

The facilitative middle in Baltic and North Slavonic: An overview of its variation

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The article deals with the facilitative middle, a gram often simply referred to (especially in literature of the formal persuasion) as ‘the middle’ (e.g., *The bread cuts easily*). While in the Western European languages this gram is nearly exclusively generic or individual-level (kind-level) and has no explicit agent (these features are correspondingly often regarded as definitional for ‘middles’), the Baltic and Slavonic languages have constructions that arguably belong to the same gram-type but often represent stage-level predications, with a non-generic agent that is optionally expressed by an oblique noun phrase or prepositional phrase, or is contextually retrievable. The article gives an overview of the parameters of variation in the facilitative constructions of a number of Baltic and Slavonic languages (individual- or kind-level and stage-level readings, aspect, transitivity, expression of the agent, presence or absence of adverbial modifiers etc.). The semantics of the different varieties is discussed, as well as their lexical input. Attention is given to the grammaticalisation path and to what made the Balto-Slavonic type of facilitatives so markedly different from their counterparts in Western European languages.

Keywords: middle, facilitative, reflexive, Lithuanian, Latvian, Russian, Slavonic

1. Introduction¹

The term ‘facilitative middle’ is taken over from Kemmer (1993), who has it from Faltz (1977). It is also used in Holvoet, Grzybowska & Rembiałkowska (2015) and Holvoet (2020), but is not otherwise widely used in the literature. In literature of the formal persuasion, which often focuses on English

¹ We thank Peter Arkadiev, Wayles Browne and two anonymous reviewers for insightful and constructive comments. For the remaining shortcomings of the article we are solely responsible. This research has received funding from the European Social Fund (project No. 09.3.3-LMT-K-712-01-0071) under grant agreement with the Research Council of Lithuania (LMTLT).

and the Germanic languages, Romance and Greek (e.g., Condoravdi 1989, Fagan 1992, Steinbach 2002, Ackema & Schoorlemmer 2003, Lekakou 2006, Stroik 2006 etc.) this construction is often simply called ‘middle’, which is an arbitrary narrowing of the meaning this term has in the grammatical terminology of the Classical languages, in that of comparative Indo-European linguistics (Delbrück 1897, 425–432) and in work of the functional-typological orientation such as Kemmer (1993). In its narrowed sense, ‘middle’ refers to English constructions like (1); in its traditional, broader meaning, ‘middle’ can also refer to (2) and (3):²

- (1) *The bread cuts easily.*
- (2) *The door closed.*
- (3) *They washed in the river.*

Also to be noted is that in the narrowed sense in which the term ‘middle’ is used by authors of the formal persuasion, it abstracts away from exponency. What is traditionally called the middle voice is a value of the category of voice, which is usually understood as valency-changing morphology,³ and this would apply to the counterparts of (1)–(3) in German, the Romance languages, Slavonic and Baltic, which use a marker of reflexive origin here, or to Greek, ancient and modern, which uses a special series of endings. The English constructions, on the other hand, have no marking on the verb, so that it is doubtful whether they can be assigned to the domain of grammatical voice. In this article we will sidestep this problem, not only because we will be dealing mainly with Baltic and Slavonic but also because we will be discussing functional types; functionally the English constructions are close to the German or Romance ones with reflexive marking, and together they show important semantic differences when compared to the corresponding reflexive-marked constructions of Baltic and Slavonic. It is these differences we will focus on.

As the term ‘middle’ in its traditional sense refers to a whole family of syntactically and semantically distinct constructions (of which examples

² At least one study in the formal tradition, Alexiadou & Doron (2012), shows a return to the broader meaning of ‘middle’ as a category also comprising natural reflexives, anticausatives etc. As the notion of middle in its traditional sense inherited from Classical and Indo-European grammar has proved to be still viable, it deserves to retain its primacy vis-à-vis the narrowed sense in which it is now often used.

³ Cf. Zuñiga & Kittilä’s (2019, 4) definition of voice as “...a grammatical category whose values correspond to particular diatheses marked on the form of predicates”.

(1)–(3) represent but part), more precise terms are needed to refer to the individual constructions. We use ‘facilitative’ for (1), while constructions as in (2) are now usually called ‘anticausative’, and those like (3) could be termed ‘naturally reflexive’. Constructions as in (1) have also been referred to as ‘potential passive’ (Geniušienė 1987), and alongside this we find the term ‘modal passive’ (used, e.g., in Letučij 2014, 2016), but we regard these terms as not quite felicitous because it is, on the one hand, important to emphasise that our construction is (despite certain similarities) not a subtype of the passive,⁴ and, on the other, ‘potential’ and ‘modal’ cover only part of the uses of our construction. We therefore prefer Faltz’s and Kemmer’s term ‘facilitative’, though it is basically a mnemonic label rather than a description.

The Baltic facilitatives are dealt with (against the background of Slavonic) in Holvoet, Grzybowska & Rembiałkowska (2015) and Holvoet (2020), where two aspects of this construction are highlighted: first, the co-existence of generic and non-generic uses of the facilitative (mainly in the sense of the genericity of the agent); and, secondly, the possible overt syntactic realisation of the agent in those cases where it is non-generic. These features contrast with the western-type (Romance and Germanic) facilitative, which is (almost) always generic and agentless. The aim of the present article is to discuss a number of important parameters of variation in the corresponding constructions of Baltic and Slavonic. For one Baltic language (Latvian) and one Slavonic language (Russian) we have looked at the facilitatives represented in the corpora, their subtypes and their relative frequencies. The counts based on the corpora are somewhat approximate, as manually filtering out facilitatives from among other types of reflexives sometimes involved subjective decisions, and the same can be said about the process of setting apart semantic subtypes of facilitatives especially in cases where their agent is implicit and only contextually retrievable.

The structure of the article is as follows. After introductory sections on notional matters, demarcation and lexical input, we will discuss, one

⁴ The question is, to a certain extent, terminological, but the passive is usually associated with the pragmatic functions of agent backgrounding and patient foregrounding (cf. Keenan & Dryer 325–328), without the semantic modifications characteristic of the constructions dealt with here. See the discussion in section 8 below.

by one, the parameters of variation opposing subtypes of facilitatives. We will then present some corpus-based quantitative data for two languages (Latvian and Russian), and in the concluding sections we will discuss some aspects of diachrony as well as the place of the facilitative among middle-voice constructions.

2. Definition and demarcation

Formally, a facilitative is a subtype of the middle, marked by whatever means a language uses to express middle meanings, which may be zero marking, as in (4), a reflexive marker that has lost its properly reflexive function, as in (5), or a set of (mediopassive) endings, as in (6):

(4) *This bread cuts well.*

(5) Lithuanian

<i>Ši</i>	<i>skarda</i>	<i>lengvai</i>	<i>karpo-si.</i>
this	tin.NOM.SG	easily	cut.PRS.3-REFL

‘This tin sheet cuts well.’

(6) Modern Greek (example from Alexiadou 2014, 22)

<i>Afto</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>vivlio</i>
this.NOM.N.SG	DEF.NOM.N.SG	book.NOM.SG

<i>diavaz-ete</i>	<i>efkola.</i>
read-PRS.3SG.MPASS	easily

‘This book reads well.’

These markers are also used to convey anticausative and, in some languages, passive meanings, so that we will have to deal with a problem of demarcation.

Syntactically, the facilitative construction is characterised by promotion of the original object, if present, to subject position, as shown in (4)–(6),⁵ and optionally, in certain languages, by the appearance of the original agent (we will refer to it as the quasi-agent, as a true agent is not always involved in terms of semantic roles) in the form of an oblique expression. In the Baltic languages and in most Slavonic languages (with the exception of East Slavonic) this oblique phrase will always be in the

⁵ Polish has a non-promoting facilitative, about which more below.

dative. Russian has a split, marking the oblique agent either with a dative or with a prepositional phrase with *u*; this will be touched upon in 4.4.

The facilitative construction has a constructional meaning that can undergo different modifications depending on the verbal semantics and aspect but can be generalised in the following way: the facilitative is a construction presenting human agency or at least volitionality as a necessary but insufficient condition for the realisation of a type of events or an individualised event. The course of the event is ultimately determined by various factors not dependent on human volition, such as the properties of the patient, the instrument, external circumstances or the agent's psycho-physical state. So, for instance, the determining factor may be:

(i) the design properties of the patient

- (7) Latvian
- | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------|---------------|
| <i>Durvis</i> | <i>vera-s</i> | <i>uz</i> | <i>iekšu.</i> |
| door[PL].NOM | open.PRS.3-REFL | to | inside.ACC |
- 'The door opens inward.'

(ii) an accidental property of the patient, instrument, location, or external circumstances revealed during agency as a factor affecting the course of the process set in motion by this agency:

- (8) Latvian
- | | | | |
|--------------|---------------|------------|-------------|
| <i>Šis</i> | <i>audums</i> | <i>man</i> | <i>labi</i> |
| DEM.NOM.SG.M | fabric.NOM.SG | 1SG.DAT | well |
- krāsoja-s.*
dye.PRS.3-REFL
- 'I find this fabric easy to dye.'

(iii) the agent's physical or mental state as a factor affecting the course of the process set in motion by the agency:

- (9) Latvian
- | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Viņam</i> | <i>brokastis</i> | <i>ne-ēdā-s.</i> |
| 3.DAT.SG.M | breakfast[PL].NOM | NEG-eat.PST.3-REFL |
- 'He ate his breakfast without relish.'

Historically, facilitatives develop from anticausatives through a process of lexical extension. A type of marking originally applying to events that can be viewed as self-contained and occurring spontaneously extends to verbs denoting processes that notionally necessitate an external agent

causing the event, the agency being, however, represented as in some way insufficient to produce the event. As in all such cases of lexical extension, a group of verbs can be identified that may refer to both types of events (necessitating agency or not) and that therefore may be assumed to have been the source group from which the facilitative type expanded. A verb straddling the borderline between the two types is shown in examples (10) and (11):

- (10) Lithuanian (constructed)
Bato raišteliai at-si-rišo. (anticausative)
 shoe.GEN.SG lace.NOM.PL un-REFL-tie.PST.3
 ‘The shoelaces came loose (got untied).’
- (11) *Bato raišteliai (lengvai) at-si-rišo.* (facilitative)
 shoe.GEN.SG lace.NOM.PL (easily) un-REFL-tie.PST.3
 ‘The shoelaces untied easily.’ (e.g., some agent easily managed to untie the shoelaces)

While (10) describes an instance of the action of the laws of mechanics, (11) presupposes human agency. In many cases an adverbial like ‘easily’ will enable the identification of the facilitative construction, but this will not always be the case; when no identifying elements are present, we will say the sentence is ambiguous rather than vague between an anticausative interpretation (on which the shoelaces untie without human interference) and a facilitative one (where conscious agency is presupposed).

Part of the Slavonic languages, such as Russian, have not only reflexive-marked anticausatives and facilitatives, but also a reflexive-marked passive, nonexistent in Baltic.⁶ In syntactically and contextually minimally differentiated cases, a Russian reflexive form can have as many as three interpretations—anticausative, facilitative and passive:

⁶ As Geniušienė (1987) shows, reflexives may develop passive meanings, passing through the ‘potential passive’ (in our terminology, facilitative) stage. The Baltic languages, like German, have stopped at the facilitative stage, while all Slavonic languages have developed a reflexive-marked passive (this apparently happened already in the Proto-Slavonic period). Polish has, however, lost it in the course of the 18th century through syntactic reanalysis as an impersonal, a development that appears to have taken place in colloquial Croatian and Slovenian as well (Uhlik & Žele 2018, 103). In Polish this impersonal has, in its turn, influenced the facilitative construction, which is now usually non-promoting, that is, does not advance the original object to subject position; see subsection 4.7.

(12) Russian (constructed)

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| <i>Okna</i> | <i>otkryvajut-sja.</i> |
| window.NOM.PL | open[IPFV].PRS.3PL-REFL |
| (i) | 'the windows (fly) open' (anticausative) |
| (ii) | 'the windows can be opened' (facilitative) |
| (iii) | 'the windows are (being) opened' (passive) |

This threefold interpretation is, however, basically restricted to imperfective verbs like *otkryvat'* in (12), as the reflexive marker is used for passivisation mainly in the case of imperfective verbs; perfective reflexive-marked passives also exist but are infrequent. In a Russian text, deciding which of the three meanings is involved is often difficult without a broader context, which makes corpus searches complicated.

