks should be given first.

The Lithuanian and Latvian languages are close relatives and Prof. Mathiassen's idea of creating correlative descriptions of the two is highly valuable. Numerous similarities existing in these languages and a common model of presenting the material justify the use of certain blocks of text in both books with minor changes. One could probably accuse the author of "compilation", but I can only approve of these correspondences. On the contrary, I would regret that some changes are artificially made, when they do not seem necessary. Thus, for example, different numeration of sections occurring in some chapters complicates cross-references between the books.

Unfortunately, the book contains a huge number of misprints. There are not only such harmless defects as twice repeated, omitted or not separated words, use of the improper font, incorrect hyphenation of Latvian words, etc. (see, e.g., p. 19), but also misprints and mistakes that can be misleading, cf. **menēsis* (p. 25)

instead of *mēnesis*, **akmeṇam* (p. 45) instead of *akmenim*, **pie paša mājas* (p. 73) instead of *pie pašas mājas*, **sniedz* (p. 90) — 2Sg.Praes. instead of *sniedz*, **gūsta* (p. 102) — 3 Praes. instead of *gūst*, **šis durvis* (p. 126) instead of *šis durvis*, **jāpaenmt* (p. 189) instead of *jāpaenæm*¹ and many others (cf. also the word *ruoze* translated as 'newspaper' on p. 47). Inexact page cross-references can be found also. The numerous technical failings of the book reflect badly on Slavica Publishers, who are usually so reliable. No further attention will be paid to this aspect here; instead I will analyze the con-ceptual side of Prof. Mathiassen's work that gives really rich material for consideration.

In Chapter 1 the phonology of the Latvian language is discussed. A striking difference from the tradition exists in the presentation of the system of consonants (p. 22-24). Here the phonemes designated by the letters *k, ģ, l, n*, are treated not as *palatal* (i.e., according to IPA, /c/, /ʃ/, /ç/, /ɲ/), but as *palatalized* (/tʃ/, /dʒ/, /lʃ/, /nʃ/), thus a correlation of palatalized and non-palatalized phonemes being introduced in the Latvian language. This solution, however, seems highly doubtful. It is suspicious already that only dental phonemes appear to have palatalized counterparts, but not labial or velar ones. There are two aspects to the problem. On the one hand difference between palatal and palatalized articulation can be determined by means of experimental phonetics: "According to passive speech organ <these sounds> are palatal, according to acoustic effect — soft (not softened), according to the position of the tongue — dorsal" [A. Laua, 1997, 55] (translated by me — A.A.). From the point of view of phonology the correlation of palatalization presupposes some close relations between its members, resulting in the division of certain zones of articulation into two branches for non-palatalized and palatalized series of sounds. That is why counterparts of this opposition often take part in automatic alternations and positions of neutralisation of this feature often exist. In the case under consideration, however, the above-mentioned characteristics are absent² and the opposition

¹ In the present article the letter *æ* (*ǣ*) is used to denote the corresponding open sound in Latvian words, the diphthong /uo/ is always written *uo*.

² /n/ and /ɲ/, /l/ and /lʃ/ do alternate in word inflection, but these alternations are determined not by phonological position, but by morphological rules (so-called "morphological palatalization" (p. 25), or "j-palatalization" [Andronovs, 1997b, 34]): *sēne* : *sēnu* (Gen.Pl.), *ceļ* (3 person) : *ceļ* (2Sg). They

between, say, /t/ and /c/ seems to be a fully fledged member of the more general opposition in place of articulation between /p/ : /t/ : /c/ : /k/. The interpretation of these sounds as palatalized is risky because it can cause incorrect pronunciation. Thus, because of a lack of attention to the difference between, say, Latvian /c/ and Russian palatalised /t/ many students substitute the sounds of the foreign language with their own (cf. /kaʃis/ for *kaķis*, /coca/ for *тэтя*), but for a native speaker these substitutions sound unnatural³.

The next questionable item is that "[v] is regarded as fricative, not an approximant, in Latvian. It differs from [f] only with respect to the feature [+voiced]" (p. 23). Although phonetically the main allophones of /v/ and /f/ are indeed similar, phonologically these phonemes can not be united in a correlative pair *voiced : unvoiced*. The position in consonant cluster before an obstruent is a weak position for the feature *voiced : unvoiced* in Latvian, in as far as regressive assimilation takes place here. However, /v/ neither undergoes, nor causes such assimilation. This is described in the appropriate place of the book (p. 26, 35). Thus, phonologically it behaves as a resonant. This interpretation was correctly adopted by Prof. Mathiassen for the Lithuanian /v/ [Lith, 23] and I see no reason for rejecting it for Latvian.

One should pay attention to the inaccurate use of IPA symbols in the section on vowels. Thus, for example, in the chart (p. 28) the mid front vowel is written as /ε/, but further in the text the symbol /e/ often appears in its place, the diphthongs *ie* and *uo* are claimed to be pronounced as [ɪɔ] (p. 32, 33)⁴ and [uɔ] (p. 33), but in concrete cases of transcription only [ie] and [uo] occur. A person wishing to compare the vowel systems of Latvian and Lithuanian probably

encompass many other consonants as well, but /t/ and /d/ alternate with /ʃs/ and /dʒ/, and not with /c/ and /j/.

