Grammatical Functions of Verbs in Child Language

Abstract

The article explores the division of grammatical functions of verbs that, according to the author, is the most suitable for the general Latvian language system and illustrates this division with practical examples of language use. Respectively, all verbs are divided into two groups according to their grammatical functions – independent verbs and auxiliary verbs. All groups of verbs used with an auxiliary meaning are explored – auxiliary verbs, copulas and modal verbs. This division of verbs is based on the grammaticalization of the verbs, since, formerly, verbs, now used in auxiliary sense, were used in a substantive meaning and only gradually acquired their auxiliary meaning.

The use of auxiliary verbs is a significant indicator of a grammatical system development of a language, therefore it also attracts the attention of child language researchers, as it allows exploring in what order and in what ways children acquire the corresponding meanings and functions of verbs. The aim of this study is to, within limitations, explore the grammatical functions of verbs used in child language and the order of their acquisition, to analyze peculiar constructions that are formed with auxiliary verbs, as well as to detect problems that should be prevented prior to further research. One of the main problems is the limited child language material available for this study. In order to objectively judge about the ways the grammatical system develops in child language, one should first conduct full research on language of several children, as this is the only way to observe the order and ways in which certain forms and constructions emerge in child language.

Child language has the same division of grammatical functions of verbs as general language. By studying the acquisition sequence of various grammatical functions in child language, it may be concluded that independent verbs are the first to appear in child language. Children start using auxiliary verbs later – initially they use the verbs with an auxiliary meaning that are the most common in the language of their parents and in the most common constructions. The order of their appearance is as follows: copula būt (to be), modifiers gribēt, varēt (want, can), auxiliary verb būt (to be) (initially present perfect forms of the indicative mood, the rest of the forms emerge significantly later). Constructions with auxiliary verbs that are not characteristic to general language are also common in child language. Such constructions are formed at the beginning stages of auxiliary verb application, before the grammatical function system of verbs is fully understood.

Key words: auxiliary verb, copula, modal verb, child language.

Introduction

It is largely believed that in the process of word acquisition children first start using nouns and only then verbs. The commonly held belief is that learning of verbs is difficult. (See for example Maguire, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff 2006, 364–365.) However certain processes in child language are just as meaningful as objects, therefore words signifying a process may appear in a child's language quite early, soon after the first nouns. Initially it is difficult to distinguish between a word being used with the significance of a noun or a verb. Yet it is safe to say that the first verbs that signify an activity are used in their independent meaning and these are the most commonly used verbs in a child's language environment. As a child's language develops, there gradually begin to appear different forms of verbs.

The peculiarities most clearly detected in research on verbs in child language are just these unusual forms of verbs or a peculiar way of making the forms (for example, the paradigm *būt* (to be): *iru* 'esmu', *iri* 'esi', *iram* 'esam', *irat* 'esat', Freidenfelds *et al.* 32; *pasakt* 'pasacīt', *es sakšu* 'pasacīšu', Freidenfelds *et al.* 70), just like formation of words – new lexical and morphological formations (*jūroties* 'peldēties', Freidenfelds *et al.* 34; *karsināt* 'karsēt', Freidenfelds *et al.* 36; *mūma* 'govs', Freidenfelds *et al.* 52), semantic changes (*Dzenis izgrauza* 'izkala' *caurumu*, Freidenfelds *et al.* 32) and phonetic changes (*gibēt*, *glibēt* 'gribēt', Freidenfelds *et al.* 29; *nebās* 'negribas', Freidenfelds *et al.* 54; *tadījās* 'gadījās', Freidenfelds *et al.* 76). Yet all of these are traits characteristic to the language of children in general and they largely concern all the other parts of speech.

This time the grammatical functions of verbs, and of auxiliary verbs in particular, will be explored closer. Due to the limited number of language materials these peculiarities are somewhat more difficult to distinguish, yet they should be considered and are even more significant from the point of view of language system acquisition.

Aim of the study

Child language in Latvian linguistics has little been studied in this aspect, yet it may provide new insights into the development of a child's language and thinking, as well as provide a significant understanding of the development of grammar as such. The course of the study sketches issues that are encountered in studies of this kind and which for now are of significance to Latvian linguistics. Respectively, the aim of the study is to, within limits of the study, explore the grammatical functions of verbs encountered in child language as well as the sequence of their appearance by analyzing peculiar constructions of auxiliary verbs and to detect issues to be solved prior to further research.