3. The facilitative across verbal classes

Facilitatives develop out of anticausatives, which describe a process involving an object as a self-contained event conceptualised without the participation of an agent; this does not exclude the actual involvement of agency, e.g., *the door opened* may refer to a situation in which somebody is opening the door. This agency is, however, ignored. The typical anticausative is therefore a change-of-state (inchoative) predicate, as a change-of-state has most chances of being conceptualised as a self-contained event, even if this event has external causes.

Facilitatives do not ignore agency; they presuppose it. *The door opened easily* presupposes that human agency was applied with the aim of getting the door open. *The door opens inward* represents human agency as a necessary condition for the opening of the door, though its opening inward is a result of its constructional properties. The result is ultimately ascribed not to human agency but to factors independent of it. The development from anticausative to facilitative thus involves a reinterpretation of the concept of 'self-contained process': while in the anticausative this self-containedness does not exclude agency as a crucial causal factor (it simply ignores this possible aspect of the event), the facilitative represents agency as a necessary condition while denying it is the crucial causal factor for the process. There is thus a shift from 'abstracting away from possible agency' to '(at least partial) independence from (necessary and presupposed) agency'.

The example of *The door opens easily*, which illustrates how the same lexical item can underlie both an anticausative and a facilitative construction, gives an idea of the putative source class of facilitatives: that of causative verbs occurring in regular pairs characterised as ‘inchoative : causative alternations’ in Haspelmath (1993), such as *open, burn, break* etc. Apart from this source class, however, we can identify a core class which is broader than that of verbs participating in ‘inchoative : causative’ alternations, namely the class that Levin and Rappaport Hovav (in a series of publications, e.g., Rappaport-Hovav & Levin 1998) call ‘result verbs’ as opposed to ‘manner verbs’. Result verbs typically refer to some type of human activity directed toward the achievement of a specific type of result, such as *clean, fasten, cut, extract* etc.; they do not, however, lexically specify the manner in which this result is achieved. Manner verbs, such as *wipe* or *dig*, lexically specify manner, and are moreover often associated with a typical result, but they do not lexically specify it. Result verbs are the prototypical input verbs for facilitatives, as, on the one hand, this construction presupposes human agency and, on the other hand, the lexically specified result component allows the achievement of the result to be dissociated from the agency applied to achieve it and on which it is implied to be only incompletely dependent (*the tablecloth washes well*). Manner verbs, however, also qualify as input for the facilitative construction because of their frequent association with a typical result (*The cat’s fur brushes easily*). When a manner verb has no clear association with a certain type of result, a facilitative middle is difficult to derive (*??The cat’s tail pulls easily*). In Baltic and Slavonic, however, the result component can be strengthened by telicising prefixes, e.g. Lithuanian *trinti* ‘rub’ is a manner verb, but *į-trinti* ‘apply (ointment, shampoo etc.)’ has a result component introduced by the prefix and therefore provides suitable input for a facilitative derivation:

(13) Lithuanian

[*Šampūnas labai labai skaniai kvepia,*]

<i>lengvai</i>	<i>įsitrina</i>	<i>į</i>	<i>plaukus</i>
easily	in-REFL-rub.PRS.3	into	hair.ACC.PL

<i>ir</i>	<i>nedaug</i>	<i>jo</i>	<i>reikia.</i>
and	not.much	3.GEN.SG.M	be.needed.PRS.3

‘[The shampoo has a very nice smell,] it is easy to apply to the hair and you don’t need a lot of it.’⁷

⁷ https://harmonylife.lt/index.php?route=product/product/review&product_id=386&page=3

A further class of telic verbs is not associated with a change of state. They include, for instance, verbs of mental processing, which are telicised by the conventional conceptualisation of a certain quantum of event units as a discrete object (*read a book, watch a film, listen to the Queen's speech*), see example (14). And we could add the creation or reproduction of objects like literary works or musical works as instances where an accumulation of event units is also conventionally viewed as a discrete object (*write a novel, play a sonata*).

- (14) Russian (ruTenTen11)
Takie stat'i legko čitajut-sja,
 such.NOM.PL article.NOM.PL easily read.PRS.3PL-REFL
 [*daže esli oni dovol'no bol'sogo ob'ema.*]
 'Such articles read easily, [even if they are rather bulky.]'

A further shift in the development of facilitatives is from telic to atelic verbs. These may be transitive (15) or intransitive (16):

- (15) Latvian
 [*Vecāki izvēlējās audumu—spandeksu, kas viegli mazgājams.*]
nav īpaši jāgludina un
 be.PRS.3.NEG particularly DEB.iron and
labi nēsāja-s.
well wear.PRS.3-REFL
 '[My parents chose the fabric—spandex; it is easily washable],
 doesn't require much ironing and **wears well**.'

- (16) Latvian
Nu forši izskatās, labi staigāja-s,
 PTC nicely look.PRS.3 well walk.PRS.3-REFL
 [*feini atpūsties un nekad nav bijis domas ka ir kas nelabi izdarīts.*]
 'Well, it looks fine, it's nice to walk there, [a nice place to relax, and it has never occurred to me something was wrong.]'⁸

The shift from transitive to intransitive can be explained by a shift from patients to other arguments as factors facilitating a process. In (17) this is an instrument:

⁸ <https://iecava.lv/lv/zinas/pasvaldiba/16010-aptauja-vai-atbalstat-ieceri-veidot-piedzivojumu-parku-iecavas-parka> (accessed 10-7-2020)

(17) Russian

<i>Perom</i>	<i>pišet-sja</i>	<i>gladko,</i>
pen.INS.SG	write.PRS.3-REFL	smoothly
<i>bez</i>	<i>naprjagov,</i>	
without	effort.GEN.PL	

[*počti ne otryvajas' ot lista.*]

'With a pen one writes smoothly and effortlessly, [almost without lifting one's hand from the sheet.]'

Though 'write' is potentially telic, it is here intransitivised and atelicised by the absence of a syntactically expressed patient and the way is now open for the extension to intransitive verbs, for instance, when location is the facilitative factor. (18) has an atelicised and intransitivised transitive verb, while the verb in (19) is inherently atelic and intransitive:

(18) Latvian (Imants Ziedonis)

<i>Te</i>	<i>ļoti</i>	<i>labi</i>	<i>rakstā-s.</i>
here	very	well	write.PRS.3-REFL

[*Te ir tāda ilūzija, ka aiz loga ir mežs.*]

'It's very good to write here. [One has the illusion that there's a forest outside the window.]'⁹

(19) Latvian

[*Ja kādus gribi saukt par vergiem, tad sauc viņus, jo*

<i>viņi</i>	<i>ne.spēj</i>	<i>tikt</i>	<i>prom</i>
3.NOM.PL.M	NEG.be.able.PRS.3	get.INF	away
<i>no</i>	<i>tām</i>	<i>vietām,</i>	<i>kurās</i>
from	DEM.DAT.PL.F	place.DAT.PL	REL.DAT.PL.F
<i>labi</i>	<i>sēža-s.</i>		
well	sit.PRS.3-REFL		

'[If you want to call anybody a slave, you could call them slaves, because] they cannot get away from the places where they sit so comfortably.'¹⁰

These extensions to new lexical classes are accompanied by shifts in the syntactic, morphosyntactic and semantic properties of the construction. Within the core class of telic verbs the emphasis is on result. When we

⁹ <https://www.ziedonamuzejs.lv/lv/events/kadas-ir-radosas-rezidences/97> (accessed 2020-07-20)

¹⁰ <https://nra.lv/viedokli/arno-jundze/208377-praviesi-un-zivis.htm/komentari> (accessed 2020-07-20)

say a shirt washes well we usually mean it is easy to get clean, though we may also find the process enjoyable. In the class of mental processing the first shift occurs: when a book reads well, the focus is on the properties of the process (enjoyment, effortlessness etc.) rather than on the attainment of the result, i.e. reading the book to the end. Besides, as noted above, the facilitating factor shifts from object to instrument, location and finally to external circumstances in general. From circumstances it is but a small step to a person's mood or psychophysical state—here we reach the dispositional reading, on which an event is or is not successfully realised because of the presence or absence of a certain predisposing mental state of the agent—or, let us say, quasi-agent.

(20) Lithuanian

[*Manau jei esate didelis žūklės fanatikas*]

<i>ir</i>	jums	sunkiai	sėdi-si
and	2PL.DAT	with.difficulty	sit.PRS.3-REFL
<i>savaitgaliais</i>	<i>namuose</i>		
weekend.INS.PL	at.home		

[*tai tikrai vertėtų pabandyti laimę prie vandens.*]

‘[I think that if you’re a great angling fan] and you find it difficult to sit at home in the weekend [then you should try your luck at the waterside.]’¹¹

The above-mentioned shifts in syntactic, morphosyntactic and semantic properties lead to a considerable amount of variation within the facilitative construction. In the following section, we discuss each of the parameters of variation separately.

4. Parameters of variation in the facilitative construction

4.1. Individual level (kind level) vs stage level

This distinction, based on Carlson (1977), is between a reading on which whatever is expressed by the verbal form is an inherent property of some entity (or type of entities, on the kind-level reading) involved in the situation, the agent being generic and basically irrelevant, and one on which this property manifests itself in a particular situation (or set of situa-

¹¹ <http://www.zvejokliai.lt/index.php/straipsniai/reportazai/5416-lapkricio-zuvys> (accessed 10-7-2020)

tions), and the agent is specific. The entity whose properties are at stake on the individual level is often the patient (the grammatical object of the transitive verb), but it may be a location or another element involved in the situation. Example (21) is individual-level and refers to the inherent properties of a house, regardless of the occupant, while (22) refers to conditions prevailing in a particular country as determining the well-being of one specific person at a specific time:

(21) Latvian

<i>Labi</i>	<i>dzīvoja-s</i>	<i>šajā</i>	<i>mājā</i>
well	live.PRS.3-REFL	DEM.LOC.SG	house.LOC.SG
<i>un</i>	<i>nav</i>	<i>nekādu</i>	<i>problēmu.</i>
and	be.PRS.3.NEG	no.GEN.PL	problem.GEN.PL

‘This house is good to live in and there are no problems with it.’

(22) Latvian

[*Taču tad, kad tur pārcēlās mans brālis, bija skaidrs, ka jābrauc ciemos pārbaudīt.*]

<i>kā</i>	<i>tad</i>	<i>viņam</i>	<i>tur</i>	<i>dzīvoja-s—</i>
how	PTC	3.DAT.SG.M	there	live.PRS.3-REFL

[*vai dzīve pasaku zemē patiešām ir kā pasakā?*]

‘[But when my brother settled over there, it was clear I had to visit him to see] what his life there was like, [and if life in fairy land is really as in a fairy tale.]’

A formal difference associated with this distinction is the frequent presence of an oblique agent in the stage-level construction. If the agent is generic, as is always the case in the kind-level and individual-level varieties, it is basically not expressed.¹² If it is specific, it is either overtly expressed, as in (22) above, or contextually retrievable, as in (23):

(23) Latvian

<i>Kā</i>	<i>dzīvoja-s</i>	<i>nelikumīgi</i>	<i>uzbūvētajā</i>
how	live.PRS.3-REFL	illegally	build.PPP.LOC.SG.DEF

¹² A reviewer draws our attention to the fact that in the South Slavonic desiderative middle a generic quasi-agent may appear in a dative form because the construction requires an explicit dative quasi-agent, as in Serbo-Croatian *Živite, kako vam se živi* ‘Live as you like’, where the second-person plural pronoun has a generic meaning.

mājā, Riekstiņ?
 house.LOC.SG PN.VOC
 ‘How’s life in your illegally built house, Mr Riekstiņš?’¹³

An oblique quasi-agent (*jums* ‘you.DAT.PL’) could be added in this sentence, but one could also interpret (23) as inviting an individual-level statement about the house based on the quasi-agent’s personal experience, so that (23) is ultimately vague between an individual-level and a stage-level reading. Situations of this type are actually frequent, but they do not invalidate the distinction itself, which is important cross-linguistically, as we will see presently.

