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The expression of spatial meanings in Livonian

The present paper discusses the conceptualisation of space in Livonian against a background of Estonian and Latvian. These languages are related areally, Livonian and Estonian are linked also genealogically (both belong to the Finnic branch of the Finno-Ugric languages). Additionally, comparisons are made with the expression of spatial meanings in Hungarian, which is a distant cognate of Livonian and Estonian.

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 display tripartite locative case system and distinguish between external and internal locative cases; likewise, this system is represented in postpositional constructions (see Table 1). For comparison, Hungarian has three sets of local cases as inflectional suffixes are additionally used to encode vicinal relations (*-hoz/hez/höz* 'towards, to', *-nál/nél* 'at, by', *-tól/től* 'away from') (e.g. Kenesei et al. 1998). Hungarian also uses postpositional constructions, but they do not form such series as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. **Spatial expressions containing *mǭ* 'ground' in Livonian**

	GOAL		LOCATION		SOURCE	
Inflectional suffixes						
External	*mǭ-lõ*	'onto, to'	*mǭ-l*	'on'	*mǭ-ldõ*	'from (off)'
Internal	*mǭ-zõ*	'into, to'	*mǭ-s*	'in'	*mǭ-stõ*	'out of, from'
Postpositional constructions						
External	*mǭ pā̄-lõ*		*mǭ pā̄-l*		*mǭ pā̄-ldõ*	
Internal	*mǭ si'zz-õl*		*mǭ sizā-l*		*mǭ sizā-ld*	

Although Table 1 seems to indicate that all slots can be filled for Livonian, the actual use of nouns displays gaps and discrepancies. First, the external locative cases in Livonian are, in fact, limited to certain nouns and fixed expressions (Viitso 2008). Second, one finds conflation of cases conveying GOAL and LOCATION. As there is no in-depth study neither on the distribution and usage of the inflectional suffixes and postpositional constructions nor on the conflation of cases in Livonian, the aim of this paper is to fill in this gap. Another objective is to discuss the results against a broader background by drawing parallels between the expression of spatial meanings in Estonian and Latvian but also in Hungarian.

The linguistic data on Livonian originates from various collections of texts and recordings that go back to mid-1860s; additional examples are taken from grammars/grammar overviews. The Estonian, Latvian and data Hungarian data comes from grammars and language corpora. For determining the choice between the synthetic and analytic means, the various properties of Landmarks and Trajectors (for the notions, see e.g. Talmy 1983) are considered as done by Klavan (2012) in a study on the fluctuation of such synthetic and analytic constructions in Estonian.

References

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