Materials and methods

The article explores theoretical literature on grammatical functions of verbs, and it lists and analyzes language examples. Two types of practical language material are used: 1) adult language examples (taken from the Balanced contemporary Latvian language text corpus "miljons-2.0"), see www.korpuss.lv; examples in the text are marked with an abbreviation "K") for detection of grammatical functions of verbs in general language; 2) child language examples (sources: I. J. Freidenfelds, D. Lapāne, D. Markus "Bērnvalodas vārdnīca" ("The Dictionary for Child Language")(2009); RTTEMA Child Language Research Centre children's language database "Jēdzienu interpretācija bērnu zīmējumos" ("Interpretation of Concepts in Children's Drawings"); D. Markus "Bērnvaloda: no pirmā kliegšana līdz pasakai" ("Child Language: From the First Cry to a Story")(2003); D. Markus "Bērns runā kultūras pasaulē" ("A Child Speaks in the World of Culture")(2005); V. Rūķe-Draviņa "Latviešu meitene apgūst savu pirmo valodu" ("A Latvian Girl Learns Her First Language") (1993), as well as several observations of the author, self-detected examples). In line with the aims of the study theoretical notions in literature are analyzed, language examples are excerpted and analyzed.

Results and conclusions

In order to tackle grammatical functions of verbs in child language, they must first be explored in general language.

According to the syntactical functions, verbs can be divided into independent verbs (*dziedāt, redzēt, snigt* (to sing, to see, to snow) etc.) and verbs with an auxiliary meaning, i.e., auxiliary verbs (*būt, tikt, tapt* (to be, to get, to become)), copulas (*būt, tikt, tapt, kļūt, šķist* (to be, to get, to, come to be, to seem) etc.) and modal verbs (*varēt, vajadzēt, gribēt, beigti, laimēties* (can, need, want, stop, get lucky) etc.). Auxiliary words traditionally are those verbs, which are used for the making of analytical forms of independent verbs, yet all copula function verbs and modal verbs also have the auxiliary meaning.

Independent verbs in the finite form when alone in a sentence function as predicates (*birds **sing***), but auxiliary verbs form the predicate together with an independent word – auxiliary verbs with an independent verb in a participle form (*Putni **bija dziedājuši** visu vasaru* (The birds **had sung** all summer)), copulas with a nominal or adverb (*Vasara **būs karsta**; Dziedāt **ir spēcinoši*** (the summer **will be hot; singing is empowering**)), modifiers with an independent verb infinitive (*Es arī **gribu dziedāt*** (I, too, **want** to sing)). In order for the nominal part of the predicate – the nominal, the pronoun, the conjugated participle –, as well as the infinitive and the adverb to function as a predicate, it is needed to have an element that creates the grammatical meanings characteristic to the predicate (respectively, to the independent verb) – person, time, expression and voice. Thus there are independent

verbs, which initially performed the predicate function by themselves, yet in such predicate constructions, through partial desemanticization now become the unifying element – acquire an auxiliary meaning and express the majority of grammatical meanings of a predicate, by leaving the expression of lexical meaning largely to the remaining part of the predicate.

Such a division of verbs is based on the grammaticalization process of verbs, respectively, gradual transition of lexical units into grammatical ones, with disappearing or simplification of the semantics, syntactic autonomy, morphological structure, phonetic contents of the linguistic element. For example, through grammaticalization the syntactic construction may become a word form, a lexical unit may become an auxiliary word, and an auxiliary word may become an affix (Trask 2000, 141; Kalnača 2005, 125; VPSV 2007, 133). The above-mentioned separate groups of words are verbs that exist in various levels of grammaticalization, besides a single verb may often exist on various different levels.

Thus **an auxiliary word or an auxiliary verb** is “a verb that together with a participle form of an independent verb is used for the creation of an analytical form of a verb time, type, expression or voice” (VPSV 2007, 274). Auxiliary verbs have developed through grammaticalization: *independent verb* > *auxiliary verb*. In Latvian language auxiliary verbs are *būt, tikt, tapt* (to be, to get, to become). For example: *Pasaule sākas no tās vietas, kur esi dzimis.* (The world begins in the place where you **are** born.) (K¹) *Tasks meant for children, of course, will not get forgotten.* (Protams, **netikšot** aizmirsti arī bērniem domāti darbi.) (K) *Tas viss arī noved pie tā, ka pārlieku lielas ļaužu masas karjera krīzes laikā top nevis nobremzēta, nevis pārinstrumentēta, bet pilnīgi degradēta.* (All this lead to an outcome that careers of too many people during the crisis **become** not slower, not restructured, but totally degraded.) (K)