It is important to note that a sentence with an explicit dative quasi-agent, as in (22), may still be individual-level or kind-level, but it will then be the quasi-agent that receives an individual-level or kind-level reading; more on this in 4.4.

Many languages—Germanic, Romance and Greek—have practically no stage-level uses of facilitatives. Indeed, the lack of such uses has been cited as a definitional feature of the ‘middle’, as our facilitatives are usually called, cf. Ackema & Schoorlemmer (2003, 132). Steinbach (2002, 39), while rejecting the interpretation of middles as individual-level, regards them as inherently generic. The difference consists in that the notion of individual-level predication involves a certain type of interpretation of a NP (as referring to an individual throughout its existence rather than to an individual at a certain stage *t*), whereas the alternative account invokes the action of a generic operator at clausal level without any specific type of reading being imposed on any NP. However, even a rather superficial internet search shows the existence of middles that cannot be considered either individual-level or generic. Here is one from English:

- (24) *Bathroom fitter very impressed with these tiles, they **have cut easily** and there are no breakages.*¹⁴

¹³ <https://www.diena.lv/raksts/latvija/politika/papildinata-riekstins-neredz-iespejas-turpmakiem-samazinajumiem-diplomatiska-dienesta-budzeta-685958/comments/> (accessed 10-7-2020)

¹⁴ <https://www.tilemountain.co.uk> (accessed 10-7-2020)

And for German, Steinbach (2002, 39) cites the following:

(24) German

<i>Der</i>	<i>Bach</i>	<i>hat</i>	<i>sich</i>	<i>gestern</i>
DEF.NOM.SG.M	PN	have.PRS.3SG	REFL	yesterday
<i>Abend</i>	<i>ausnahmsweise</i>	<i>mal</i>	<i>ganz</i>	<i>gut</i>
evening	exceptionally	PTC	quite	well
<i>gespielt.</i>				
play.PP				

'Exceptionally, this piece by Bach played well last night.'

We assume both these examples are stage-level uses. Steinbach (*ibid.*) while citing this as an example of a stage-level use, uses it as evidence for the claim that middles are in fact never individual-level, their characteristic generalising effect being due to the presence of a generic operator at clausal level. He adds, however, on the basis of (24), that this genericity can be restricted to a very short time frame. This attempt to force a generic interpretation on (24) is rather counterintuitive and far-fetched. But the idea of the gradual reduction of the time frame of a generic or even individual-level statement should not be rejected. A Google search for *is cutting very well* yields mostly sentences characterising instruments, but quite a few characterising patients. Here is one of them:

(25) *The paper is cutting very well, nice for a print that is probably 30 years old.*¹⁵

The progressive form used here is not stage-level—it refers to a collection of prints and is, within certain temporal boundaries, individual-level. However, when the time frame of validity of the statement is further reduced, one ultimately arrives at cases like (24), where there is no longer any point in using the notion of individual-level or generic meaning.

The fact that stage-level facilitatives are rare in English and German shows that in some languages there is at least a strong tendency for facilitatives to be kind-level or individual-level only. There must be a good reason for this restriction. Slavonic and Baltic facilitatives, however, are neither consistently individual-level, nor can they be described as consistently generic at clause level. They do have individual-level readings, and

¹⁵ <https://custompuzzlecraft.com/Evolve/puzzle648.html> (accessed 10-7-2020)

on those readings the agent is generic in the sense that the properties ascribed to the patient, instrument etc. determine the course of the event for any arbitrary agent. The genericity of the agent is, in most cases, a concomitant of the individual-level reading of the patient, instrument etc.

4.2. Aspect

Both Slavonic and Baltic languages have developed derivational aspect systems, characterised by Dahl (1985, 89) as systems of ‘grammaticalised lexical classes’, or, to put it in a different way, grammaticalised lexical aspect. The degree of grammaticalisation is decidedly higher in Slavonic, where aspect crucially affects the structure of the inflectional paradigm and the grammatical selection features of the verb (cf. Arkadiev 2011); still, the difference is one of degree rather than of principle, and aspectual distinctions are grammatically relevant in many domains in Baltic as well, as shown, e.g., in Holvoet (2014). In Baltic, as in Slavonic, a verbal prefix normally perfectivises a verb, e.g. Latvian *būvēt* ‘build’ (IPFV) vs *uz-būvēt* ‘build’ (PFV). In Latvian, if a spatial meaning has to be conveyed without perfectivising the verb, a verbal particle can be used instead of the prefix, e.g., *iz-ņemt* ‘extract, take out’ (PFV) vs *ņemt ārā* ‘extract, take out’ (IPFV). In Slavonic, and to a lesser extent in Lithuanian, suffixation is used to provide prefixed perfective verbs with imperfective counterparts, cf. Russian *vy-tjag-ivat* ‘pull out, extract’, imperfective partner of *vy-tjanut*. For further details on the Latvian aspect system see Holvoet (2001, 132–145); on the typology of derivational aspect systems see Arkadiev (2014, 2015).

When a telic verb involving an incremental theme (an object affected by the event in successive stages till complete affectedness) is used in the facilitative construction, it usually occurs in two varieties, perfective and imperfective. The difference is between the (un)successful achievement of a resulting state and the generally (un)satisfactory course of the process leading up to the change of state. What is described here as the (un)satisfactory course may consist in the process advancing in a way promising to guarantee the successful achievement of the change of state, but it may also be subjectively (un)satisfactory from the quasi-agent’s point of view. The opposition is partly dependent on the opposition between individual-level (or kind-level) and stage level use, as in part of the Slavonic languages (mainly East Slavonic; on divisions within Slavonic in this domain cf. Mønnesland 1984 and Dickey 2000) individual-level meaning

automatically imposes imperfective aspect. In the following examples, (26) is individual-level (kind-level?) and (27) is stage-level:

(26) Latvian

[*Var atšķirties pusasu flanči. Bet tā nav liela nelaime.*]

<i>Viņi</i>	<i>viegli</i>	ņēmā-s	<i>ārā</i>	<i>un</i>
3.NOM.PL.M	easily	take.PRS.3-REFL	out	and
<i>ir</i>	<i>viegli</i>	<i>apmaināmi.</i>		
be.PRS.3	easily	replaceable.NOM.PL.M		

‘[The flanges of the axle shafts may get loose. But that’s not a big deal.]

They let themselves be taken out easily and are easily replaceable.’¹⁶

(27) Latvian

[*Kad mainīju antifrīzu, noskrūvēju korpusu ...,*]

<i>termostats</i>	iz-ņēmā-s	<i>viegli</i>	<i>laukā.</i>
thermostat.NOM.SG	out-take.PST.3-REFL	easily	out

‘[When I changed the antifreeze, I screwed off the housing, and]

the thermostat allowed itself to be taken out easily.’¹⁷

While the imperfective variety of the facilitative derived from telic verbs has basically one interpretation, the perfective variety may often have more than one interpretation. One variety of the perfective facilitative refers to the (un)successful complete realisation of an event depending on factors other than the agent’s agency. This is illustrated in (27). In this variety the patient is usually definite and topical. Apart from this type there is also a type apparently differing from the first by a reversal of information structure. In this type, the object affected or created as a result of the agency is not the one intended by the agent. Here we use simplified examples to show the contrast:

(28) Latvian (constructed)

<i>vāks</i>	<i>man</i>	no-ņēmā-s	<i>(viegli)</i>
lid.NOM.SG	1SG.DAT	off-take.PST.3-REFL	easily

‘the lid came off (easily)’

(29) Latvian (constructed)

<i>man</i>	<i>(nejauši)</i>	no-ņēmā-s	<i>vāks</i>
1SG.DAT	accidentally	off-take.PST.3-REFL	lid.NOM.SG

‘I accidentally took off the lid.’

¹⁶ <http://audi-style.lv/forum/topic/41475-ātrumkārbu-atšīribas/page-12> (accessed 7-9-2020)

¹⁷ <https://iauto.lv/forums/topic/25095-castrol-edge-sport-10w-60?pnr=5> (accessed 7-9-2020)

In (29) as well as in (28), the outcome of the agency is not quite controllable; as a result, the object actually affected is different from what was intended. The patient-subject is non-topical in this variety. We now give authentic examples illustrating the opposition shown in a simplified way in (28), (29):

- (30) Latvian (lvTenTen14)

[*Tā nu sanāca, ka*]

<i>grāmata</i>	<i>tika</i>	<i>manās</i>	<i>rokās</i>
book.NOM.SG	get.PST.3	my.LOC.PL.F	hand.LOC.PL

<i>un ļoti raiti</i>	<i>izlasījā-s.</i>
and very smoothly	read.PST.3-REFL

‘[It somehow came about that] the book came into my hands and it read very quickly.’

- (31) [*Grāmatu biju pasūtīnājis jau pirms tās iznākšanas, centos nemaz nelasīt par to, kas tur būs, lai būtu interesantāk. Diemžēl nesanāca,*]

<i>un nejauši</i>	<i>izlasījā-s</i>	<i>šī</i>
and inadvertently	read[PFV].PST.3-REFL	DEM.NOM.SG.F

<i>atsauksme</i>	<i>lasītājas</i>	<i>piezīmēs.</i>
opinion.NOM.SG	reader[F].GEN.SG	comment.LOC.SG

‘[I had ordered the book before it came out and tried not to read about what was in it, so as to keep the interest up. Unfortunately it didn’t work] and I inadvertently read this critical opinion in a reader’s comments.’

While the variety in (29), (31) could appear to be derived from that in (28), (30) through a reversal of information structure, it is by no means obvious that such a derivational relationship actually exists. Assuming that perfective facilitatives like (28) and (29) arise diachronically from perfective anticausatives, it is perfectly plausible that facilitatives as in (29) could have arisen directly from anticausatives with subjects in focal position, as in (32):

- (32) *1915. gadā atlūza un*
 1915 year.LOC.SG break.off.PST.3 and
nogāzās vēl viens Staburaga
 tumble.PST.3-REFL yet one.NOM.SG.M PN.GEN
klints gabals.
 rock.GEN.SG piece.NOM.SG

‘In 1915 one more piece of the Staburags rock broke off and tumbled down.’¹⁸

¹⁸ <https://lv.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staburags> (accessed 7-7-2020)

The rise of the facilitative construction out of the anticausative construction is a problem to which we will return in section 7. There is some cross-linguistic variation as to the degree of inherent telicity required to licence the derivation of a perfective facilitative. As mentioned in the preceding section, ‘read’ is not inherently telic as there is no change of state in the object, but it is telicised by singling out a certain quantum of mental impulses. Latvian freely allows perfective facilitatives derived from *iz-lasīt* ‘read through’:

- (33) Latvian
- | | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|------------|----------------------|
| <i>Pirmās</i> | <i>nodaļas</i> | <i>man</i> | <i>izlasījās</i> |
| first.NOM.PL.F.DEF | chapter.NOM.PL | 1SG.DAT | read[PFV].PST.3-REFL |
| <i>tik</i> | <i>viegli,</i> | <i>tik</i> | <i>ātri,</i> |
| so | easily | so | quickly |
- [*bet nodaļu par Sirds ceļu lasīju kādu nedēļu.*]
 ‘The first chapters read so easily, so quickly, [but it took me about a week to read the chapter *The way of the heart.*.]’

But there is evidence that such cases of extended telicity are worse in deriving perfective facilitatives. In Polish, for example, analogous sentences are not accepted, or evaluated as rather bad:

- (34) Polish
- | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|-----------|------------|
| ?? <i>Pierwszy</i> | <i>rozdział</i> | <i>mi</i> | <i>się</i> |
| first.NOM.SG.M | chapter.NOM.SG | 1SG.DAT | REFL |
| <i>dobrze</i> | <i>prze-czytał.</i> | | |
| well | PFX-read[PFV].PST.M.SG | | |
- Intended meaning: ‘I found the first chapter easy to read through.’