³ Thus I can not approve of Prof. Mathiassen's following argument in favor of his presentation of these sounds: "...This conception is in conformity with the phonetic reality behind them <i.e. *k, ģ* — A.A.>. One may in this connection remind about the Latvian way of treating the Gorbachovian word *glasnost'* which the Latvians wrote *glasnosk*" (p. 24). Ways of representing the sounds of one language in another language can not be relied upon when describing the phonological system.

⁴ One can not agree with the usage of symbol [ɔ] here, because it denotes a rounded vowel.

would be puzzled by the claim that the Lithuanian vowels "can be shown diagrammatically in a quadrangular system" [Lith, 26], whereas the Latvian ones — "in a triangular system" (p. 28). The reason why different symbols are used to express some correspondent sounds in Prof. Mathiassen's books ([Lith, 26-27], [Latv, 28-29]), cf. /i/ : /i/, /ɔ/ : /o/, /e:/ : /ɛ:/, /ɑ:/ : /a:/⁵ for Lithuanian and Latvian respectively is also obscure. Traditional and obsolete treatment of Latvian diphthongs is accepted in the book, when they are all claimed to be "unitary phonemes" (p. 33). This view was reasonably criticised in [Bendiks, 1972].

Much attention in the chapter on phonology is paid to orthographic representation of the sounds. A separate large section is devoted to the distribution of closed and open *e* / *æ* (p. 29-31). One would like appropriate different symbols to be introduced here and the distinction to be drawn explicitly throughout the book, as it has been done in many manuals of Latvian. This technique would be a great advantage for students suffering from this annoying inconsistency of the Modern Latvian orthography (as well as from the non-differentiation of *uo* : *ō* : *o*). As every serious description of phonology, this chapter contains detailed information on sound alternations characteristic of the Latvian language and many morphological processes. One should notice that the alternation *f* : *ff* (p. 24) is actually rejected by normativists in Latvia, but accepted by the emigré authorities (cf. *žirafe*, *-fu* in [LVPPV, 1995] but *žirafe*, *-ffu* in [LVV, 1993]). An alternation *st* : *š* is not mentioned among the others (p. 25), but an example of it (*sacikste*, *-šu*) appears on p. 47 without any special comment. An inconsistency can be found in the description of vocalisation: according to the formulated rule it takes place only when /j/ or /v/ appear in tautosyllabic position after short vowel, but cases with long vowels also occur among the examples: *tæ̃vs* [tæ̃:us], *guovs* [guous] (p. 35). The distinction of different degrees of vocalisation seems more adequate here [Laua, 1997, 81-82].

One of the advantages of the book is the historical remarks (e.g., on the history of graphemes *r*, *ch*) and diachronic commentaries as well as some relevant facts from dialects included in the description. However, in the discussion of sound changes in word-final position synchronic and diachronic approaches are not separated properly. Thus, it is stated here that, first, "voiced end-consonants preserve

⁵ In the last case the distinction (if any) should have been the opposite, as far as the corresponding Latvian sound is more back than the Lithuanian one.

the feature [+voiced]" and, second, "short vowels undergo syncope in end-syllables, while long ones are shortened in the same environment" (p. 35). The second statement, being very important from the point of view of history of Latvian, looks strange in the synchronic presentation of its phonological system.

The last section in the chapter is devoted to suprasegmentals (stress, quantity and tone). As it was already pointed out in [Andronov, 1997a, 130], the treatment of quantity as a prosodeme needs some further justification. Prof. Mathiassen concentrates in this respect on the fact that "vowel quantity can have distinctive function in Latvian" (p. 37). Prosodic features, however, characterise the syllable, not the phoneme, and that is why the opposition of the long and short vowels is not enough for the introduction of *prosodic* feature of quantity. Only the relevant distinction of long and short syllables explains the necessity of this feature for the description of Latvian phonology. This distinction is vital when speaking about pitch accent (tone), which in Latvian is realised only on the long, mostly, stressed syllables. In this respect syllables containing a long vowel, diphthong or semi-diphthong are united under the label "long" (p. 39). The problem is that in Modern Standard Latvian the norm of the usage of the pitch accent is still not settled (cf. an attempt to do that in [LVPPV, 1995]). One could not agree, however, with Prof. Mathiassen's claim that "In Contemporary Standard Latvian there are only very few *minimal pairs* with oppositions consisting in tone alone" (p. 39) — cf. several works of R. Grīse devoted to the significance of Latvian pitch accent, most recently [Grīse, 1996-97]. In any case I am not sure if the recommendation that tone "can be more or less ignored by the student" (p. 39) is right. In other respects Prof. Mathiassen's description of pitch accent is very concise and valuable especially due to the brief review of the dialectal material. A special subsection deals with long and short consonants in Latvian (p. 38-39). As this distinction is not phonologically relevant it seems more appropriate to discuss it together with the phonetic realisation of Latvian consonants (p. 23), and not in the section on prosodemes.