A copula is a “verb that performs a syntactic auxiliary function in a compound predicate and expresses its grammatical meanings – time, person, modality” (VPSV 2007, 334). It is a verb with a weak independent lexical meaning, the main task of which is to link together other elements of sentence structure. Copulas have developed through grammaticalization: *independent verb* > *copula* (indirectly in Milenbahs 1898, 27; Bergmane *et al.* 1962, 235; Beitiņa 1964, 8; Valdmanis 1989, 34). In traditional Latvian linguistics copulas are considered to be verbs *būt, tikt, tapt, kļūt* (to be, to get, to turn, to become): *Esmu lībietis, runāju lībiski, bet mans bērns ir latvietis.* (I **am** a Liv, I speak the Liv language, but my child **is** Latvian) (K) *Bet, ja arī visas, kas gribēja, netika aktrises, tad tomēr netika arī tik klaji publiski izrādīts, ka darba piramīdas pamatā dubļi vien.* (Although everyone, who had wanted to, **did not turn** into an actress, it was not publically shown that there is only mud at the foot of the work pyramid) (K) *Apmēram desmit gadus es mācījos, kamēr man tapa skaidrs, kas Jāņos ir jādara.* (I have been studying for about ten years, until it **became** clear to me what needs to be done at Jāņi) (K) *Pļāvums noteikti jāsavāc, citādi mauriņš izsutīs, kļūs*

1 “K” indicates examples taken from the Balanced contemporary Latvian language text corpus “miljons-2.0”, www.korpuss.lv.

brūngans un sāks pelēt. (The mowing should definitely be collected, or else the lawn will foment, **become** brown and start to grow moldy. (K)

However other verbs are also frequently being used as copulas (in Latvian linguistics these are traditionally called copula verbs²). These have three meanings:

1) The meaning of having a certain characteristic or trait (*būt – gadīties, atgadīties, sagadīties, justies, sajusties, klāties, iznākt, nākties, izrādīties, turēties, noturēties, pieturēties, palikt, izdoties, padoties, stāvēt* etc. (to be – to happen, to occur, to coincide, to feel, to experience, to get on, to be off, to appear, to manage, to keep, to endure, to hold on to, to stay, to succeed, to give up, to stand etc.): *Un pat tad, ja abi **esat gadījušies** tādi mierīgi un nosvērti, .. sirds nav brīva.* (And even if both of you **happen to be** so calm and balanced, .. the heart is not free.) (K) *Bez veiksmes vienmēr **klājas** grūti.* (Without luck it is always difficult **to get on**) (K) *Auns gan **esot padevies** nīkulīgs, bet melngalvju šķirne pati par sevi ir laba.* (The ram **has managed** to be puny, but the Blackhead breed itself is good) (K) *Malkas šķūnis **stāv** tukšs.* (The wood shed **stays** empty) (K) *Filiāļu funkciju un uzdevumu apjoms **paliks** nemainīgs.* (The volume of functions and tasks of the branches will **remain** the same.) (K)

2) The meaning of a change in the situation or of a trait (*kļūt, tikt, tapt* (to become, to get, to grow) – *mesties, apmesties, atmesties, samesties, nākt, vērsties, izvērsties, palikt* (rush, to settle, to fling, to turn out, to come, to move on, to develop, to remain): (Both games **turned out** nearly similar) (K) *Cep aptuveni 6-8 minūtes, kamēr malas **paliek** brūnas.* (Bake it for approximately 6-8 minutes until the edges **turn** brown (K)

3) The meaning of an appearance (*šķīst, šķīsties, likties, izlikties, izskatīties, skaitīties, sacīties* (to appear, to seem, to look to be, to pretend, to look, to count, to claim)): *Tas, kas reiz **šķīta** tāls, pēkšņi ir tuvs.* (That, which once **seemed** distant, all of a sudden is close.) (K) *Ugunskura gaismā gaiši zilā krāsa **liksies** zaļa, baltā – dzeltena un violetā – brūna.* (In the light of the campfire the light blue color **will appear** green, the white will appear yellow and the violet – brown) (K) *Pašlaik, ziedēšanas laikā, astilbju dobe **izskatās** patiešām krāšņa.* (Now during the bloom time the bed of astilbes **looks** really gorgeous) (K) *Man vēl jānoskaidro, kā īsti jāpiebūvē otra ēka, lai tā **skaitītos** atsevišķa būve.* (I still need to find out how to build an outbuilding for it to **count** as a separate construction) (K) (Kārklīš 1974, 44–49; Freimane 1985, 56).