How far perfective facilitatives extend beyond the core class of inherently telic verbs appears therefore to be subject to cross-linguistic variation. Latvian has occasional extensions of the facilitative construction to perfectives with intransitive bases. These are mostly motion verbs that have been transitivised by the addition of a telicising prefix that expresses the coverage of a distance (as opposed to prefixes denoting a change in the location of the agent-theme). The active transitivised construction and its facilitative counterpart are shown in (35) and (36):

- (35) Latvian
- | | | | |
|------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------|
| <i>Kad</i> | <i>noskrēju</i> | <i>pirmos</i> | <i>2</i> |
| when | PFX.run.PST.1SG | first.ACC.PL.M.DEF | two |

km, parādījās jocīga doma [...].
 km appear.PST.3 funny.NOM.SG.F thought.NOM.SG
 ‘When I had run the first two kilometers, a funny thought occurred to me [...].’

- (36) *Pirmie divi apli*
 first.NOM.PL.M.DEF two.NOM circle.NOM.PL
noskrējās bez bēdām <...>
PFX.RUN.PST.3-REFL without trouble.DAT.PL
 ‘I ran the first two rounds without difficulties.’

Strictly translocational intransitive motion verbs, that is, motion verbs whose prefixes denote a change in the location of the agent-theme, cannot underlie a facilitative construction:

- (37) Latvian
 **Man viegli izlēcā-s no*
 1SG.DAT easily out-jump.PST.3-REFL from
autobusa.
 bus.GEN.SG
 Intended meaning: ‘I easily managed to jump off the bus.’

One instance where an apparently translocational prefix appears on a motion verb in the facilitative construction is that of *aiz-*, which denotes motion away from the deictic centre but also the point of reaching an outlying goal. In the latter case the verb is followed by the preposition *līdz* ‘up to’, but it can also combine with an object denoting the length of path moved through:

- (38) Latvian
 [*Izbraucu pavizināties pa Rīgu,*]
nejauši aiz-braucā-s līdz Rāmavai.
 suddenly **PFX-drive.PST.3-REFL** up.to PLN.DAT
 ‘[I set out for a drive about Riga and] before I noticed I ended up in Rāmava.’

- (39) *Un skrējiens tiešām aiz-skrējā-s*
 and race.NOM.SG really **PFX-run.PST.3-REFL**
tik nemanīti,
 so unnoticed
 [*ka jau pāris minūtes pēc 10 bijām finišā!*]
 ‘And indeed the race was run so quickly [that a few minutes past ten we were already at the finish].’

This would suggest that *aiz-* is, in this sense, not translocational but quantifying in that it focuses on the stretch of trajectory covered. That is, the perfective facilitative construction extends to a group of motion verbs that emulate prototypically transitive verbs by combining with a spatial ‘quasi-object’ measuring out the motion event (an incremental path). As in the case of canonical transitive verbs (as in (29)), the object actually affected differs from what was intended or anticipated.

4.3. Transitivity

Transitivity is not a necessary condition for the derivation of a facilitative: intransitive activity and state verbs can underlie them as well:

(40) Lithuanian

Kaip jūms,

how 2PL.DAT

[*dėl asmeninių pražangų nebegalinčiam tęsti rungtynių,*

sėdėjo-si ant suoliuko?

sit.PST.3-REFL on bench.GEN.SG

‘How did you feel sitting there on the [penalty] bench [being unable to stay in the match because of individual fouls]?’¹⁹

The restriction to atelic (activity and state) verbs is a consequence of the historical development of facilitatives (an overview of this development is given in the schema at the end of section 7). The source class for facilitatives consists of transitive verbs, occurring with an object that is promoted to subject in the facilitative construction. When emphasis shifts from the patient-subject to another argument—instrument or location—as being responsible for the successful realisation of the event, the verb is used without an object, functioning as it were as an activity verb, and the road is free for the introduction of intransitive activity or state verbs, which are always imperfective. The association of the facilitative with transitivity having been shed, presumably through intransitive and atelicised use in constructions where the properties of non-patient arguments (instruments, locations...) are stated to be responsible for successful realisation of the event, the way is open for the introduction of other, also

¹⁹ <https://www.delfi.lt/krepsinis/herojai/ukrainieciai-nepamirsta-kaip-per-nakti-reikalavo-atimti-is-zalgirio-nepelnyta-pergale.d?id=76501355> (accessed 10-7-2020)

telic, intransitive verbs. These may be agentive, like body motion verbs; they sometimes occur in the facilitative construction in atelic use, as in (41), but telic constructions can also occasionally be found, as in (42):

- (41) Latvian
Sākumā *skreja-s* *labi,* *tiešām,*
 beginning.LOC.SG run.PRS.3-REFL well really
 [negaidīti labi noskrieti pirmie 2 km..., tālāk tik jautri nebija.]
 ‘At first the run is fine, really, [the first 2 km went off unexpectedly well... further on it was not as nice any more.]’

- (42) Latvian
Kā *tad* *skrējā-s* *uz* *Valmieru?*
 how PTC run.PST.3-REFL to PLN.ACC
 ‘How was the run to Valmiera?’

And one also finds extensions to change-of-state verbs without an agentive component, like Lith. *seni* ‘get old’ in the following example:

- (43) Lithuanian
Kaip *sensta-si?* *Ar* *vis dar* *toks*
 how age.PRS.3-REFL Q still such.NOM.PL.M
aršus, *ar* *jau* *dantys*
 frisky.NOM.PL.M or already tooth.NOM.PL
kiek *atšipo?*
 somewhat grow.blunt.PST.3
 ‘How are you ageing? Are you as frisky as ever, or have your teeth grown blunt a bit?’²⁰

Moreover, as we saw above, some intransitive verbs of motion emulate transitive verbs by adding a spatial expression functioning as a pseudo-object.

4.4. The agent and its encoding

In those languages where the facilitative is exclusively, or almost always, individual-level there is no possibility of expressing the agent. There is, indeed, no need to express it, so that the restriction to individual-level use could explain why no strategy for expressing the agent was developed. On the other hand, the lack of such a strategy could also have blocked

²⁰ [https://banga.tv3.lt/lt/2forum.showPosts/878550.121.1-=\(993078179](https://banga.tv3.lt/lt/2forum.showPosts/878550.121.1-=(993078179) (accessed 9-7-2020)

the development of a stage-level type with specific agents. Which of the two was decisive is hard to tell. What we can say with certainty is that in Baltic and Slavonic,²¹ where the means for syntactically encoding the agent were created, its non-expression in the case of a generic agent is no longer due to a syntactic restriction: an agent phrase of the type ‘for any possible agent’ would simply be pragmatically odd.

When a quasi-agent is expressed or situationally retrievable, the individual-level (kind-level) or stage-level reading of the clause is often determined by the interpretation of the agent, not the patient. (44), for instance, is about the reading preferences of an individual, whereas (45) is about a reader’s experience at a specific time, while reading a specific book.

(44) Latvian

<i>Man</i>	<i>labi</i>	<i>lasā-s</i>	<i>vēl</i>	<i>daudzi</i>
1SG.DAT	well	read.PRS.3-REFL	also	many.NOM.PL.M
<i>citi</i>		<i>darbi,</i>	<i>piemēram,</i>	
other.NOM.PL.M		work.NOM.PL	for.instance	
<i>Vizma</i>	<i>Belševica.</i>			
PN.NOM	PN.NOM			

‘I also enjoy reading many other [literary] works, e.g., *Vizma Belševica*.’

(45) [*Man patīk distopiskie romāni*]

<i>un</i>	<i>šis</i>	<i>arī</i>	<i>diezgan</i>
and	this.NOM.SG.M	also	quite
<i>labi</i>	<i>lasījā-s.</i>		
well	read.PST.3-REFL		

‘[I like dystopian novels] and found this one quite good to read as well.’

Whether the reference of the patient determines the reference of the agent or the other way round is basically determined by information structure. The patient must be in topic position for the clause to be an individual-level statement:

(46) Latvian

<i>Amerikāņu</i>	<i>grāmatas</i>	<i>interesantas,</i>
American.GEN.PL	book.NOM.PL	interesting.NOM.PL.F

²¹ The extent to which quasi-agents may be expressed in the facilitative construction in the individual Slavonic languages is subject to variation. In Russian, explicit oblique agents as in (48) are infrequent, whereas in South Slavonic dative quasi-agents are restricted to the desiderative middle mentioned in 4.6 below.

<i>tās</i>	<i>labi</i>	<i>lasā-s.</i>
3.NOM.PL.F	well	read.PRS.3-REFL

‘American books are interesting, they read well.’

Where the agent is expressed, it is not an optional modifier, but a semantic argument. Whether it is also a syntactic argument is a different question, but facilitatives based on intransitive verbs, as illustrated in (21) and (22), suggest an answer in the affirmative, otherwise we would have to say *dzīvojas* is a zero-place predication that can be optionally expanded with an experiencer modifier. We must, of course, assume that historically the agent complement probably arises from a modifier or other optional constituent. In Baltic, the dative agent has developed from the dative of beneficiary and the closely related dative of external possessor; but these datives have undergone a reinterpretation, and a sentence like (47) is now clearly ambiguous between a reading on which the dative is not necessarily the agent but is the interested person, most likely the possessor, and a reading on which the dative is the agent but not necessarily the possessor or even an interested person:

- (47) Lithuanian
- | | | | |
|------------|-------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Man</i> | <i>batų</i> | <i>raišteliai</i> | <i>at-si-rišo.</i> |
| 1SG.DAT | shoe.GEN.PL | lace.NOM.PL | un-REFL-tie.PST.3 |
- (i) ‘My shoelaces came loose.’
(ii) ‘I managed to undo the (my) shoelaces.’

In Russian, the encoding of the agent correlates more or less with transitivity: when the verb has an object that is promoted to subject in the facilitative construction, the agent is encoded with *u* + genitive (48), whereas if the verb is intransitive, or if the facilitative construction is derived from a transitive verb in intransitive use, so that no object is promoted to subject, it is encoded with the dative (49):

- (48) Russian (ruTenTen11)
- [*Tol’ko menja volnuet vopros, počemu*]
- | | | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|----------------|---------------|---------------------------|
| <i>u</i> | <i>menja</i> | <i>stat’i</i> | <i>lučše</i> | <i>pišut-sja</i> |
| at | 1SG.GEN | article.NOM.PL | better | write.PRS.3PL-REFL |
| <i>tol’ko</i> | <i>po</i> | <i>utram,</i> | <i>a</i> | <i>u drugix</i> |
| only | on | morning.DAT.PL | but | at other.GEN.PL |
| <i>po</i> | <i>nočam</i> | <i>s</i> | <i>čaškoj</i> | <i>kofe...</i> |
| on | night.DAT.PL | with | cup.INS.SG | coffee[GEN] |
- ‘I’m just wondering why] I find it easier to write articles in the morning whereas others [find it easier] at night with a cup of coffee...’

- (49) Russian (Ėmma Gerštejn, 1985–2002, RNC)
 [A to *zapiralsja* v kabinete, *vyxodil proglotit*’ stakan čaja, *prigovarival*:]
Kak xorošo mne pišetsja, uže
 how well 1SG.DAT write.PRS.3SG-REFL already
celyj list nakatal.
 whole.ACC.SG.M sheet.ACC.SG pen.PST.M
 ‘[At other times he would lock himself up in his study, whence he would emerge to swallow a glass of tea and say:] “How well my writing is going—I’ve scribbled down a whole page already”’

While the dative used for encoding the agent is in origin a dative of beneficiary, the prepositional phrase with *u* in Russian is originally an external possessor—prepositional phrases with *u* + genitive being one of the two ways of encoding external possessors in Russian (see Garde 1985). As in the case of the datival agents discussed above, Russian sentences may be ambiguous between an anticausative expanded with an external possessor and a facilitative (on such cases of ambiguity cf. Letučij 2014, 373):

- (50) Russian (constructed)
U menja dver’ ne otkryvaet-sja.
 at 1SG.GEN door.NOM.SG NEG open.PRS.3SG-REFL
 (i) ‘My door won’t open.’
 (ii) ‘I can’t manage to open the door.’