Chapters 2-7 are devoted to the morphology of categorematic parts of speech. A short survey of the nominal grammatical

categories is given first. A strict synchronic approach is established in the description of the Latvian case system which is claimed to consist of six cases (or five plus a vocative form). Thus, the existence of an instrumental is denied and some residual traces of it are classified as adverbs (p. 41, 176). Some difficulties, however, can be caused by rare instances of prepositionless use of the instrumental both in singular and plural with one and the same function, cf. *iet lānu gaitu : iet lāniem suoliem* (Prof. D. Nitiņa's example). Still, this can not be an argument in favor of the existence of a separate case form, because not every noun is capable of being used in such a way. It is important to reveal all such cases in order to dot the *i*'s in the problem of the instrumental in Modern Standard Latvian. In the description of the category of gender it is properly stated that masculine is the unmarked member of the opposition; through this fact its usage in the impersonal sentences is explained and contrasted with that of the adverbs: *ir auksts : man ir auksti* (p. 40, 207). The qualification of such nouns as *nejāga* as common gender nouns (p. 40, 216) is problematic inasmuch as masculine and feminine paradigms are not identical here — they differ in Dat.Sg. having *-am* for masculine and *-ai* for feminine (cf. true common gender nouns in Lithuanian *nemokša*, or Russian *невежда* which have identical paradigm irrespective of the morphological gender). As far as the category of number is concerned, proper attention is paid to pluralia tantum words and their high frequency in Latvian (p. 41, 51-52).

The declension of nouns is described by means of the traditional classification into 6 types (with separate comments on the form of the vocative) plus two subtypes for reflexive nouns. Indeclinable nouns are dealt with in a special subsection (p. 50-51). The description of the 6th declension lacks indication on the peculiarity of the word *laudis* which is the only masculine noun here. This fact is not taken into account in the discussion of plural nouns either, which results in the erroneous general conclusion that plural nouns "in *-as, -es* and *-is* follow the feminine declensions, i.e. the 4th, 5th and 6th respectively" (p. 52). Obsolete *u*-stem feminine nouns *dzirnis, pælus, ragus* (to many students they are known only from

grammatical descriptions) are reasonably not mentioned in the 3rd declension but commented on separately as "[having] been replaced by the normalized *dzirnavas*, *pālavas* and *ragavas* respectively" (p. 52).

A brief review of word formation concludes the description of Latvian nouns. Such peculiar phenomena of the Latvian language as the so-called *ģenetīveņi* (*pirmskara*, *viensējuma*) are indirectly mentioned here (and nowhere else in the book): "In some cases... the compound noun occurs in a petrified oblique case... and is used in the function of an (undeclined) adjective (non-congruent attribute...)" (p. 55). It seems that more attention should be paid to this item in the Grammar. The very grammatical status of the *ģenetīveņi* is not clear: in spite of their derivational affinity with nouns, their meaning and usage compels us to treat them as indeclinable adjectives⁶. Word composition is discussed at the end of the section. Although it is rightly pointed out that "German and the Nordic languages make much wider use of compounds" (p. 56) Latvian is characterized by the higher productivity of this strategy of word formation in comparison with Lithuanian or Russian.

The description of the adjectives (Chapter 3) contains comprehensive information on the declension and syntax of the indefinite (short) and definite (long) forms and degrees of comparison, sections on word formation and substantivization. Synchronic formal correspondences between short and long forms are especially commented on (p. 59; according to [Fennell, 1971a]), whereas their usage is a topic for separate discussion. It is pointed out that "the short form adjective does not have vocative function" (p. 58) and the distribution of nominative and accusative form of the definite adjective in the vocative function is described. It is difficult to distinguish by formal markers between qualitative and relational adjectives in Latvian (in contrast to Lithuanian, cf. [Lith, 63]), that is why only general indication is given that "for formal

⁶ Cf. [Fennell, 1980, 519]: "A number of genitives have become invariable adjectives. This is a common enough occurrence in the plural, cf. *latviešu valuoda*, etc., and we have also met cases of the singular, e.g., *māla trauks*, *kuoka galds*. In these examples, the genitive meaning is not entirely lost; in a number of other examples however, it is not possible to speak of anything but invariable adjectives".

and/or semantic reasons comparative forms are not constructed from all types of adjectives" (p. 59).

In Chapter 4 Latvian pronouns are studied. Their classification is rather traditional but for one item. In a similar way to [Lith, 74] a special "anaphoric pronoun of the 3rd person" is singled out: "The anaphoric pronoun refers to and agrees in gender and number with a noun... mentioned in the preceding sentence" (p. 68). For Latvian a homonym of the demonstrative *tas* is regarded as such. It is mentioned, however, that *tas* is used only with reference to non-persons, whereas with persons *viņš* is applied. The theoretical reasons for this introduction of a new pronoun are not clear. Anaphoric function could be merely described in appropriate sections on demonstrative and personal pronouns. Prof. Mathiassen's approach helps, however, to concentrate on this specific topic. In general much attention is paid to the usage of the pronouns (cf. p. 70 on the pronouns *kas* and *kurš* in the relative function).