2 By observing the distinction between copulas and copula verbs, the grammaticalization process should be depicted as follows: *independent verb* > *copula verb* > *copula*, respectively, copulas have almost fully desemanticized, while copula verbs have only partly semanticized. They have a lexical meaning, which is more pronounced than that of the copulas, and they are also used as independent verbs more frequently than copulas (except for *to be*). Therefore copulas only link together the structural elements of a sentence, while copula verbs also give the predicate a significant nuance of meaning. The verb *to be* has grammaticalized in just the same way: *būt* 'augt, kuplot, elpot, mist, stāvēt' etc. (*viņš bija* 'viņš auga') > *būt* 'augt' etc. (*viņš bija liels* 'viņš auga, kļuva liels') > *būt* 'būt' (*viņš bija liels*) (*to be*, to grow, to thicken, to dwell, to stand etc.) (*he was* 'he grew') > *to be* 'to grow etc.' (*he was big* 'he grew, became big') > to be 'to be' (*he was big*) (Milenbahs 1898, 25–28; Ambrazas 2006, 155–156). Yet the level of desemantization of verbs used in a copula function is difficult to determine, therefore the distinction between copulas and copula verbs is not considered to be objective.

Modifiers (previously also called semantic modifiers – Freimane 1985, 32–35; Paegle 2003, 91) are auxiliary verbs that together with the infinitive form the predicate or the principal part, by granting it a modal, phasal or coincidental significance (for example, respectively *Mēs **gribam** strādāt*; *Mēs **sākam** strādāt*; *Mums **izdevās** pastrādāt* (We **want** to work; We **start** to work; We **managed** to work)). (VPSV 2007, 237) Modifiers have emerged through grammaticalization: *independent verb > modifier*. By partly being desemanticized, modifiers grant a semantic nuance to an independent verb. By forming the predicate or the principle part (or other constructions), modifiers make the independent verb change formally, yet the initial grammatical meanings in the construction are not lost – they are transferred from the independent verb to the auxiliary verb. Similarly to other auxiliary verbs, modifiers express the grammatical meanings of a construction, yet the auxiliary meaning of modifiers can be characterized not only as grammatical but also as semantic. Modifiers with the meaning of a **phase** name actions indicated with the infinitive.

1) the beginning (*mesties, ņemties, sākt, atsākt, iesākt* etc. (to rush, to dash, to begin, to resume, to start etc.)): *Nonākot citā valstī un kultūrā, tu **meties** baudīt visu, ko ceļojums piedāvā.* (By going to a different country and culture you **rush** to enjoy everything this trip has to offer.) (K) *Tāču tad pamazām tirgū **sāka** parādīties baravikas, gailenes, bērzlapas.* (Then little by little penny buns, chanterelles and russulas **began** to be sold in the market.) (K) *Vai tā kādreiz **atsāks** pukstēt?* (Will it **resume** beating again?) (K);

2) sequel, continuation (*nebeigt, palikt, turpināt* (to pursue, to remain, to continue) (etc.): *Esmu pārliecināts, ka dzīve **nebeigs** mani pārsteigt arī turpmāk.* (I am sure that life will **continue** to surprise me in the future.) (K) *Ja iedzīvotāji **paliek** dzīvod denacionalizētajā namā, jāērķinās, ka īres griesti var strauji kāpt.* (If citizens **remain** living in the denationalized building, they need to take account of the possibility of an increase in the rent ceiling.) (K) *Vēl apmēram pusstundu **turpinām** vārīt uz lēnas uguns* (For about half an hour we **continue** to cook it on low heat) (K);

3) the end (*beigt, mitēties, pārstāt, rīties* (to stop, to discontinue, to put an end to, settle) etc.): *Pērn puķu audzētāji **beidza** maksāt aizņēmumu un paņēma jaunu.* (Last year flower growers **settled** their debt and took out a new loan) (K) *Kad bērni **pārstāj** fantazēt?* (When do children **stop** dreaming?) (K).