The possessive origin of the prepositional phrase explains why it is basically restricted to facilitatives from transitive verbs: in the anticausative source construction, it is licenced by an original object promoted to subject. However, one also finds occasional instances where, though the verb is basically transitive, the construction is intransitive and no object promoted to subject appears:

- (51) Russian (cited from Letučij 2016, 298)
Počemu-to i u menja
 for.some.reason also at 1SG.GEN
tak napisalo-s’, no
 so write[PFV].PST.N-REFL but
točno — ot duši.
 really from soul.GEN.SG
 ‘For some reason I put it like that as well, and it really came from my soul.’

As the construction is intransitive, why don’t we have the dative here, as in (49)? Examples like this suggest that the rationale for the use of the

dative and the prepositional phrase is perhaps not purely syntactic any more, and that a certain constructionalisation associated with types of meaning has occurred. We will return to this below in 4.6.

If we recognise that the oblique agent in facilitative constructions is an argument, the next question that poses itself is that of its grammatical function. The oblique agent is, wherever it occurs, usually topical and clause-initial, and appears to be a good candidate for non-canonical subjecthood (for a recent discussion see Zimmerling 2012). But the question is probably undecidable, as the nominative-marked patient is as good a candidate when it is topicalised and clause-initial, as, for instance, in (45).

4.5. Facilitative adverbials

This term is not meant to refer to an independently motivated class of adverbs; we just mean adverbials that, in a facilitative construction, express certain aspects of a process or the achievement of a result that are independent of human volition, such as ‘easily’, ‘with difficulty’, or ‘well’, ‘badly’. In the case of change-of-state verbs the presence of such adverbs, which suggest agentivity, is necessary to set apart a facilitative from an anticausative reading (*The door opens : The door opens easily*); in the case of result and manner verbs the clause is often ungrammatical without an adverb (**The cat’s fur brushes : The cat’s fur brushes well*). In the light of such facts it has been suggested that the task of the adverbial is to make the implicit agent recoverable in some way. Even within the Minimalist tradition, accounts vary with regard to whether the motivation is semantic, pragmatic or syntactic (for an overview and further discussion see Lekakou 2006). We assume the requirement for adverbial modification to be semantically and/or pragmatically motivated, but will not attempt a detailed answer here. The literature on this question focuses on the western-type middle, and a special investigation would be needed for the Balto-Slavonic facilitative. Without entering into the details, we should mention that, for instance, perfective facilitatives may occur with adverbials that are not specifically agentive, like those denoting the time span in which an event is completed:

- (52) Latvian (lvTenTen14)
 [*Salda, rūgta, smeldzīga un pacilājošā pasaka.*]
kas iz-lasā-s tik īsā
 that.NOM PFX-read.PRS.3-REFL so short.LOC.SG

laika sprīdi,
 time.GEN span.LOC.SG
 [ka negribas grāmatu nolikt malā.]
 ‘[A bitter-sweet, poignant and elevating fairy-tale] which one reads in
 such a short span of time [one doesn’t want to put the book down.]’

The verb *izlasīties* is not susceptible of an anticausative reading, so the adverbial is not needed semantically to make the quasi-agent recoverable; but there must be some element non-controllable by the agent to justify the use of the facilitative construction, which is, in this case, the speed of reading as determined by the quality of the tale. Adverbials denoting involuntary action are often required in ‘non-volitional’ facilitatives:

- (53) Latvian
- [Tas kurš man rakstīja par to krūzīšu apdruku uzraksti man vēlreiz,]
man nejauši izdzēsā-s tava
 1SG.DAT accidentally delete.PST.3-REFL your.NOM.SG.F
vēstule
 letter.NOM.SG
 [un neuzspēju atcerēties tavu vārdu.]
 ‘[Could the person who wrote me about printings on mugs please write
 to me once more?] I accidentally deleted your message [and I can’t
 remember your name.]’²²

On the whole, such adverbials seem to be concerned with agency and controllability. It has also been noted in the literature that the presence of a negation can make a facilitative adverbial superfluous; this is quite frequent in Baltic and Slavonic, as seen in (54) (where *vienkārši* ‘simply’ is a speech-act adverb referring to the formulation used, not a facilitative adverb):

- (54) Latvian
- [Vai ir kāda grāmata, ko esi sākusi lasīt,]
bet tā vienkārši ne-lasā-s?
 but 3.NOM.SG.F simply NEG-read-PRS.3-REFL
 ‘[Is there a book which you have begun to read] but it simply doesn’t read?’²³

²² <https://lv-lv.facebook.com/pesacustoms/posts/611984998989723> (accessed 9-7-2020)

²³ https://issuu.com/lu_biblioteka/docs/lub-jaunumi-12/50 (accessed 9-7-2020)

4.6. From patient-oriented to dispositional uses

The extension of facilitatives starting out from the source class of change-of-state verbs has several dimensions. One is extension to new aspectual classes, another is a gradual shift in the factor viewed as deciding about the course of the event in view of the insufficiency of agency. In the core class—telic verbs—the facilitative is patient-oriented in both its varieties—imperfective and perfective. Then the imperfective variety undergoes a series of shifts, other arguments than the patient being viewed as determining the course of the event. With a simplified example:

- (55) Latvian (constructed)
- | | | |
|----------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| <i>miza</i> | <i>labi</i> | <i>grieža-s</i> |
| bark.NOM.SG | well | cut.PRS.3-REFL |
| ‘the bark cuts well’ | | |
- (56)
- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <i>ar</i> | <i>šīm</i> | <i>šķērēm</i> |
| with | DEM.DAT.PL.F | scissors[PL].DAT |
| <i>labi</i> | <i>grieža-s</i> | |
| well | cut.PRS.3-REFL | |
| ‘these scissors are good to cut with’ | | |

Emphasis may shift to location and external circumstances. The construction is thereby often (if the patient is backgrounded and omitted) intransitivised and the verb atelicised.

Together with those changes another shift takes place, viz., towards increasing relevance of the agent’s mental disposition, that is, a mental state favourably or unfavourably affecting the realisation of the event denoted by the verb. The ‘circumstances’ determining the course of the event are often not purely external but include the agent’s internal situation, i.e. the agent’s psycho-physical state.

In the literature we find the notion of dispositional readings (Fici 2011), referring to situations where the agent’s disposition (psycho-physical state) is viewed as the factor determining the realisation of the event. The most conspicuous formal features accompanying the dispositional reading are the lack of reference to an external situational element determining the course of the event, such as instrument or location, and the absence of a facilitative adverb. These features can be seen in (57):

(57) Latvian

[*Vienu novembri mēģināju šūt,*]

<i>bet</i>	nešuvā-s —	<i>likās,</i>	<i>ka</i>
but	NEG-sew.PST.3-REFL	seem.PST.3	that
<i>vajag</i>	<i>aiz</i>	<i>loga</i>	<i>vasaru,</i>
be.needed.PRS.3	behind	window.GEN	summer.ACC
<i>lai</i>	šūto-s.		
in.order.that	sew.IRR-REFL		

‘[One day in November I tried to sew,] but I didn’t feel like sewing, it seemed as if one needed the summer outside the window in order to feel like sewing.’

The notion of a dispositional subtype is a convenient way of labelling the uses showing the formal features mentioned above, but semantically there is no sharp line of division between the uses referred to here and those where a situational element is mentioned that can be viewed as the facilitating factor. What is involved is obviously often the agent’s disposition as influenced by external factors.

Dispositional facilitatives also have individual-level and stage-level readings, but in this case the individual thus characterised is the quasi-agent rather than an object, location or element of external circumstances. Both the individual-level variety and the stage-level variety may contain a dative quasi-agent, as can be seen in (57) and (58) respectively:

(58) Russian (Elena Kolesničenko, 2003, RNC)

[«*Xarakter u menja nespokojnyj, neusidčivyj, — govorit ona —*]

<i>vot</i>	<i>i</i>	ne	sidit-sja	mne
PTC	PTC	NEG	sit.PRS.3-REFL	1SG.DAT
<i>na</i>	<i>meste,</i>			
on	place.LOC.SG			

[*xočetsja vse uspet’.*»]

‘[I have got a restless and fidgety character, she said,] I cannot sit quiet in one place [and want to be everywhere.]’

(59) Russian (Andrej Volos, 2001, RNC)

Zato **Konopljannikovu** **ne** **sidit-sja** —

but **PN.DAT** **NEG** **sit.PRS.3-REFL**

[*to i delo vskakivaet i nenadolgo uxodit.*]

‘But Konopljannikov cannot sit quiet: [every now and then he jumps to his feet and disappears for a while.]’

In connection with this, dispositional facilitatives are never generic in the sense of applying to any conceivable quasi-agent, as in the case of individual-level facilitatives describing an inherent property of an object, instrument etc.; they can only be generic in the sense of a kind-level predication, if a kind-referring NP occurs in the position of quasi-agent:

- (60) Russian (Nina Voronel', 1975–2003, RNC)
- | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|------------|-----------------------|
| <i>Mužčinam</i> | <i>nikogda</i> | <i>ne</i> | <i>sidit-sja</i> |
| man.DAT.PL | never | NEG | sit.PRS.3-REFL |
| <i>na</i> | <i>meste,</i> | | |
| on | spot.LOC.SG | | |
- [*i nam, mnogostradal'nym ix podrugam, prixoditsja s ètim smirjat'sja.*]
 'Men can never sit quiet in one place, [and we, their much-afflicted girlfriends, have to put up with it.]'

In modern Russian we could speak of a dispositional subtype with specific formal features: it contains an intransitive verb or a transitive verb in intransitive use, and the quasi-agent is in the dative. In 19th-century Russian this construction extended to at least two transitive verbs in transitive use (that is, with an explicit patient promoted to subject), viz. the ingestive verbs *est'* 'eat' and *pit'* 'drink'. Compare the following example with a dative agent instead of the construction *u* + GEN otherwise used in the facilitative construction from transitive verbs:

- (61) Russian (Mamin-Sibirjak, 1890, RNC)
- | | | | | |
|--------------|------------------|------------|------------|-------------------------|
| <i>No</i> | <i>i</i> | <i>čaj</i> | <i>ne</i> | <i>pil-sja</i> |
| but | also | tea.NOM.SG | NEG | drink.PST.M-REFL |
| <i>Efimu</i> | <i>Andreiču,</i> | | | |
| PN.DAT | PN.DAT | | | |
- [*a posle čaja on sejčas že uvel Petra Eliseiča v kabinet i tam ob"jasnil vse delo.*]
 'But Efim Andreich had no taste for tea either, [and as soon as tea was over, he took Pyotr Eliseich to his study to explain the whole matter.]'

Such instances of the ingestive verbs siding with intransitives are cross-linguistically well attested; in view of the affectedness of the agent such verbs diverge from the prototype of transitivity (cf. Næss 2007, 52–77). In modern Russian, constructions like (61) are no longer used, but even now the selection of the encoding for the agent—dative or prepositional phrase with *u*—does not seem to depend exclusively on whether the construction is transitive or intransitive; (51) has an intransitive construction, so that

it is probably still possible to speak of a result-oriented construction with *u* + GEN and a dispositional construction with the dative. Their boundaries are apparently being redrawn.

Apart from Russian, where the distinction correlates with a type of encoding for the agent, there is no reason for setting apart a dispositional subtype. In Latvian, for instance, dispositional facilitatives based on transitive ingestive verbs, with objects promoted to subjects, are used as well (62), but in this case it is hard to set them apart from other facilitative constructions based on transitive verbs, as the agent is always marked in the same way, viz. with the dative:

(62) Latvian

[*Nezinu, kā lai to negaršu apraksta – itkā nav [oti pretīga,]*

bet nu ne-dzera-s

but PTC NEG-drink.PRS.3-REFL

tas brūvējums.

this.NOM.SG.M brew.NOM.SG

‘[I don’t know how to describe this dismal taste—it is not downright filthy,] but you don’t really want to drink this brew.’