Chapter 5 deals with numerals. The introductory section contains a list of cardinal and ordinal numerals given in pairs (p. 74-75). For practical reasons it includes also the word *nulle*, although this is not a numeral in the strict sense. A valuable point is the description of the syntax of numerals (p. 76-78) which contains an elaborate comment on such variations as *desmit zānu / zāni, ar daudz naudas / naudu* and other important topics. In the description of fractions such formations as *divarpus — desmitarpus* are not mentioned. On the other hand the less productive model of *pusuotra* is discussed (p. 80). Only three words of this type are normally included in the dictionaries (*pusuotra, pustrēša, pusceturta*), but only *pusuotra* itself is commonly used, the others hardly even being understood by some Latvians.

The Latvian verbal system is analysed in the Chapter 6. After a short general characterisation two large sections follow, dealing with finite and non-finite verb forms.

The survey of the verbal inflection is based on the three main stems, although the possibility of working with two stems only (Infinitive and Present) is not rejected (p. 83). It is important that the 3rd person forms of the Present and Past are declared to be the principal forms of the Latvian verb (apart from the Infinitive) (p.

83), whereas traditionally the 1Sg forms are treated as such. Although Prof. Mathiassen gives no explanation of this choice, it obviously has several advantages. Thus, in the 3rd person form, the difference between the two principal sets of endings is explicit: a) *-u, -ø/-i, -ø, -am, -at*; b) *-u, -i, -a, -ām, -āt* (p. 85; cf. [Andronovs, 1997b, 32] where the terms "the short conjugation" and "the long conjugation", respectively, are suggested), cf. verbs *lakt* and *luocīt*, having homonymous 1Sg forms (*luoku*) but different 3rd person forms (*luok* and *luoka* respectively). Consequently, the 3rd person form always differentiates Present and Past, whereas in the 1Sg homonymy is often observed, cf. 3rd p. *aug* : *auga, duomā* : *duomāja*, but *augu* : *augu, duomāju* : *duomāju*. The 3rd person form is also more convenient because it is unmarked and can be formed from every verb, being at the same time the only possible finite form for impersonal verbs. Thus, Prof. Mathiassen's approach seems very reasonable and his book appears to be the first comprehensive description of the Latvian conjugation where it is applied consistently⁷. The author accurately remarks that "a peculiarity of Latvian (as well as Lithuanian) is the lack of formal distinction between the 3rd p. sg. and pl." (p. 81). Practically this is correct (it would be reasonable to reduce the conjugational paradigm patterns by one line by eliminating the 3rd person "plural"), but for a theoretical analysis this peculiarity of the Baltic languages is a difficult question⁸.

The traditional basis for the division of the Latvian verbs into conjugations is the structural interrelation between the main stems. Thus, the three main structural types (or "conjugations") are distinguished: primary verbs (Ist or Short conjugation), secondary verbs (IIInd or Long conjugation) and mixed type verbs (IIIrd or Mixed conjugation) — cf. [Fennell, 1980, XX]. It seems, however,

⁷ Due to its informativeness the 3rd person form appears in some descriptions and lists of Latvian verbs (see [Fennell, 1971b], [Lelis, 1983, 80, 126-134]) and sometimes even in traditional sources (e.g., [MLLVG, 1959, 678-679], [LVPPV, 1995, 18-19]). Still, in most of the descriptions and — most regrettably — in the dictionaries the 1Sg form is being quoted — traditionally but not rationally (so, unfortunately, also in [Fennell, 1980]).

⁸ V. Žulys tried to show for Lithuanian that there exists only one form for the 3rd person, which has no grammatical number [Žulys, 1974, 88-89]. The reason for this explanation is the fact that in certain contexts one can not say which of the two supposed homonymous forms is used (for example, in constructions with impersonal verbs). There could be a question if the same conclusion is relevant for Latvian.

that whatever the classification dealing with verbal stems may be, it appears of little use for the description of the verbal conjugation. The information necessary and sufficient for this task comprises the three main verbal stems and the appropriate paradigm of endings. That is why, having described the two main sets of personal endings (p. 85)⁹, Prof. Mathiassen could probably limit himself to the discussion of their distribution and additional rules for the 2Sg form (p. 107-109). (The same is enough for Lithuanian.) However, as is proper for every comprehensive grammar, both Prof. Mathiassen's books include descriptions of the structural verbal types which for the Latvian language are called conjugations (see [Lith, 109-114], and, with more details, [Latv, 86-107]). The most interesting and complicated matter in this respect is primary verbs.