The general groups of **modal** verbs: _

1) Verbs that express a skill, a custom, an ability, a chance or – in the form of denial – the opposite to that (*driestēt, ierast, jaudāt, mācēt, mēgt, pagūt, prast, spēt, varēt*) (may, to be able, can, use to, manage, know etc.): *Ļoti daudzi no mums **ieraduši** nomainīt realitāti pret savām domām, iedomām un apsvērumiem.* (Many of us are **used to** changing the reality into own thoughts, fantasies and considerations) (K) *Atceros, kā bērnībā **mēdzu** blēdīties, spēlējot aklās vistiņas.* (When I was a child, I remember, how I **used to cheat** while playing the blind man's buff.) (K) *Lai cilvēks*

spētu kaut ko radīt, viņam **ir jāamāk** ieklausīties klusumā un ieiet savā iekšējā telpā. (In order for a person to **be able** to show something, he or she must **know** how to listen into the silence and how to enter own inner space.) (K)

2) Verbs that express intention, will, desire, preparation (*apņemties, censties, gatavoties, grasīties, gribēt, gribēties, mēģināt, tīkot, uzdrošināties, vēlēties* u. c.) (to undertake, to intend, to, to try, to prepare, want, to covet, to dare, to wish etc.): Cilvēki paši **apņēmās** kopt apkārtni. (People themselves **undertook** to take care of the surroundings.) (K) **Centāties** nokļūt uz pareizā ceļa, bet pēc vairāku stundu braukšanas atkal iestigām. (We **tried** to get on the right track, but we got stuck again after driving around for several hours.) (K) Viņa **grib** noskaidrot īstenības teoriju, kas atrodas starp faktiem un dzīvajām atmiņām. (She **wants** to clarify the theory of reality, which exists in between facts and live memories.) (K)

3) Verbs that express reluctance, aversion, hesitation, avoidance (*baidīties, derties, kaunēties, kautrēties, kavēties, riebties, vairīties, vilcināties* etc.) (To dread, to detest, to scruple, to recoil, to avoid, to linger): Parasti pircēji **baidās** šos produktus pirkt, jo nezina, kā tos pagatavot. (Customers are usually **afraid** to buy these products, because they do not know how to prepare them.) (K) Viens no vīriešiem atzinies, ka sabiedrībā **kautrējas** nosaukt savu nodarbošanos. (One of the men admitted that he was **ashamed** to publically state his occupation) (K) **Riebjas** lasīt mūžīgo "kurš" vienkāršā "kas" vietā, adverbu verba vietā, bezgalīgos prievārdus un to lietojumu nevietā. (I **hate** reading "which" instead of the simple "that", an adverb instead of a verb and the continuous prepositions being misapplied.) (K)

4) Verbs that express inevitability, necessity (*pieklāties, nākties, vajadzēt* etc.) (to behoove, to require, to demand): Man pat **nācās** pielaiķot bārdu un kļūt par Ziemassvētku vecīti. (I even **had to** wear a beard and become Santa Claus) (K) Ja nebūtu makulatūras, **vajadzētu** nocirst 7579 kokus, lai saražotu atbilstošu papīra daudzumu, lēš akcijas rīkotāji. (According to the organizers of the event, if there was no waste paper, we would **need to** cut down 7579 trees in order to produce the needed amount of paper.) (K)

All verbs conveying coincidence have the **manifestation kind** of significance (*gadīties, izdoties, laimēties, trāpīties*) (to happen, to succeed, to get lucky, to coincide etc.): Domāju, nu labi, mūsu paaudzei **gadījās** piedzimt tādos laikos. (I thought, never mind, our generation **happened** to be born in times like these.) (K) Kāpēc latviešiem **izdodas** vienoties tikai ekstrēmās apstākļos? (Why do Latvians **succeed** to unite only during difficult times?) (K) Man **laimējās** būt īstajā vietā un īstajā laikā. (I **was lucky** to be at the right place at the right time.) (K) (Kārklīšs 1976, 64–67; Freimane 1985, 32–35).

An equivalent division of grammatical functions of verbs exists in child language, especially when exploring child language without any age limitations. The **auxiliary verb** *to be* is used in the compound past and present forms of verbs, for instance:

*Laime ir tas, kas, ja, piemēram, tu **esi** saņēmis dāvanu vai izlūdzies balonu vecākiem.* (Happiness is when, for example, you **have** received a gift or have begged for a balloon from your parents.) – An 8-year-old; “Jēdzieni”, ID 65

*Sarkangalvīte ar omi devās uz mājām pie mammas, jo ome **bija** kļuvusi vesela un jaudāja iet Sarkangalvītei līdzi. No tā laika vilku Sarkangalvīte vairs **nebija** satikusi.* (Red Riding Hood and grandmother went home to her mother, as the grandmother **had become** fit again and was able to come along with Red Riding Hood. Since that time Red Riding Hood **had not** met the wolf anymore.) – A 6-year-old; Markus 2003, 106.