Dispositional facilitatives originate from intransitive state and activity facilitatives that are always imperfective because of the nature of the aspectual classes in which the shift from agent-external to dispositional reading occurs. They are therefore originally consistently imperfective. The desiderative middle, which has developed out of the dispositional facilitative in South Slavonic (on which cf. Marušič & Žaucer 2014, Mitkowska 2019), is still basically imperfective:

(63) Serbo-Croatian

[*Probudila sam se u mračnoj tišini i otvorila oči,*

*pila (*popila) mi*

drink[IPFV].PST.F.SG drink[PFV].PST.F.SG 1SG.DAT

se kava.

REFL coffee.NOM.SG

‘[I woke up in a dark silence and opened my eyes,] and I felt I wanted some coffee.’²⁴

²⁴ <https://hrvatskodrustvopisaca.hr/hr/novosti/dnevnik-iz-karantene-stanislava-nikolic-aras> (accessed 2020-07-07)

This restriction is easily explained by the fact that desideratives are state predicates: they refer to a state of volition clearly distinguished from the event constituting the object of volition. In Baltic, the dispositional facilitative is also always imperfective, perhaps because this aspectual value was inherited from the agent-external uses of the facilitative construction. In Russian, however, an extension to perfective verbs has occurred:

- (64) Russian (V. V. Krestovskij, RNC, cited after Letučij 2014, 367)

[*Ja xotel sprosit'*]
no kak-to ne sprosilo-s'.
 but somehow NEG ask[PFV].PST.N-REFL
 'I wanted to ask] but somehow couldn't bring myself to ask.'

- (65) Russian (G. E. Nikolaeva, RNC)

[*Po kakoj že [sc. doroge] my pojdem, mama? —*]
Po kakoj pojdet-sja,
 by which.DAT.SG.F go[PFV].FUT.3SG-REFL
po toj i pojdem.
 by that.DAT.SG.F PTC go[PFV].FUT.1PL
 '[Which road shall we take, mum?] The road we'll feel like taking, that's the one we'll take.'

4.7. Personal and impersonal

Some authors set impersonal facilitatives apart as a separate subtype (Gerritsen 1992, Letučij 2016). For most Baltic and Slavonic languages the difference between personal and impersonal facilitative constructions is derivative: facilitatives derived from intransitives are automatically impersonal. However, as we have noted above, in Russian this rule allows for occasional exceptions, illustrated in (51), so that the borderlines between transitive vs intransitive and between personal and impersonal do not quite coincide here. An opposition between a personal and an impersonal type has moreover developed in Polish. This language now has a non-promoting facilitative construction, i.e., a construction in which the original object is not promoted to subject and the construction is consequently impersonal:

- (66) Polish (NCP)

Dobrze się czyta tę
 well REFL read.PRS.3SG this.ACC.SG.F

nową “*Gazetę*”,
 new.ACC.SG.F PN.ACC
 [zresztą jakichś zasadniczych zmian nie zauważyłem.]
 ‘This new *Gazeta* is nice to read, [though I didn’t notice any major changes.]’

This construction has been introduced in the place of an older object-promoting construction that is still retained alongside the new one, though gradually being ousted by it:

(67) Polish (*Polityka*, NCP)

<i>Jak</i>	<i>dziś</i>	<i>czytają</i>	<i>się</i>	<i>wiersze</i>
how	today	read.PRS.3PL	REFL	verse.NOM.PL
<i>ostatnie</i>		<i>Starego</i>	<i>Poety?</i>	
last.NOM.PL.NVIR		old.GEN.SG.M	poet.GEN.SG	

‘How do the last verses of the Old Poet read today?’

The distribution of the two constructions has never been investigated in detail, but it seems that the object has most chances to be promoted to subject when it is topical and when it is the inherent properties of the patient that are at stake, not, for instance, external circumstances. In (68), for instance, where location and circumstances are held responsible for optimal realisation of the event, the use of the nominative would hardly be possible:

(68) Polish (NCP)

<i>Moim</i>	<i>zdaniem</i>	<i>najlepiej</i>	<i>się</i>	<i>ogląda</i>
mu.INS.SG.M	opinion.INS.SG	best	REFL	watch.PRS.3SG
<i>mecze</i>	<i>w domu</i>	<i>w</i>	<i>gronie</i>	
match.ACC.PL	in home.LOC.SG	in	company.LOC.SG	
<i>przyjaciół</i>	<i>i rodziny.</i>			
friend.GEN.PL	and family.GEN.SG			

‘In my opinion the best place to watch matches is at home with friends and family.’

There is, however, no functional difference between the two constructions, and they can actually be described as varieties of the same facilitative construction.

While these parameters of variation, which account for the almost protean versatility of the facilitative construction, can to a certain extent be viewed independently of each other, as was done for practical purposes

of exposition in this section, they are also interconnected and reflect different aspects of the construction's diachronic development. Stage-level facilitatives owe their origin at least in part to extensions from original individual-level constructions; facilitatives from intransitive verbs are secondary with regard to those with transitive verbs; the explicit expression of the quasi-agent is a secondary feature in the sense that it could not have been inherited from the anticausative source construction; and dispositional uses are secondary with regard to those presenting the facilitating factor as agent-external (originally the facilitating factor was the inherent properties of the patient). We will once more return to these diachronic aspects in section 7.

5. A look at the Latvian corpus

Facilitatives are not easily extractable from a corpus, as the contextual elements that should make them more easily identifiable, viz. facilitative adverbials and dative quasi-agents, are not constant features; when they occur, their position with respect to the verb form is also subject to variation dependent on information structure. Manual selection among samples of reflexive forms reflecting all possible categories was therefore the only option.

The annotated lvTenTen14 corpus (about 658 mln tokens) shows that, though productive, facilitatives are not very frequent in Latvian, more common uses being anticausative, natural reflexive and reciprocal. Out of 10,000 randomly selected 3rd person reflexive forms (present and past tense), only about 20 were genuine facilitatives involving events that are normally controlled by the agent but are presented as only partially controllable (*lasīt* 'read', *mazgāt* 'wash', *spiest* 'press', *slēgt* 'switch', *regulēt* 'regulate', *rakstīt* 'write', *ņemt* 'take' and several others). The exact numbers of examples with each of the verbs and the type of the facilitative construction they represent are hardly informative because of the small size of the sample. We didn't perform a similar research on Russian but, according to Say & Goto (2008), the number of reflexives that roughly correspond to our definition of facilitatives is more than 100 out of 10,000 reflexives selected from RNC.

A separate group of reflexives in Latvian, much higher in frequency (about 130 tokens) consists of non-agentive verbs like *gribēt* 'want', *kārot*

‘desire’, *ticēt* ‘believe’, and *aizmirst* or *piemirst* ‘forget’, referring to inherently uncontrollable emotions and mental processes. While such uses are related to the facilitatives, they clearly represent a lexicalised extension in that the constructional meaning cannot really manifest itself here: the reflexive marking can just additionally emphasise the uncontrollable character of the state expressed by the verbal stem.

As the sample of 10 000 verbs yielded but small numbers of facilitatives, we looked separately at *rakstīt* ‘write’ and its prefixal derivatives (3rd person forms, past and present) as found in the corpus. This search yielded more than 300 instances showing quite some variation within the facilitative construction with regard to aspect and transitivity. While the parameters involved must be relevant for all Latvian facilitatives, the exact numbers remain peculiar to *rakstīt*.

Several prefixal derivatives of *rakstīt* are, in some or all of their meanings, always reflexive (e.g. *sarakstīties* ‘correspond, exchange letters’, *parakstīties* ‘appose one’s signature’, *pārrakstīties* ‘make a mistake in writing’), and they do not derive facilitatives. Facilitative meaning is found in nearly all reflexive uses of *uzrakstīt* ‘write’, which can be regarded as the perfective counterpart of *rakstīt* (the prefix having a basically perfectivising function), and in some reflexive uses of *sarakstīt* ‘write up, compile’, *pierakstīt* ‘register’, *ierakstīt* ‘record’, *izrakstīt* ‘write out’ and *aprakstīt* ‘describe’. The vast majority of facilitatives is, however, based on the imperfective *rakstīt* (though the latter is also used as imperfective counterpart of those prefixal derivatives that don’t have facilitative meanings).

Table 1. *Relative frequencies of facilitatives: rakstīt and its derivatives (affirmative and negative uses)*

	facilitative	other	sum
rakstīties	203	320	523
uzrakstīties	85	7	92
sarakstīties	9	424	433
pierakstīties	8	305	313
izrakstīties	5	84	89
ierakstīties	5	591	596

	facilitative	other	sum
aprakstīties	2	2	4
aizrakstīties	0	7	7
atrakstīties	0	127	127
norakstīties	0	25	25
parakstīties	0	2415	2415
pārrakstīties	0	17	17
sum	317	4324	4641

Out of 317 facilitative examples with *rakstīt* found in the corpus, 75% are stage-level uses, and the rest is the sum of individual-level uses, kind-level uses and those examples that are not clear. The kind-level uses refer to a kind of patients:

- (69) Latvian
Dzejoļi visvairāk rakstā-s jaunībā
 poem.NOM.PL most write.PRS.3-REFL youth.LOC
 [un tad, kad ir nelaimīga mīlestība.]
 ‘Poems are something one feels like writing mostly in one’s youth
 [or when one is unhappily in love.]’

But kind-level uses also refer to types of external circumstances:

- (70) Latvian
Vislabāk rakstā-s, kad notikumi
 best write.PRS.3-REFL when event.NOM.PL
ir svaigi.
 be.PRS.3 fresh.NOM.PL.M
 ‘The best time to write is when events are still fresh.’

Individual-level uses with topical patients are extremely rare for *rakstīt* because a text has one author (it is common to say a book reads well, but if one says it writes well, this is likely to be a stage-level statement). The only exception is statements relating to the spelling of a word:

- (71) *Baigi grūti šitas vārds*
 terribly hard DEM.NOM.SG.M word.NOM.SG
rakstā-s, pamēģini.
 write.PRS.3-REFL try.IMP.2SG
 ‘This word is terribly hard to spell, just try.’

Thus, with *rakstīt*, individual-level statements will usually be about properties ascribed to the agent as an individual; the agent is then in topical position:

- (72) *Laiviņam labi rakstā-s!*
 PN.DAT well write.PRS.3-REFL
 ‘Laiviņš writes with ease.’

More in general, when an agent is present, it is usually the interpretation of the agent that decides whether the sentence is to be interpreted as a kind-level, individual-level or stage-level statement. But the agent is often implicit, and the sentence may then be vague between an interpretation with a generic and one with a specific agent—vague rather than ambiguous because it is impossible to establish whether a statement about the agent or a generalising statement based on the agent’s experience is involved, both amounting more or less to the same:

- (73) *Ir lietas, kuras rakstā-s*
 be.PRS.3 thing.NOM.PL REL.NOM.PL.F write.PRS.3-REFL
viegli un raiti,
 easily and smoothly
 [*es, cīrulis būdams, ceļos sešos no rīta, tad jau līdz divpadsmitiem var daudz paveikt.*] ‘Some things write easily and smoothly; [being an early bird I get up at six in the morning, so I can get a lot of things done by twelve o’clock.]’
 or: ‘Some things I manage to write easily and quickly’ (with contextually retrievable agent)

In view of the interpretational difficulties illustrated by examples like (73), it is clear that a count of kind-level, individual-level and stage-level readings among facilitatives of the Baltic and Slavonic type is difficult to carry out; it involves lots of subjective interpretations. But as genericity, or consistent individual/kind-level readings, are regarded as definitional for the western-type ‘middle’, we have, for comparative purposes, attempted a rough count of the different types in Latvian and Russian, to be presented in the next section.

6. Latvian and Russian corpus data compared

We analysed facilitative uses of the verb ‘write’ in the Latvian and Russian internet-based annotated corpora lvTenTen14 (about 658 mln tokens) and ruTenTen11 (about 18,300 mln tokens). Two samples were selected from each of the corpora representing reflexive uses of the imperfective (*rakstīt / pīsat*) and the perfective (*uzrakstīt / napisat*) version of the verb for ‘writing’. Facilitative examples were manually selected from each of the samples.