The author develops his own classification of primary verbs (p. 86-104). A thorough analysis of it, however, would require much space, and would be expected to result in a better classification. In general, I am rather pessimistic about this task, inasmuch as the main stems can and frequently do differ in respect to more than one feature: different distinctive features may be combined and this makes a strict classification impossible, since classes would inevitably intersect¹⁰. That is why any classification is easy to criticise but difficult to improve. On the whole I am not sure that Prof. Mathiassen's classification is better than, say, that of T.G. Fennell (see [Fennell, 1971b], [Fennell, 1980, 906-909]) and would be able to compete with it. The description itself, however, contains several interesting items. I shall limit myself here to some relevant remarks only.

Prof. Mathiassen rightly points out the problem of intervocalic *-j-* in the Present and Past stems (p. 83). He prefers to treat it as an automatic glide appearing to prevent hiatus in the secondary and mixed type verbs (p. 85, 104)¹¹. A more complicated situation is presented by the primary verbs. In this respect Prof. Mathiassen's position is less explicit. One could suppose that *-j-* belongs to the

⁹ One can notice a curious situation: in most standard Latvian grammars there is neither a special section, nor a paragraph containing the description of personal endings, these being merely illustrated by examples of word conjugation (cf. [MLLVG, 1959], [Pauliņš, 1978], [Ceplītis, 1991], etc.).

¹⁰ Cf.: "Since criteria of classification can and do conflict, no determination of what the "right" classification is can be made here or elsewhere" [Zeps, 1981, 390].

¹¹ It is not clear why for the verb *runāt* the Present stem is given as *runā-j-*, but the Past stem as *runā-*, for *audzināt* the Past stem *audzinā-* (p. 84).

root in *mīt – mij – mija*, *līt – līst – lija*¹²; *smiet – smej – smeja*. It should obviously be treated as a suffix in *skūt – skuj – skuva*; *kraut – krauj – krāva*. It cannot be regarded either as an automatic glide inserted to prevent hiatus or as part of the root, because both solutions would make us expect the same *-j-* to appear in the Past stem, which is not the case. An ambiguity is caused by the case of *jāt – jāj – jāja*, where *-j-* can be treated as a glide either in both cases (which Prof. Mathiassen prefers (p. 88)), or only in the Past stem, being a suffix in the Present (which I would prefer). Indeed, all primary verbs are opposed to the secondary ones by the fact that postvocalic *-j-* does not disappear before zero ending in 2Sg and 3rd person Present forms. Therefore one could probably suggest the explanation that *-j-* in the Present stems of all types of primary verbs (if it does not belong to the root) should be treated as stem suffix, which, being a morpheme, is more stable than a pure phonetic glide.

Prof. Mathiassen operates with 6 subclasses of primary verbs (p. 87-88). The author tries to take into account only formal surface differences between the stems explicit on the synchronic level. This is definitely the right approach for a descriptive grammar. However, it should not disregard some underlying functional similarities relevant for synchronic description as well. Thus, in the classification under consideration, verbs with the so-called *j*-present (formed by explicit or extinct *j*-suffix) are scattered over different subclasses and subgroups: 1A (*jāt – jāj – jāja*), 1C (*braukt – brauc – brauca*), 2Ba (*skart – skar – skāra*), 2Bc (*dzert – dzer – dzēra*), 2Be (*lekt – lēc – lēca*), 2Db (*plēst – plēš – plēsa*), 2Dc (*ciest – cieš – cieta*), 3 (*celt – ceļ – cēla*), 4Aa (*glābt – glābj – glāba*), 4Ab (*jumt – jumj – jūma*), 4Ba (*skūt – skuj – skuva*), 4Bb (*kraut – krauj – krāva*). Most *j*-presents, however, are characterised by consonant alternations in the 2Sg. The exceptions are postvocalic *j*, which does not alternate, *c*, *dz* which do not alternate formally, merging the reflexes of **kj* and **ki*, **gj* and **gi* and *r* which in Modern Standard Latvian is not palatalized to *ŗ*. The rest of the verbs are subject to "morphological depalatalization" (cf. p. 25) in the 2Sg. This common feature is obscured by the presentation separating them into different subclasses¹³.

¹² Note the equivalence of *ī-C* and *ij-V*, — cf. the different situation with secondary verbs where *-j-* is a glide: *cienīt – cienī – cienīja*.

¹³ Prof. Mathiassen explains this division by the fact that in the subclass 4 the suffix *j* is explicit, but elsewhere it is present only "in a diachronic perspective" (p. 98). Its traces, however, are obviously present and relevant in the Modern language.

A similar situation can be observed with the verbs divided into subgroups 2Ab (*tapt – tuop – tapa*), 2Ca (*krist – krīt – krita*) and 2Cb (*zust – zūd – zuda*). On the one hand, all these vowel alternations have the same source — a process of "compensatory vowel lengthening" (due to the loss of infix) already described by the author on p. 32. On the other hand, these verbs behave similarly in respect to the presence or absence of the ending *-i* in the 2Sg (p. 107-108).

