SYNCRETISM IN CODING OF LOCATION AND SOURCE IN THE EASTERN SÁMI LANGUAGES

Riku Erkkilä
riku.erkkila@helsinki.fi
Iida Lankoski
Felix Mäkelä
Tuomas Koukkari

INTRODUCTION

The East Sámi languages Aanaar Sámi, Skolt Sámi, Kildin Sámi, Akkala Sámi, and Ter Sámi, as well as in the easternmost West Sámi language North Sámi exhibit a syncretism of spatial cases denoting LOCATION and SOURCE. The syncretism has risen because of historical sound changes that lead to the merger of the former inessive (location) and elative (source) cases and yielded a case called locative that expresses all the functions of the former two cases. This situation has disrupted the previous tripartite spatial case system that had its own case for LOCATION, SOURCE, and GOAL, and which is still present in most of the other Western Uralic languages, I. e. West Sámi, Finnic, and Mordvin languages. In this paper we will focus on Aanaar, Skolt, Kildin, and North Sámi, and address the following questions:

1. Are there signs of restoration of the tripartite system?
2. If the system is being restored, to what extent is it happening?

For North Sámi Aikio & Ylikoski (forthc.) have shown that the adverb *eret* 'away' can in spatial contexts be used with the locative case to express SOURCE. For the other languages studied here there are no previous reports about the matter.

TYPOLOGICAL AND GENEALOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Previous typological studies (Creissels 2006, 2011; Luraghi 2014) have shown that the syncretism of location and source is very rare in the languages of the World. In addition, Levinson (2003) states that in a system of two spatial relators SOURCE tends to be separate from LOCATION and GOAL, because it's markedness compared to the other relations.

Other Western Uralic languages, namely the Finnic languages Olonetsian, Lude, and Veps show similar case of merger between LOCATION and SOURCE, but in all these languages the spatial case systems have re-established the tripartite system by agglutinating the postposition *päi(n)* 'towards' to the locative-ablative case to yield a new tripartite spatial case system. However, the restoration of the SOURCE-case extends to only a part of the functions it could express (for Veps Grünthal 2003). The Mari language has lost its SOURCE case altogether and has recruited a postposition to complete its tripartite system.

DATA AND MEANINGS (FUNCTIONS) OF THE LOCATIVE

The data consists of examples from different kinds of spoken and written texts, including newspaper texts, fiction, and folklore. Table 1 shows the distribution of the data. Note that the data can't be used for statistical claims, as parts of it have been collected with the possible diversity, instead of the frequencies, of the meanings. Particularly in a more natural data set the amount of spatial uses would be larger. Even so, the data shows approximately what meanings the locative has in the studied languages.

	North Sámi	Aanaar Sámi	Skolt Sámi	Kildin Sámi
Spatial	43	82	9	22
Possessive	4	30	1	14
Temporal	8	11	0	11
Material	1	11	1	5
Abstract	14	8	7	1
Cause	0	3	0	3
Topic	0	9	0	0
Other	4	n/a	0	0
Total	74	154	18	56

Table 1. Meanings of the locative.

The first four meanings have been mentioned in the previous literature, as well as standard of comparison, part of whole, and experiencer, which were also sporadically attested in our data. The data of this study shows that the locative is used to express LOCATION and SOURCE in the abstract domain, i. e. being or exiting a state. In addition, some more marginal functions were found, namely CAUSE or REASON of an action, and TOPIC of communication.

DISTINGUISHING LOCATION AND SOURCE

In this study we focused on the adverb 'away' as means of distinguishing LOCATION and SOURCE, as this has been mentioned in the literature as a possible way of doing it in North Sámi. In addition, our study showed sporadic evidence of the favoring the coding of goal instead of the source at least in North Sámi in motion events. However, this can be also a reflex of the goal over source principle evident in many languages and in human cognition (cf. Lakusta & Landau 2005). This type of distinguishing the two meanings should be studied further.

	North Sámi	Aanaar Sámi	Skolt Sámi	Kildin Sámi
Spatial	33	27	13	11
Possession	0	3	1	6
Abstract	0	10	8	0
Other	0	0	0	0
Total	33	40	22	17

Table 2. The distribution of the locative +' away'.

The data for the occurrence of 'away' in the studied languages and the meanings it is attested with can be seen in table 2. As can be seen, the adverb 'away' is used to distinguish source in three domains: spatial, abstract, and possessive. This is natural, because in these three domains a distinction between location and source is most meaningful and possible in the first place. For example, it is hard to imagine a context where location and source could be distinguished when expressing standard of comparison, material, part-whole relation, or cause. On the other hand in temporal meaning and possibly experiencer the distinction could be possible, but it is not attested. The data of this study is too small to state anything reliable of this matter, so it must be left for future study to solve.

CONCLUSIONS

In this study we have studied the locative case of eastern Sámi languages, which is a typologically rare spatial case combining location and source. This case has emerged from a merger of two original spatial cases yielding a system of only two spatial cases. This kind of case is labile as has been demonstrated by the development witnessed in other Uralic languages that have had similar merger. However, the eastern Sámi languages do not show any systematic distinguishing of location and source.

In this study we addressed the questions are there any signs of restoration of the tripartite system of spatial cases, and if there is, to what extent the distinction is restored.

There seems to be a number of ways to make the distinction in the eastern Sámi languages, of which we focused on one, namely the use of adverb 'away' to mark source with locative case. This strategy is employed only on a subset of the meanings of the locative case, namely in the spatial, abstract, and possessive domains.

Due to restrictions in the dataset, the findings should be considered preliminary, and further research is needed to work out the extent and restrictions of the phenomenon.

Sources:
Aikio, Ante & Jussi Ylikoski forthcoming: North Saami. In Bakró-Nagy, Marianne, Johanna Laakso & Elena Skribnik (eds.) *The Oxford guide to the Uralic languages.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aikio, Ante & Jussi Ylikoski 2016: The origin of the Finnic l-cases. – *Fenno-Ugrica Suecana Nova Series 15* pp. 59–158.

Creissels, Denis 2006: Encoding the distinction between location, source and destination. A typological study. In Hickmann, Maya Stéphanie Robert (eds.) *Space in languages. Linguistic systems and cognitive categories.* Typological studies in language 66 pp. 19–28. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Creissels, Denis 2011: Spatial cases. In Malchukov, Andrej, Andrew Spencer (eds.) *The Oxford handbook of case* pp. 609–625. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Grünthal, Riho 2003: *Finnic adpositions and cases in change.* Mémoires de la Société Finno-Ougrienne 244. Helsinki: Société Finno-Ougrienne.

Lakusta, Laura & Barbara Landau 2005: Starting at the end. The importance of goals in spatial language. – *Cognition 96* pp. 1–33.

Levinson, Stephen 2003: *Space in language and cognition. Explorations in cognitive diversity.* Language, culture and cognition 5. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Luraghi, Silvia 2014: Plotting diachronic semantic maps. The role of metaphors. In Luraghi, Silvia & Heiko Narrog (eds.) *Perspectives on semantic roles.* Typological studies in language 106 pp. 99–150. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.