

The expression of spatial meanings in Livonian against a background of Estonian and Latvian

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This paper analyses the conceptualisation of space in Livonian, drawing parallels with the corresponding systems in Estonian and Latvian. As these languages are related areally, not genealogically (Livonian and Estonian are Finno-Ugric languages belonging to the Finnic branch and Latvian is an Indo-European language), similarities and differences are also discussed in the light of language contacts.

In Livonian, Estonian and Latvian, spatial meanings are expressed by means of inflectional suffixes and adpositional constructions. Whereas Latvian makes use of one locative case, Livonian and Estonian make use of the tripartite locative case system and the distinction between external and internal locative cases; this system is also represented in postpositional constructions (see Table 1). Still, apart from Estonian (and other Finnic languages), the use of the external locative cases in Livonian is limited to certain nouns and fixed expressions (Viitso 2008: 328). For instance, in Table 1 one can fill in all the slots for the Livonian word *mō* ‘ground’, but with many other nouns some slots would remain empty. In Livonian, one also finds conflation of cases conveying GOAL and LOCATION. As a result, *mōl* can be found with the meaning ‘on the ground’ and ‘onto the ground’.

Table 1. Spatial expressions containing *mō* ‘ground’

	GOAL	LOCATION	SOURCE
Inflectional suffixes			
External	<i>mō-lō</i> (Allative)	<i>mō-l</i> (Adessive)	<i>mō-ldō</i> (Ablative)
Internal	<i>mō-zō</i> (Illative)	<i>mō-s</i> (Inessive)	<i>mō-stō</i> (Elative)
Postpositional constructions			
External	<i>mō pā-lō</i>	<i>mō pā-l</i>	<i>mō pā-ldō</i>
Internal	<i>mō si'zz-ōl</i>	<i>mō sizā-l</i>	<i>mō sizā-ld</i>

There are two main goals of the paper.

1. To analyse the conceptualisation of space in Livonian by studying the use of locative cases and postpositional constructions. So far, there is no research on this; previous researchers have only mentioned the limited use of the external locative cases in Livonian, but they have not compared the case system to the corresponding postpositional constructions. A pilot study showed that some nouns (e.g. *ve'ž* ‘water’) clearly favour postpositional constructions, while others (e.g. *tōrg* ‘market’) appear in both usages. In order to determine the choice between the synthetic and analytic means, the various properties of Landmarks and Trajectors (for the notions, see e.g. Talmy 1983) will be considered as done by Klavan (2012) in a study on the fluctuation of such synthetic and analytic constructions in Estonian.
2. To interpret the results in the light of language contacts by considering the comparative data from Estonian and Latvian. Although one can suspect that the reduction of the local case system in Livonian results from the Latvian influence, there is also evidence of the

Livonian (Finnic) influence on Latvian. For instance, as maintained by Ernštreits and Kļava (2014), the Latvian locative displays semantics typical to the Finnic allative and illative cases.

In the case of Livonian, the linguistic data was collected from various collections of texts and recordings that go back to mid-1860s; additional examples were taken from grammars/grammar overviews of Livonian. The Estonian and Latvian data originated from language corpora.

References

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