Copulas are also common, predominantly the copula *būt* (to be), and at times other copulas, such as *kļūt* (to become):

*Laime **ir** ģimene.* (Happiness **is** family.) – A 7-year-old; “Jēdzieni”, ID 68

*Citu reizi, kad es nāku, man nav bailes, bet šoreiz ap sirdi **kļūst** nelabāk.* (At other times, when I come, I am not scared, but this time my heart **becomes** weak) – A 5-year-old; Markus 2003, 105

The most commonly used **modifiers** in the explored language material are *can* and *want*, and also *may*:

*Darbs ir tāda lieta, kur **var** nopelnīt naudu.* (Work is something, where you **can** earn money) – A 7-year-old; “Jēdzieni”, ID 114

*Sarkangalvīte izcepa pīrāgus, maizes, salika grozā un ... **nevarēja** panest.* (Red Riding Hood baked pies and buns, put them in a basket and... **could not** carry them) – A 3-year-old; (Markus 2003, 85).

*Es labāk zīmēšu, es **negribu** stāstīt.* (I will draw, I **do not want** to talk) – A 4-year-old; Markus 2003, 89

*Kad bites vāc medu, **nedrīkst** traucēt.* (When bees collect honey, you **may not** bother them.) 5/6 g., (Markus 2007, 121).

The very first verbs that enter a child's language with the meaning of a verb are independent verbs, yet soon after, as sentence constructions are being formed, there also emerge auxiliary verbs (***gribu** dzert, tas **ir** suns* (I **want** to drink, that **is** a dog)). Yet, according to the available language material, initially the diversity of used constructions is limited, just like the number of auxiliary verbs – the most commonly encountered auxiliary verbs are applied (or to be more precise, the verbs most common in the language of parents, grandparents and nannies) in the most common constructions: the copula *būt* (to be), later also *kļūt* (to become), modifiers *gribēt, varēt, drīkstēt* (want, can, may) and later on the auxiliary verb *būt* (to be). Compound tense forms appear later, as it is possible to express approximately the same thing with more simple forms, thus in a more simple way. In constructions with modifiers the auxiliary meaning seems initially not to be felt, for instance: *gribu dzert* (I want to drink) and *gribu sulu* (I want juice). In this period of time other meanings that in adult language are expressed with constructions of auxiliary verbs, in child language are expressed with more simple constructions.

Essentially that coincides with the view expressed in literature that in child language in general there may initially emerge immature constructions and, only as speech develops, these transfer into mature constructions characteristic to adult language, although that cannot be attributed to all language constructions. Emergence of so-called “non-grammatical” forms in separate constructions prior to adult language forms show that children learn and explore regularities rather than simply acquire expressions. The frequency of these constructions in adult speech must also be taken into account, as it has significant impact upon the emergence of such constructions in child language (Brown and Hanlon 2004).

Here we need to mention the study conducted by Roger Brown that explores the sequence of certain morphological forms and elements of construction in the speech of three English-speaking children. For instance, plural forms, regularly form simple past, irregular simple past, articles etc., including also the copula – both the full and the shortened copula, respectively, the clitical and the full and the shortened auxiliary word. This study acknowledges that out of the auxiliary verbs the first to emerge in child language is the copula, yet that occurs later than some other morphological forms. The other auxiliary verbs emerge significantly earlier, of which first there emerges the full auxiliary word, clitical copula and last to emerge is the clitical auxiliary word (Brown 2004, 275). Modal verbs have unfortunately not been included in this study.

Due to the limited linguistic material available, it is difficult to conclude with certitude concerning the sequence of appearance of usage of auxiliary verbs in the language of Latvian children. However, it can be said that the last ones to appear are auxiliary verbs in perfect tenses. This is also demonstrated by Velta Rūķe-Draviņa language material (*Latviešu meitene apgūst savu pirmo valodu*, 1993 “A Latvian girl learns her first language”, 1993), where present perfect use *ir (is)* is first observed at the age of 2.5. (*tagad ir [at]braucis pastnieks*³ (*the postman has now arrived*) – 2 years and 6 months; *tas lielais [lācītis] melno degunu ir [iz]staigājies* (*that big [bear] with the big nose has been for a walk*) – 2 years and 9 months; *to ir Dainis zīmējis* (*Dainis has drawn this*) – 2 years and 11 months; (Rūķe-Draviņa 1993, 39).