The subgroup E ("stems with *-e- / -ē-*") of the subclass 1 ("unchanged stem in all principal forms"¹⁴) is separated on a different basis than the rest of the subgroups, for which the last consonant of the stem is relevant (p. 87). That is why some intersections are possible: thus, the verbs *vest – væd – veda* and *degt – dæg – dega* match the subgroups 1B and 1E, whereas the verb *slēgt – slædz – slēdza* matches the subgroups 1C and 1E. The alternation of /e/ and /æ/ in the verbal conjugation should probably be described by a separate rule which holds true for different verbal subclasses (*cirpt – cærpu, cerpi, cærp – cirpa, lekt – læcu, lec, læc – lēca, cerēt – cæru, ceri, cær – cerēja*) but not by means of classifying verbs into groups. In the case of *nest – nesu /næsu/ – nesu /nesu/* one should not speak about homonymy (p. 91), but about homography, inasmuch as in spite of the common spelling, the pronunciation of these forms is different.

Some minor inaccuracies were found in the description of verbal classes. In the presentation of the subgroup 6A — "verbs with *st-* suffix in the Present tense" and "unchanged stem" (obviously, root) — a separate "small *izsīkt, izsīkst, izsīka* type" (b) is postulated (p. 101). No clear reason for this is given. The same type *sapīkt, sapīkst, sapīka* is found in the subgroup (a). Incorrect forms of the verb *virt* are quoted (p. 89): *viru, viru* (1Sg is quoted, not the 3rd person) — instead of *værd, vira*. Prof. Mathiassen shares this error with [Ceplītis, 1991, 229]. Some mistakes occur in the paradigms of verbal conjugation: 2Sg Present *krīt* (p. 95), *glābj* (p. 99) not *kriti,*

On the other hand, in his description of the system of noun declension the author makes no difference between, say, *gulbis – gulbju* (with explicit *j*) and *briedis – briežu* (with underlying *j*) (p. 45).

¹⁴ Obviously formal identity of the Present and Past stems only is taken into consideration.

glāb, 3rd person Present *vēlās* (p. 107) not *vālas*, Present stem *pleš* (p. 96) for the verb *plēst* – *plēš* – *plēsa* (probably due to the interference with the verb *plest* – *pleš* – *pleta*). No comment is given on the absence of stem final *-j-* in the 2Sg and 3rd person Present forms of the secondary verbs (*mazgāt* – *mazgāju*, *mazgā*, *mazgā* – *mazgāja*) (p. 104). The verbs *malt* – *maļ* – *mala*, *kalt* – *kaļ* – *kala* do not match any type of Prof. Mathiassen's classification: they can not be put in the subclass 3 inasmuch as they have no "contrastive long vowel in the Past tense" (p. 98), cf. *celt* – *ceļ* – *cēla*.

The description of the Future tense distinguishes between vocalic stems and consonantal stems (p. 109). The author notes, however, that "verb stems ending in labials and velars form future tense forms in the same way as vocalic stems" (p. 110). Thus, the relevant difference is that between verbs with roots ending in dental stops or sibilants (they insert the vowel *-ī-* before the Future suffix: *vedīšu*, *nesīšu*) and all other verbs. The explanation of this insertion is somewhat strange — "assimilations and dissimilations which would have led to unclear forms are avoided" (p. 111). In Lithuanian, however, the same assimilations do not result in "unclear forms": *vesiu*, *nešiu*, etc. In the presentation of Future tense endings (p. 109) one would expect a comment on the 2Pl variants *-iet* : *-it*, and on the 3rd person reflexive ending *-ie-s* (cf. the historically natural *-i-s* [Endzelins, 1951, 907]).

A short survey of compound forms concludes the section on the formation of tenses of the Indicative active. The next part contains a concise comment on the aspect category; the problem of the Latvian opposition of the kind *ie-iet* : *iet iekšā* is specially discussed. Similar Finno-Ugric and German constructions are mentioned. The semantics of tense forms is analysed with due attention to aspectual characteristics of the verbs.

The category of mood — especially in its part concerning specific Relative and Debitive moods — is a very interesting matter in Latvian. Prof. Mathiassen's Grammar provides some valuable remarks on this point.

First of all the idea of the Debitive mood should be analysed. This mood was first postulated for Latvian by T.G. Stender in the

second part of the XVIII century and is accepted by the grammatical tradition. The striking objection against it was indicated, however, long ago: the fact that its marker can be combined with the markers of other moods (*ir jālasa, æsuot jālasa, būtu jālasa*) precludes the possibility of including it in the mood paradigm. Prof. Mathiassen introduces another argument against the Debitive mood — the fact that it possesses the same amount of tenses as the Indicative mood, though marked moods are expected to have fewer tenses than the unmarked one (p. 130). Though aware of these arguments, the author follows the existing tradition and describes the Debitive as a mood. This solution is inadequate and the question of the grammatical status of the word combination *būt + jā*-form remains the crucial problem in the description of the Latvian Debitive¹⁵. In the presentation of alternative ways of expressing the debitive meaning (p. 131), among other things, the construction with the verb *nākties* is mentioned, which is rejected by some purists as a loan from Russian. On the other hand, no mention is made of the archaic construction of the type *tev būs Dievu mīlēt*.