Table 2. Reflexives, and among them facilitatives, in a Latvian and a Russian corpus

	Russian		Latvian	
	IPFV	PFV	IPFV	PFV
corpus	180,575	2,749	523	92
sample	1,000	100	523	92
facilitatives	35	59	203	85

The frequencies of imperfective vs perfective instances of ‘write’ in the corpora, as well as the frequencies of facilitatives in the samples, reflect the well-known differences between Baltic and East-Slavonic verbal aspect, such as the association of the perfective with the future and the use of imperfective reflexives as a passive form in Russian. In both languages imperfectives are more frequent than perfectives, but in Latvian they are six times more frequent, and in Russian 66 times more frequent. The share of facilitatives among imperfective reflexives derived from ‘write’ is 0.4 in Latvian and 0.04 in Russian, other reflexives being mainly represented by reciprocals and anticausatives²⁵ in Latvian and by passives in Russian. Since perfective reflexives are not normally used as passives in Russian, the shares of facilitatives in the perfective samples show more similarity between the languages.

²⁵ Anticausative uses of ‘write’ in both Latvian and Russian mainly refer to recording of information by electronic devices.

Table 3. *Imperfective and perfective facilitatives in Latvian and Russian*

	Russian	Latvian
IPFV/PFV	66	6
facilitatives/ IPFV sample	0.04	0.4
facilitatives/ PFV sample	0.06	0.9

The majority of facilitative uses, either perfective or imperfective, have a specific agent in both languages. For the most part it remains unexpressed but can be easily recovered from the context. An agent overtly expressed by the dative or a prepositional phrase (the latter only in Russian) is far less common, although the percentages differ for Latvian and Russian. Besides, the choice between the dative and the prepositional phrase in Russian seems to show correlation with aspect. This correlation is secondary with respect to the main factor behind the distribution of the two expressions. The dative is found with intransitive verbs common in dispositional uses that tend to be expressed with imperfectives. In comparison with specific agents, generic agents are in the minority in both languages. In addition, generic agents show a strong preference for imperfective aspect in Russian.

Table 4. *Expression of the agent in Latvian and Russian*

	Russian				Latvian			
	IPFV		PFV		IPFV		PFV	
covert: generic	9	26%	1	2%	21	10%	6	7%
dative	3	8%	0	0%	54	27%	13	15%
prepositional phrase	1	3%	9	15%	0	0%	0	0%
covert: contextually retrievable	22	63%	49	83%	128	63%	66	78%
sum	35	100%	59	100%	203	100%	85	100%

The difficulties with assigning the examples found in the corpora to kind-level, individual-level and stage-level uses were already pointed out

above. The table below therefore represents a rather rough count; nevertheless, it clearly shows the predominance of stage-level uses.

Table 5. *Kind-level, individual-level and stage-level uses of facilitatives in Latvian and Russian*

	Russian				Latvian			
	IPFV		PFV		IPFV		PFV	
kind-level	9	26%	0	0%	19	8%	4	5%
individual-level	1	3%	0	0%	11	5%	0	0%
stage-level	22	63%	59	100%	141	74%	72	85%
kind-level/ individual-level	3	9%	0	0%	29	13%	9	11%
unclear	9	26%	0	0%	3	1%	0	0%
sum	35	100%	59	100%	203	100%	85	100%

This look at the Latvian and Russian corpora shows a clear difference with regard to the western-type ‘middle’: facilitatives are predominantly stage-level. This does not quite correlate with the occurrence of agent phrases, because a specific, referential agent may be implicit and contextually retrievable.

7. A broader outlook

The Baltic and Slavonic facilitatives seem to exist in two varieties, individual-level/kind-level and stage-level, rather than one, like those of the Germanic languages. Authors writing on the western-style ‘middles’ are generally unaware of the Slavonic and Baltic facts. Apart from this, a number of further differences can be observed between the western type and the Balto-Slavonic type; they are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. *Western-type and Balto-Slavonic facilitative middles*

Western-type	Balto-Slavonic type
basically kind-level and individual-level	both individual/kind-level and stage level
basically imperfective ²⁶	imperfective/perfective
no expression of the agent	agent often expressed
only facilitative readings ²⁷	facilitative and non-volitional readings
agent-external	agent-external and dispositional

Geniušienė (1987), who is aware of the Baltic and Slavonic facts, treats the perfective facilitatives as a distinct type of reflexive verbs—we would now say: a distinct construction. She sets the ‘perfective passive’ apart from the ‘potential passive’. Her notion of potential passive would thus coincide with that of the western-style middle. The ‘perfective passive’ would then be a construction known to the Baltic and Slavonic languages but not to Germanic, Romance etc. This is a possible view, though Baltic and Slavic also have imperfective facilitatives that are demonstrably stage-level, that is, not ‘potential’ in Geniušienė’s terminology. The distinction is therefore not between ‘potential’ and ‘perfective’, even though this is a salient distinction. Individual-level (kind-level) vs stage level and imperfective-perfective are, in principle, distinct parameters.

As facilitatives arise from anticausatives, we must allow for the possibility that western-type facilitatives arise from an individual-level subtype of anticausatives. Let us assume, for the sake of exposition, that the shift could occur in the presence of adverbs like *easily*, which (as noted by Fellbaum 1985), have a twofold meaning, one denoting inherent likelihood (‘at the slightest provocation’) and therefore associated with

²⁶ This characterisation should not be taken quite literally: only Baltic and Slavonic have consistent derivational marking of aspect throughout the paradigm. With regard to Romance and Greek we should say the aspect is imperfective where it can manifest itself, cf. the imperfect in French *L’article se lisait bien* ‘The article read well’.

²⁷ Here we use the term ‘facilitative’ in a somewhat narrowed meaning, as referring to the (not quite controllable) successful achievement of an intended result, and excluding the ‘non-volitional use’, where an unintended result is achieved.

anticausatives, while the other is associated with agency ('without difficulty'). We can contrast (74) and (75):

(74) *The child easily catches cold.*

(75) *?The child has easily caught a cold.*

(75) is pragmatically odd because it suggests the child caught a cold on purpose and did so without difficulty; the perfective use of the verb rules out the likelihood reading. Assuming a lexical extension from change-of-state verbs to result verbs we get

(76) *The door opens easily.*

(77) *The door has opened easily.*

In both cases there is no problem with the interpretation of *easily* as agency is involved in both cases, but taking into account that the facilitative arises from the anticausative, there clearly is a source construction for (76) while there is none for (77), as (75) does not occur. We thus get entrenched uses of the type (76) and just occasional extensions in the form of stage-level uses like (77). This account need not be essentially reformulated if we do not assume the presence of a facilitative adverb: as anticausatives basically refer to uncontrollable processes or processes conceptualised as uncontrolled (possible agency behind them being ignored), imperfective (present-tense) uses are less likely to be progressive (referring to processes in progress) or habitual (scheduled to occur at regular intervals) and more likely to refer to basically unpredictable events of which individuals are susceptible. The 'susceptibility uses' could then extend from inchoative verbs to result verbs.

As the discussion of the English and German middles in 4.1 suggests, the stage-level uses of facilitatives can be explained by a process of gradual narrowing of the temporal frame over which an individual-level or generic statement is valid. In English and German this process is sufficiently infrequent for researchers writing on middles to accept the assumption of the inherently generic nature of middles as obvious and uncontroversial. One could assume that in Baltic and Slavonic this process of extension of originally individual-level facilitatives, for which the rudiments are present everywhere, somehow assumed massive proportions. While this is conceivable, such a process would not explain the whole extent of variation which we find in the Baltic and Slavonic languages. Within the general

assumption that the facilitative construction arises out of the anticausative one, we need not commit ourselves to the view that there can have been only one single pathway leading from anticausative to facilitative. There could have been a second pathway explaining developments within the facilitative for which extension from the individual-level facilitative does not account very well.

What the assumption of extension from the individual-level type does not account for very well is the fact that the Slavonic and Baltic facilitatives have, in their perfective varieties, two interpretations: one is properly facilitative in the sense applicable to the western-style middle, the other expresses unexpected result. This contrast was already shown in (30) and (31), and is shown once more in (78), (79):

- (78) Latvian
- | | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------|------------------|
| <i>Plāns</i> | <i>izveidojās</i> | <i>viegli,</i> | <i>scenārijs</i> |
| plan.NOM.SG | shape[PFV].PST.3-REFL | easily | scenario.NOM.SG |
| <i>uzrakstījās</i> | <i>pats</i> | <i>no</i> | <i>sevis,</i> |
| write[PFV].PST.3-REFL | self.NOM.SG.M | from | REFL.GEN |
- [*man īpaši nepiepūloties.*]
 ‘The plan took shape easily and the scenario got written all by itself,
 [without any special effort of mine.]’

- (79) [*Atvaino, gribēju rakstīt Ziemeļkurzemes, bet*

<i>steigā</i>	<i>uzrakstījās</i>	<i>pavisam</i>
haste.LOC.SG	write[PFV].PST.3-REFL	completely
<i>cits</i>	<i>reģions.</i>	
other.NOM.SG.M	region.NOM.SG	

 ‘[Sorry, I wanted to write ‘Northern Kurzeme’, but] in my haste I wrote
 [the name of] a completely different region.’

The distinction involves a difference in information structure, but there are further differences that cannot be reduced to information structure. For the sake of simplicity, let us once more consider the constructed examples (28) and (29), which we will here repeat as (80) and (81):

- (80) Latvian (constructed)
- | | | | |
|-------------|------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| <i>vāks</i> | <i>man</i> | <i>no-ņēmās</i> | <i>(viegli)</i> |
| lid.NOM.SG | 1SG.DAT | off-take.PST.3-REFL | easily |
- ‘the lid came off (easily)’

(81) Latvian (constructed)

<i>man</i>	(<i>nejauši</i>)	<i>no-ņēmā-s</i>	<i>vāks</i>
1SG.DAT	accidentally	off-take.PST.3-REFL	lid.NOM.SG
'I accidentally took off the lid.'			

(80), with stress on *noņēmās*, presupposes that the agent wanted to remove the lid, whereas (81), with stress on *vāks*, presupposes the opposite. While it is imaginable that (81) arose from (80) through a reversal of information structure, we could also derive (81) directly from the anticausative. That is, we could assume a shift from type (i) to type (ii) in example (82):

(82) Lithuanian (constructed)

<i>Man</i>	<i>at-si-vėrė</i>	<i>durys.</i>
1SG.DAT	PFX-REFL-open.PST	door[PL].NOM
(i) 'a door opened before me'		
(ii) 'I accidentally opened a door'		

This shift could be motivated by the very feature that makes the imperfective variety of the anticausative susceptible of 'potential', hence individual-level, readings: it is the feature of uncontrollability of the event. Following this line of reasoning, we could venture that in Baltic and Slavonic two different contexts for the use of anticausatives led to facilitative extensions: the properly 'facilitative' one in imperfective (basically present-tense) contexts, and the 'non-volitional' one in perfective (basically past-tense) contexts. Subsequently a series of extensions must, of course, have occurred.

This assumption would account for the existence of non-volitional readings in Baltic and Slavonic and would also provide an additional possible source for perfective and stage-level facilitatives, which, as we saw, are but marginally represented in the western type of 'middle'. Of course, in assuming an additional pathway of development for facilitatives in Baltic and Slavonic, we have to pose the question why it was not available in western-style middles.