The use of past perfect appears later (*es bi ‘biju’ ēdusi ķīseli* (*I had eaten pudding*) 3 years and 9 months, Rūķe-Draviņa 1993, 40) and future perfect appears even at a later stage ([*kad es pārnākšu pasaki, kādi mani bērni ‘lelles’ būs bijuši* ([when I arrive] *tell me what ‘dolls’ my children would have been*); *vēlāk viņi būs norunājušies ‘izrunājušies’* (later on they will have spoken, ‘talked through’) – 4 years and 2 months; Rūķe-Draviņa 1993, 40). The distinction between separate verbs in indefinite tenses in the speech of the very same girl appears at the age of 2 (Rūķe-Draviņa 1993, 36). However, the forms of relative and conditional moods are to be registered later than the perfect tense forms in indicative mood that is around 3-4 years of age (Rūķe Draviņa 1993, 43).

3 The instances quoted without noting the majority of phonetic peculiarities, since the rest of material does not registrate them in detail.

Judging from other language materials, the most often used copulas and modifiers are already used before auxiliary verbs are.

Except for the verb *būt* (to be), other verbs rarely appear in the function of copula, yet they do so in a separate form. For instance, children-narrated fairy tales about Red Riding Hood in the book by Dace Markus: "Bērna valoda: no pirmā kliegšana līdz pasakai" ("Children's Language: From the First Cry to Story") these verbs are featured in a characteristically changed meaning and a characteristically inherited meaning:

*Meitenīte raudāja, raudāja, bet tad **palika** priecīga.* (The girl cried and cried, but then **became** glad) *Mamma vecmāmiņai nopirka kāmīti, un viņa **palika** priecīga* (Mum bought grandmum a hamster and she **became** glad.) – A 5-year-old; (Markus 2003, 100).

*Sarkangalvīte ar omi devās uz mājām pie mammas, jo ome **bija kļuvusi** vesela un jaudāja iet Sarkangalvītei līdzi.* (Red Riding Hood and grandmother went home to her mother, as the grandmother **had become** fit again and was able to come along with Red Riding Hood.). – A 6-year-old; (Markus 2003, 106).

*Es aiziešu uz vecmāmiņas mājiņu, apēdīšu vecmāmiņu un **izlikšos** par vecmāmiņu.* (I will go to grandmother's house, eat the grandmother and **pretend** to be the grandmother.) – A 7-year-old; (Markus 2003, 112).

More examples of such a usage are to be found narrated among older children:

*Viņas māte palūdza, lai Sarkangalvīte aiziet pie vecāsmammas, jo viņa **jutās** slima un vientuļa.* (Her mother asked Red Riding Hood to go see the grandmother, since she **felt** ill and lonely.) – A 12-year-old; (Markus 2003, 137).

*Kad vilks pamodās, viņš **jutās** ļoti izslāpis.* (When the wolf woke up, it **felt** very thirsty.) – A 12-year-old; (Markus 2003, 138).

*Sarkangalvītei **metās** mazliet bail, bet, lai omu uzjautrinātu, viņa sacerēja dziesmiņu par meitenīti, kurai nebija bail.* (Red Riding Hood **became** a little scared, but to cheer up the grandmother she made up a song about a girl who wasn't scared.) – A 12-year-old; (Markus 2003, 137).

An unusual usage of a verb in the form of a copula with characteristically changed meaning is also common:

*„Kāpēc tev ir tik liels un brūns deguns?” – „Es jau tev teicu, ka man ir tik lielas iesnas, kad es šķaudu, man deguns **izstiepjas** šausmīgi garš!” – „Kāpēc tev ir tik lieli zobi?” – „Es sen neesmu neko ēdusi, un mani zobi **izstiepās** tik gari!”* ("Why do you have such a long and brown nose?" – "I already told you, I have such a runny nose, that when I sneeze, my nose **stretches** terribly long!" – "Why do you have such big teeth?" – "I have not eaten anything and my teeth **stretched** this long.") – A 10-year-old; (Markus 2003, 136).

When it comes to modifiers, the situation is very similar. The most common, as noted earlier, are: *want*, *can* and *may*, but in several cases others are used, too, most often with a meaning of a phase. Yet, modifiers with several other meanings are also to be found:

Un tad Sarkangalvīte **sāka** puķītes lasīt. (And then the Red Riding Hood **began** to pick flowers.) – A 3-year-old; (Markus 2003, 129).

Kad viņi bija izņemti ārā no vēdera, viņi **sāka** atgūties. (When they had been taken out of the belly, they **began** to recover.) – A 7-year-old; (Markus 2003, 112).