Prof. Mathiassen offers a comprehensive description of the Latvian Relative mood, concentrating especially on its functions. Some comments on the use and forms of the Relative mood, however, cause questions (which could be addressed to the other existing grammars of Latvian as well). In the majority of Latvian grammars, the amount of tenses in the Relative mood is limited to Present and Future (both simple and compound), whereas the Past is declared to be lacking, "this gap being filled by the present perfect" [Fennell, 1980, 1086]. In fact, it seems reasonable to agree with V. Bērziņa-Baltiņa, who recognises Past forms of the Relative mood in the Past participles, used without an auxiliary verb in the finite verb position (simple Past *aizgājis*, compound Past *bijis aizgājis*) [Bērziņa-Baltiņa, <1994>, 127]. One could probably object that there is a zero auxiliary (*æsuot*) in the case *viņš aizgājis*. The case is indeed ambiguous, but the negative counterpart which would require an explicit auxiliary (if any) seems to give us the possibility of distinguishing between *viņš nav aizgājis* (Compound Present Indicative), *viņš neæsuot aizgājis* (Compound Present Relative) and *viņš neaizgājis*

15 Cf. the articles specially devoted to this problem: [Marvan, 1967], [Holvoet, 1997a], [Andronovs, 1997c].

(Simple Past Relative)¹⁶. Next, the separate status of an Imperative submood in the Relative claimed for *lai es nākuot* (p. 132) (cf. [MLLVG, 1959, 626]) is dubious. The very traditional 3rd person Imperative (*lai nāk*) is already problematic: is it an analytical Imperative form indeed, or a syntactic combination of a modal particle and a verb in the Indicative?

Some inaccuracies were found in the description of the formation of Imperative. Thus, in the 2Pl form *-iet(ies)* is added not precisely to the 2Sg form (p. 124), but to its stem (*sak-i – sak- – sak-iet*). In the rule on the insertion of an automatic *j*-glide "before the ending *-iet(ies)* when the 2nd sg imperative ends in a vowel" (p. 124) only vowels *-ā, -ē,* and *-o /uo/* are mentioned, but not *-ī* and *-ū*, thus omitting the verbs *cienīt, dabūt,* etc.

One of the advantages of Prof. Mathiassen's presentation of Latvian moods is a thorough study of their functions. In the description of the functions of the Subjunctive (p. 126-129), however, the approach slightly differs from that used in the Grammar of Lithuanian [Lith, 132-134], which complicates the comparison between the two languages.

The Latvian Passive operating with two auxiliaries (with the meaning 'become' and 'be') is properly compared to that of German and Nordic languages and opposed to the Passive in Lithuanian and Slavonic (p. 136). A short passage about reflexive passives in Latvian is introduced here. It is disputable, however, that the verb *glabājas* in *grāmatas glabājas bibliotēkā* should be treated as the head of the Passive construction (p. 142). I see in *glabāt* and *glabāties* different lexemes, rather than the realisation of opposition in Voice. Such correlative pairs are not universal in Latvian and therefore can not be referred to the sphere of grammatical relations.

16 The sentence *Anna nav dāvusies uz Latviju* is quoted by Prof. Mathiassen as an example of a narrative function of the Relative mood (p. 133). I do not see any Relative mood here, as far as the auxiliary verb is used in the Indicative form (*nav*), producing together with the participle the form of a (negated) Compound Present Indicative. In general Prof. Mathiassen seems not to distinguish strictly between the zero-copula and significant absence of copula, cf.: "Where the copulative verb is omitted before a past participle, we are more likely to have a form of the relative mood... rather than the compound past <present? — A.A.> form of the indicative" (p. 198).

The section on non-finite verbal forms (p. 145-158) comprises the infinitive, the gerunds and participles and the verbal noun and correlates nicely with the corresponding pages of the Lithuanian Grammar [Lith, 150-167]. Some inaccuracies, however, were found therein. Thus, according to the table given on p. 147, the Past Passive participle (in *-t-*) is formed from the Past stem, the correct infinitive stem being indicated in the description on p. 155. If a formative suffix *-am / -ām* is quoted for the Present Passive participle, it is not clear why it is separated by a dash (*-ā-m-*) throughout the paradigm of declension (p. 155). As an example of a participle used as an adverb the author gives the word *iznīcinuoši* (p. 158), which is not a participle, but a real adverb, formed from the participle with the suffix *-i*.

In the section on word formation the verbal derivation prefixes are listed and commented on together with the corresponding adverbs (cf. *aiz-(iet)* and *(iet) pruo(jā)m* — p. 160) which makes the description very convenient.

Chapter 6 gives an account of adverbs and relevant information on negation in Latvian. In the classification of adverbs as it is presented on p. 163 (in contrast to [Lith, 175-176]) different criteria are mixed, making it heterogeneous: adverbs of manner, place, time, cause and purpose on the one hand, and interrogative, indefinite and negative adverbs on the other are given on one line. The result is that some adverbs will naturally match two classes: *kur* — of place and interrogative, *nekad* — of time and negative, etc.

