

Locatives in Mari

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In a series of penetrating studies, Alho Alhoniemi has compiled and analysed the meaning and use of local cases of Mari (see among other [1]). This material provides a sound basis for comparison with ‘major’ Uralic languages such as Finnish, Estonian and Hungarian. In this paper I will take a modern look at the Mari data. Using new insights concerning the morphology and syntax ([5]) and the semantics ([4]) of local expressions, I shall look at the distribution and meaning of local cases of Mari.

Roughly, locative cases consist of two layers: the inner layer (Layer 1) describes the general location while the outer layer (Layer 2) describes the temporal dynamics. Thus in Finnish *elative* adds a Layer 1 suffix /s/ (“inside”) and a Layer 2 suffix /ta/ (“from”). As is apparent from the following Mari paradigm for /o₁ma/ “apple”, the Layer 1 /s/ is found in Mari as well, without contrast (in Finnish /s/ contrasts with /l/).

LATIVE	o ₁ maš	“to the apple”
ILLATIVE	o ₁ maš(ke)	“into the apple”
INESSIVE	o ₁ mašte	“in the apple”
ABLATIVE	o ₁ maleč	“from the apple”
APPROXIMATIVE	o ₁ maškôla	“in direction of the apple”

The current paradigm however differs from Finnish and Hungarian in that the /š/ by itself is the ending of the lative though there is reason to believe that the suffix of the lative must be analysed as an empty Layer 2 suffix.

The layering theory can explain certain idiosyncrasies like this one, noted in [2]. The inflection of /o₁lômba₁/ takes only layer 2 endings (contrasted here with /kuðô/ “house”). Surprisingly, it has an elative that is otherwise missing.

inessive	kuðôšte	o ₁ lômbalne
illative	kuðôške	o ₁ lômbake
lative	kuðeš	o ₁ lômbalan
elative	—	o ₁ lômbač(ôn)

There are parallels with Finnish and Udmurt.

The simultaneous presence of both a lative and an illative presents interesting semantic questions, since the lative is the case of general goal directed movement. In fact, Mari seems to follow a general pattern of Uralic languages by which goal directionals are used in the absence of factual motion. The lative is synchronically

no longer a general directional case. According to [3] these are the functions of the lative case in Mari.

1. Lative: rarely (!).
2. Prolative: /černíla pumayaeš šärlä/ ‘the ink is spreading *on the paper*’
3. Illative: /Sôlwa wüt koč pašazôwlak pušeš šinžôn woňžat/ ‘the workers are getting *on board of the ship* [and] cross the Selwa’
4. Inessive: /alem kajôš šokšeš/ ‘my strength is waning *in the heat*’
5. Transformative: /imnim kuzêkeš puaš/ ‘to give a horse *as dowry*’.
6. Sometimes it is selected: /ərwezə alaeš koden/ ‘the son remained *in the city*’.

Specifically, the lative is used to denote a location with verbs that denote change (2, 4). This is quite common in Uralic. Using the layered theory of meaning some more general order can be brought into this list. In the talk I shall present a detailed account of local case meanings in Mari from the perspective of the layering theory.

References

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