„Laikam nāk pavasaris!” teica meitiņa un tad **turpināja** ar vilku iet kopā. (“I think the spring is coming!” said the girl and then **continued** to go along the wolf.) – A 3-year-old; (Markus 2003, 129).

Vilks labdienu nepadeva, bet **metās** aprīt vecmāmiņu. (The wolf did not say hello, but **rushed** to eat the grandmother up.) – A 5-year-old; (Markus 2003, 102–105).

Sarkangalvīte ar omi devās uz mājām pie mammas, jo ome bija kļuvusi vesela un **jaudāja** iet Sarkangalvītei līdzi. (The Red Riding Hood and grandmother went home to her mother, as the grandmother had become fit again and **was able to accompany** the Red Riding Hood.) – A 6-year-old; (Markus 2003, 106).

[..] vilks **nemācēja** peldēt un tāpēc noslīka. ([..] the wolf **could not** swim and therefore drowned.) A 4.5-year-old; (Markus 2003, 133).

Tomēr [Sarkangalvīte] **uzdrošinājās** ienākt iekšā un tad saredzēja vecmāmiņu, gulēdamu krēslā. (Nevertheless, [The Red Riding Hood] **dared to** come in and noticed the grandmother, who was sleeping in the chair.) – An 8-year-old; (Markus 2003, 117).

An example must be mentioned, in which, in comparison to corresponding expressions in other cases of children's narration, in the conditional mood there is no modifier or, possibly, a copula. This example may, too, indicate that auxiliary verbs generally appear in child language much later than simple forms of independent verbs:

„Cik tev liela mute!” – „Lai tevi labāk apēst!” (“You have such a big mouth!” – “To eat you better!”) – A 5-year-old; (Markus 2003, 89).

In comparison to: „Kāpēc tev ir tik lieli zobi?” – „Lai **varētu** apēst!” (Why are your teeth so big?” – “So I **could** eat you!”). – A 4-year-old; (Markus 2003, 96).

Separate attention should be paid to peculiar constructions that emerge in child language and that involve verbs used with an auxiliary meaning. Presumably, particularly in the initial stage of language learning, there are more such constructions, yet only one has come to my attention:

es gribu derēt ‘es gribu, lai der’ (I want to fit ‘I want that it fits’) - 2 years and 3 months

es gribu putru uztaisīt ‘es gribu, lai (tu) uztaisi putru’ (I want to make porridge ‘I want (you) to make porridge’) - 2 years and 7 months

Both examples are observed in the language of the same girl and she actively forms such constructions following this example up to the age of 2 years and 9 months and possibly will continue doing so for a longer period of time. The examples use the modifier construction, without indicating the operator of the named action with the second verb. Thus presumably the broadening of meaning of a modifier construction has taken place in the child's perception.

Child language has the same division of grammatical functions of verbs as general language. Specific study should be devoted to the order in which various grammatical functions enter child language. Although the child language material available for this study was limited, it can be concluded that the first to appear in children's language are independent verbs. Children start using verbs with an auxiliary meaning later, initially children use the verbs with an auxiliary meaning in their most common constructions used in the language of adults (grandparents, nannies, as well as the surrounding language environment in general). They have the following order of appearance: copula *būt* (to be) and modal verbs *gribēt*, *varēt* (want, can) (for now it is not safe to conclude whether it is copula or one of the modal verbs that comes first in this sequence), auxiliary verb *būt* (to be) (first used in indicative past perfect forms, the rest of the forms appear considerably later).

In child language it is also common to find constructions with auxiliary verbs that are not characteristic to general language and that reveal the children's creative approach in acquisition and use of the language. These constructions are created in the initial usage stage of auxiliary verbs – before the grammatical function system of verbs is fully comprehended.

It is **generally concluded** that in order to conduct an objective study, multiple collections of data and separate studies on children's language development would be required, similar to the edition by V. Rūķe-Draviņa „Latviešu meitene apgūst savu pirmo valodu” (“A Latvian Girl Learns Her First Language”). Then more safe and thorough conclusions could be drawn on the grammatical functions of verbs, as the majority of currently free to access language material has been collected differently, serving other research aims and thus does not suit such research on grammatical development.

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Lecturer, researcher Mag. hum. **Baiba Ivulāne**

University of Latvia, Faculty of Humanities, Department of Latvian and General Linguistics

Visvalža iela 4a, Riga, Latvia

Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy, Child Language Research Centre

Imantas 7. līnija 1, Riga, Latvia

Phone: 29398186

E-mail: baiba.ivulane@gmail.com