The last chapters of the book are devoted to syntactic items. The presentation is systematic and comprehensive, as in the Short Grammar of Lithuanian: case functions, prepositions, conjunctions, sentence types, difficult points of grammatical agreement, word order and other questions are analysed. This part of the book is especially profitable inasmuch as the appropriate information is hard to find in many other grammatical descriptions of Latvian.

Only a few improvements could be suggested here. The usage of the partitive genitive and genitive of negation as it is described by Prof. Mathiassen characterises the situation at the beginning of the XX century, rather than that observed in Modern Latvian where it is reduced considerably and substituted by the accusative. Thus, *ēst*

sēņu (p. 166) and *nuopirkt piena* (p. 172) nowadays are much more probable to sound *ēst sēnes, nuopirkt pienu*¹⁷. The strong tendency to use the accusative instead of the genitive with the negated object of a transitive verb is pointed out on p. 171 (*nelasīt avīzes* rather than *nelasīt avīžu*). There is also a tendency to replace the genitive of the negated (logical) subject by the nominative: *tāva nav mājas* (p. 172) in colloquial speech will appear as *tāvs nav mājas*. This usage is not approved of in the prescriptive grammars and is not mentioned by Prof. Mathiassen.

The situation with the adverbial genitive in Latvian does not become clear from the description (p. 172). In favour of the claim that in such examples as *ik (pār)dienas, ik reizes, ik (pār)naktis* "the endings *-as / -es / -is* are (at least in a diachronic perspective) most probably to be analysed as genitive singular forms, and not as accusatives plural (irrespective of cases like *ik gadus...*)" (p. 173) not a single reason is put forward¹⁸. The use of the genitive of time after *ik* seems to be obsolete in the Modern language (cf. [ME-I, 702-704], [Endzelīns, 1951, 566-567]). Only one relevant example of it can be quoted from the article on *ik* in the [LLVV-3, 1975, 445]: *Bet tās skātienušs viņš sajūt ik acumirkļa* (Upīts), whereas in the majority of occurrences the accusative (Sg. or Pl.) appears.

The difference between the adverbial accusative of time and that of measure seems artificial and does not become clear from the respective examples: *viņi bija divus gadus Rīgā* and *mēs jau gājām divas stundas* (p. 175).

Some kind of ambiguity is present in the description of one-part sentences. It is stated in the introductory remarks on the principal member (*galvānais luoceklis*) that "although (often) identical in form with either the subject or the predicate, it can not be functionally identified with either of these" (p. 197). Several formulations on the immediately following pages are, however, at variance with this reasonable definition, cf.: "The predicate may be of two kinds: verbal or nominal. This holds true both for two-part and one-part

¹⁷ Cf.: "The partitive genitive of Lesson 208 is a bit like the giraffe — there ain't no such animal. The attestations cited by F & G must have been culled from the 19th-century belles lettres. I simply cannot see Mr. Gelsen saying: "Dodiet man siera!" (p. 981) 'Give me of cheese!' like the French do" [Zeps, 1981, 391].

¹⁸ The example *ik (pār)naktis* simply can not be explained as Gen.Sg., which should have been **ik (pār)nakts*.

sentences" (p. 198); "...in one-part sentences... the principal sentence member may (often) be identified as a predicate" (p. 199); "...complete sentences can consist only of a subject and a predicate in two-part sentences... and in one-part sentences of a predicate alone" (p. 199).

The review of simple sentence structure is based on the "basic sentence patterns" presented in a table on p. 204. Though it looks all right, it does not allow comparison with that presenting the Lithuanian basic sentence patterns in [Lith, 217]. The reason for such a cardinal change of the approach to classification is difficult to explain. In any case it is obviously not due to a relevant difference in the structure of the two languages.

The book is supplied with an extensive list of reference literature (articles and monographs on various items, authoritative dictionaries¹⁹, the most important periodicals) (p. 228-230) which encourages those interested to further and more serious and detailed study of Latvian. Somewhat confusing, however, is the indication of a never existing Russian edition in 1989 of M. Rudzīte's book "Latviešu dialektoloģija" (p. 228). A detailed index of grammatical topics and Latvian words ends the book making it attractive for the reader (p. 231-236).

The description of Latvian grammar is, in general, less developed nowadays than that of Lithuanian. Every author willing to create a comprehensive modern grammar of Latvian faces various difficulties connected with the lack of thorough descriptions (both theoretical and experimental studies) and inertness of the existing tradition on the one hand, and unresolved problems of the relatively young literary language of the Latvians on the other. That is why Prof. Mathiassen's book, containing many original solutions and interpretations, is highly valuable. The very idea of a grammar of Latvian of this size in English is noteworthy and I hope that the present review could help to improve the book and would lead to a revised edition which is vitally necessary²⁰.

¹⁹ One would expect the latest and the most extensive orthographic and orthoepic dictionary of Standard Latvian [LVPPV, 1995] to be mentioned here also.

²⁰ I am greatly indebted to Prof. Alfred Majewicz and Prof. Axel Holvoet for their kind advise on my English.

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