A possible answer would be that the difference consists in the nature of verbal aspect in Baltic and Slavonic. As mentioned above, the Slavonic and Baltic languages have a system of aspect oppositions expressed by derivational means, perfectivity being associated with prefixation. A perfective verb like Latvian *iz-vilkt*, Russian *vy-tjanut* 'pull out' refers to the removal of an object as a result of the action of pulling. In most cases

there is an implicature to the effect that the result expressed by *iz-vilka, vytjanul(a)* ‘pulled out’ resulted from conscious agency with the purpose of removing an object, but this implicature is cancelled in a number of grammatical contexts. One of them is the negated imperative:

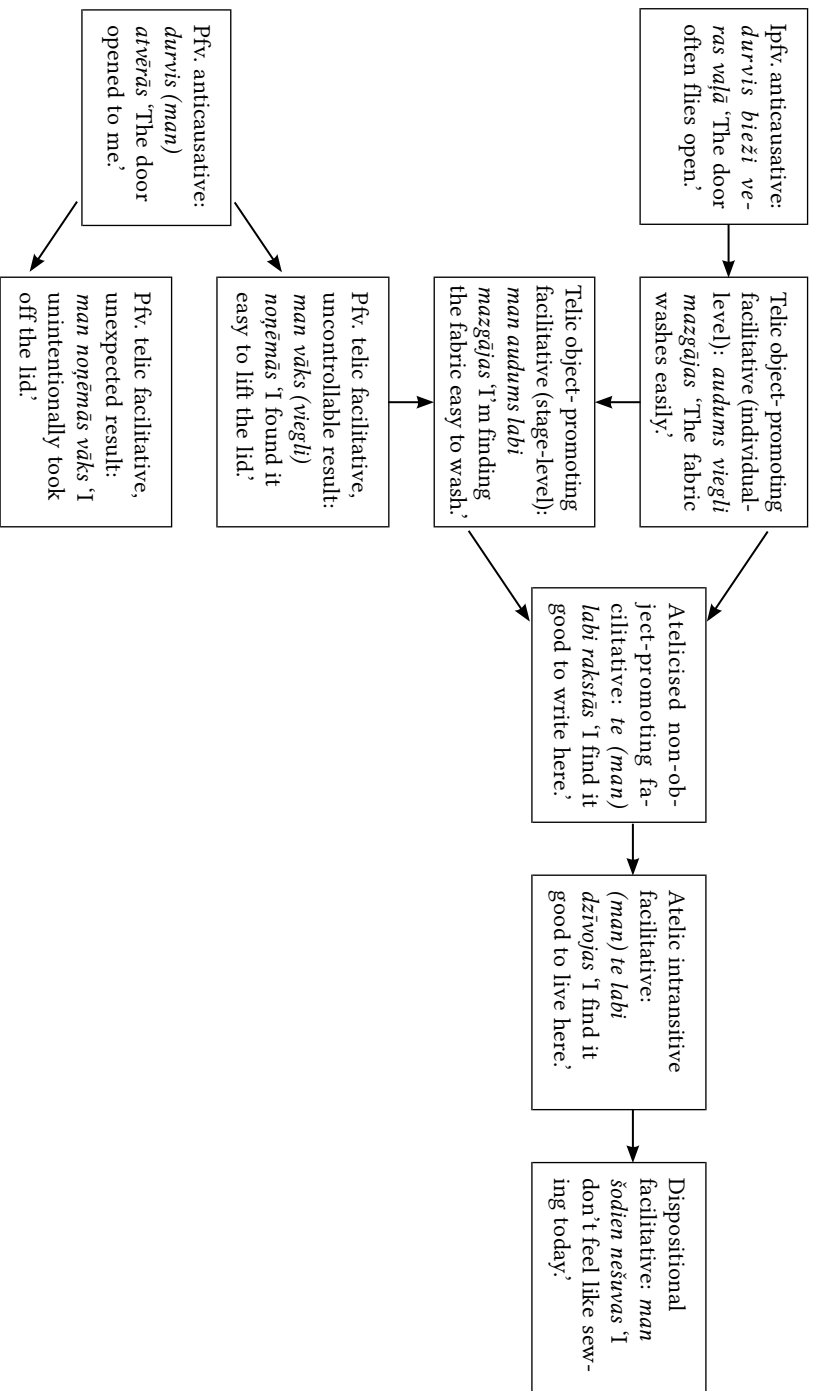
- (83) Russian (constructed)
Ne vytjani štepsel’.
 NEG pull[PFV].IMP.2SG plug.ACC.SG
 ‘Don’t (accidentally) pull the plug.’
- (84) *Ne vytjagivaj štepsel’.*
 NEG pull[IPFV].IMP.2SG plug.ACC.SG
 ‘Don’t pull the plug.’

While (84) is an appeal not to undertake the agency that would lead to the removal of the plug, (83) does not assume such agency and is just an appeal to counteract the undesirable change of state (on this distinction cf. Bogusławski 1985). In speech-act terms, (84) is usually described as a prohibition while (83) is a cautioning. We would suggest that another grammatical context eliminating the implicature of goal-directed agency is the facilitative construction. The result focus of the perfective verb interacts with the constructional meaning of the facilitative in a twofold way: (80) conveys that the change of state was achieved despite the insufficiency of agency, whereas (81) conveys that the change of state was achieved in spite of the agency being directed at another kind of change of state.

The existence of these derivational though grammaticalised aspectual oppositions may have rendered possible the rise and subsequent entrenchment of two subtypes of facilitatives differentiated with regard to aspect. Alongside an imperfective subtype concentrated around ‘susceptibility uses’ that were basically individual-level (or kind-level), there was a perfective subtype that in virtue of its aspectual specialisation developed a non-volitional value that could assume two readings: unexpected result or non-controllable attainment of a result.

The further development of the facilitative middle in Baltic and Slavonic involved a number of extensions. There was now a twofold input for imperfective stage-level facilitatives: on the one hand, individual-level facilitatives can occasionally undergo extensions and develop stage-level counterparts, as shown for Germanic above. In Balto-Slavonic, however, they were fed by a second source, viz. perfective non-volitional middles that could also develop imperfective counterparts, as verbs usually exist in aspectual pairs.

Figure 1. The development of the facilitative construction



The synthesis of the imperfective, individual- and kind-level ‘susceptibility uses’ and the perfective, stage-level ‘non-volitional uses’ could have given rise to the widely ramified Balto-Slavonic facilitative as we know it now.

It is conceivable that a better explanation could be found for the rise of imperfective stage-level and perfective facilitatives, but the assumption that the Balto-Slavonic facilitatives owe their much more differentiated character to the existence of more than one anticausative source context would help us understand the difference between the western-type and the Balto-Slavonic type facilitative, and the character of the Balto-Slavonic aspect system would provide an independent rationale for the specific features of the Balto-Slavonic facilitative.

The schema on p. 335 shows the putative development of the different varieties of the facilitative construction in Balto-Slavonic. The schema gives only the main lines of development, without the smaller subtypes and extensions.

8. The facilitative among middle-voice constructions

The middle voice, in the broader sense which we envisage here, is a family of constructions widely differing in productivity and grammatical characteristics. Some affect argument structure and are, in that sense, more derivational in character; this could be said of the anticausative, which eliminates the agent from argument structure. Others preserve argument structure, and are thereby more inflectional (for a discussion of voice operations from this point of view cf. Spencer 2013, 90–109). Facilitatives clearly belong to the second group; it is broadly recognised as one of the definitional features of the ‘middle’ (facilitative) that the agent is part of its argument structure (e.g., Ackema & Schoorlemmer 2002, 138), and in this sense facilitatives are similar to typical voice constructions like the passive, which reshuffle grammatical relations but do not modify argument structure. There is, in some languages, no way of syntactically expressing the agent that is present in argument structure (as in many languages the agent cannot be expressed in the passive construction), but in Baltic and Slavonic the agent does appear in syntax as well.

But the ‘derivational : inflectional’ divide has also other aspects, like whether the operation crucially changes meaning or not. This problem does not reduce to argument structure, though the addition or subtrac-

tion of an argument is obviously relevant to meaning. The passive is an example of a ‘pure’ voice operation, modifying prominence relations but not affecting meaning. But it might well be the only one. So, for instance, antipassives, which are in many respects a mirror image of the passive, are known to have (both semantic and pragmatic) constructional meanings, discussed for Latvian in Holvoet & Daugavet (2020). The facilitative is not different: it reshuffles grammatical relations like the passive (which is evidently the reason why it is often referred to by terms containing the notion of passive, like ‘potential passive’ or ‘modal passive’), but it also has a clear constructional meaning. Comparing the facilitative with the passive, we can say that they both reflect a change in the status of the agent, but in different ways: while the prototypical passive reduces the agent in prominence (typically eliminating it from the syntax), the facilitative reduces it in agency by presenting the agent’s agency as a necessary but insufficient condition for the (successful) realisation of the event described. The constructional meanings of the facilitative constructions are regular and predictable.

Productivity is a third important aspect, as we tend to think of those operations that are performed ‘online’ rather than being stocked in the lexicon as inflectional. Middle-voice constructions show wide variation in this respect, and even (lexically determined) subtypes within one construction show considerable differences in productivity, as noted for deobjective antipassive reflexives in Holvoet & Daugavet’s study of Latvian antipassives (Holvoet & Daugavet 2020).

Facilitatives are, on the whole, freely produced ‘online’, though a certain number of instances are certainly strongly entrenched. Russian dictionaries regularly list, as fully-fledged lexical items, such reflexive forms as (*ne*) *spitsja* ‘(somebody) cannot fall asleep’, (*ne*) *rabotaetsja* ‘(somebody) does not feel like working’ or (*ne*) *siditsja* ‘(somebody) cannot sit quiet in one place’. But most facilitatives of this type are too low in frequency to make it to the dictionaries.²⁸

²⁸ As Peter Arkadiev kindly pointed out to me, constructions like *ne spitsja*, *ne rabotaetsja* etc. have no complete tense paradigms and hardly derive non-finite forms in Russian, which strengthens the impression that they are not separate lexemes but are instances of the corresponding lexemes *spat’*, *rabotat’* etc. used in voice constructions with limited morphosyntactic variability.

The productivity of the facilitative construction can be shown with examples like the following, where a facilitative is derived ‘online’ from a technical term not used in everyday language, so that the form has little chance to become lexically entrenched:

- (85) Latvian (lvTenTen14)
- | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| <i>Eksperimentāli</i> | <i>iegūtie</i> | <i>dati</i> |
| experimentally | obtain.PPP.NOM.PL.M.DEF | data.NOM.PL |
| <i>labi</i> | <i>aprosimēja-s</i> | |
| well | approximate.PRS.3-REFL | |
- [*ar Bolcmana sadalījumam raksturīgo eksponenciālo funkciju.*]
 ‘The experimental data can be nicely approximated [with the exponential function characteristic of a Boltzmann distribution.]’

All properties listed here—productivity, regularity and predictability of meaning, preservation of the argument structure of the verb—can be adduced as arguments in favour of the treatment of the facilitative as a productive, inflectional rather than derivational, voice construction.

9. In conclusion

In this article we have discussed the facilitative middle as a cross-linguistically identifiable construction type, of which we have studied in greater detail (partly with the aid of corpus data) the Baltic and Slavonic instantiations. These differ from what, in studies of Western European languages, especially in those authored by linguists of the formal persuasion, is often referred to as ‘the middle’ *tout court* by their frequent non-generic (stage-level) readings and by the possibility of overtly expressing the agent. We have assumed that in both cases the same construction type is involved, and have attempted to account for the cross-linguistic variation by invoking partly divergent diachronic scenarios starting out from the anticausative construction. Whether or not our hypothesis is accepted, it is to be hoped that the relevant Slavonic and Baltic constructions and their counterparts in the Western European languages will henceforth be considered in closer connection.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACC — accusative, DAT — dative, DEB — debitive, DEF — definite, DEM — demonstrative, F — feminine, FUT — future, GEN — genitive, IMP — imperative, INF — infinitive, INS — instrumental, IPFV — imperfective, IRR — irrealis, LOC — locative, M — masculine, MPASS — mediopassive, N — neuter, NEG — negation, NOM — nominative, NVIR — non-virile, PFV — perfective, PFX — prefix, PL — plural, PLN — place name, PN — personal name, PP — past participle, PPP — past passive participle, PRS — present, PST — past, PTC — particle, Q — question marker, REFL — reflexive, REL — relative pronoun, SG — singular, VOC — vocative

SOURCES

NCP = National Corpus of Polish at <http://nkjp.pl>

RNC = Russian National Corpus at <https://ruscorpora.ru>

lvTenTen14 = Latvian Internet Corpus at <https://www.sketchengine.eu>

ruTenTen11 = Russian Internet Corpus at <https://www.sketchengine.eu>

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