

Objects, cognate accusatives and adverbials in Latvian

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Abstract

The IE accusative of temporal and spatial extension is generally assumed to be genetically related to the object accusative. In this paper Latvian material is cited which shows that the border between both is not clear-cut. The author's contention is that this is a natural, semantically motivated phenomenon and that the similar treatment of both categories, though partly inherited, continues to be a living tendency in several IE languages. In Latvian this tendency is particularly pronounced.

It has long been observed that the fact of the spatial or temporal extension of an action being denoted by the same case form which is associated with objecthood cannot be a mere coincidence, and that spatial and temporal accusatives must have been originally objects of some kind. As to the precise nature of these objects formulations diverge. According to Delbrück (1893:372) the accusative of spatial and temporal extension was originally a cognate accusative which gradually became "emancipated"; with reference to Greek cf. Schwyzer & Debrunner (1950:69). Among authors specifically concerned with the Baltic languages we may cite Fraenkel (1928:161), according to whom "diese Akkus[ative] sind urspr[ünglich] solche des äußeren Objekts, bzw. des Inhalts gewesen und haben sich erst allmählich selbständig gemacht"; and Mühlenbach (Endzelins-Mühlenbachs 1907:179), who wrote more confidently that the accusativus temporis was originally a cognate accusative.

The genetical affinity between the object accusative and the spatial and temporal ones is an indisputable fact. To my view, however, the second part of the above-mentioned statements by Delbrück, Fraenkel e.a. is less accurate. Various changes have of course occurred within the particular Indo-European languages, but it would not be altogether correct to assert that the affinity between object and spatial or temporal accusative was an idiosyncratic feature of the older stages of Indo-European, which was later on partly or completely lost by the particular languages. Some facts seem to suggest that this affinity could be a more universal, semantically motivated phenomenon, which by this very fact is susceptible of recurring at various stages of language development. In the present paper I have collected some Latvian evidence which seems to be relevant to the question. I have earlier discussed the problem with reference to Slavonic (cf. Holvoet 1991:84-93); the situation in Latvian, though basically similar, is specific in some respects.

At the start let us consider the question whether the spatial and temporal accusative can be considered a kind of cognate accusative. Of course there are cases where this seems to be so. These are cases of a verb being combined with a noun which does not seem to denote an autonomously existing entity, but rather a state of an object, somehow limited in space or time, e.g. *(no)dzīvot garu mūžu, iet savu ceļu*. But the scope of the spatial and temporal accusative goes beyond the limits of this category of cognate objects, and the objects of *ὄδον πορεύεσθαι, πλεῖν θάλασσαν, ὄρος καταβαίνειν* (cf. Schwyzer-Debrunner 1950:69) are only remotely reminiscent of cognate objects. The situations described by these expressions involve physical contact with some material object over the surface of which the motion takes place. In the case of temporal accusatives the situation is of course different, as here there is no physical object with temporal dimensions through which the subject of the action moves. Those expressions in which the object, though characterised by temporal rather than spatial dimensions, comes closest to some degree of autonomous existence, belong rather to the category of cognate objects, e.g. *dziedāt dziesmu*. The typical accusativus temporis involves a noun delimitating the duration of a state or action in an abstract way, as in *gulēt cauru dienu*; and this kind of accusative does not resemble a cognate object. The case of temporal phrases is therefore the most instructive, and I will deal with this group first.

In normal active sentences the accusativus temporis cannot be distinguished from a direct object. The difference in syntactic status can be

detected by applying transformational tests such as passivisation. In Latvian two more tests can be used: the debitive construction, which involves promotion of the surface object to the status of surface subject, and the construction with the present passive participle (as in *siens ir plaujams*), similar in meaning to the debitive and often compared to it (it is called "external debitive" by Marvan 1967).

It was already observed by Mühlenbach (Endzelīns-Mühlenbachs 1907:179) that the accusativus temporis may be treated in the same way as the object in the debitive construction, as in (1):

(1) Bekas abi pratuši izkļūt no fermas, kur tiem bija jākalpo līguma gads. (I. Grebzde)

The evidence provided by the debitive is corroborated by constructions with passive participles:

(2) Kasparam kursos vēl ejami divi mēneši. (I. Grebzde)

The results of the debitivation test in the case of adverbials of duration are only partly confirmed by passivisation. Adnominal constructions with passive participles, derived from constructions with an accusativus temporis, do indeed occur:

(3) Pēc negulētas nakts bija dabīgi, ka viņš aizmiga. (J. Veselis)

But such passive constructions probably occur only in their stative variety (with the copula *būt*), evidently derived from the construction with an adnominal participle:

(4) Nakts bija negulēta. (J. Veselis)

Constructions of the type *negulēta nakts* seem to be lexicalised and unproductive. They are comparable to such constructions from the language of the dainas as cited by Endzelīns (1951:1017): *sunītim būs paēsta diena; cita [dienīņa] smieta, cita dieta, cita gauži nuoraudāta*. These constructions are no doubt a continuation of a Protobaltic state of affairs, where the participle was still a verbal adjective not clearly marked for voice; the semantic relationship to the noun is often rather indeterminate in such constructions (cf. Ambrazas 1990:93).

The treatment of the temporal adverbial as an object occurs in a regular way with verbs containing the prefix *no-*. First, we have the debitivation test:

(5) Viņam tikai jānobrauc savi gadi. (R. Valdess)

There are also passive constructions like (6):

(6) viena vasara ir atkal noskrieta. (A. Dziļums)

The difference with regard to the unprefixd verbs can be seen most clearly in passive constructions, where verbs with *no-* occur regularly, whereas passive constructions with temporal modifiers treated as subjects are rare and subject to the restrictions mentioned above.

Clearly, the verbs with the prefix *no-* constitute a special case. *No-* (like Russian *pro-*, Polish *prze-* and their counterparts in the other Slavonic languages) have the property of transitivity; this probably reflects certain changes on a semantic level as well. In Slavonic the accusative object with verbs containing the prefix *pro-/prze-* is obligatory; it cannot therefore represent an adverbial modifier, but must represent an argument of predication. One must therefore assume that the prefix signals the introduction of a superordinate predicate, the lexical realisation of which would be a verb like 'to spend'; Russian *proguljat' noč'* is equivalent to *provesti noč' guljaja*.

For Latvian the situation is less clear, as the object is not strictly obligatory with verbs containing the prefix *no-*. There are also constructions without a direct object, though not all of them seem to constitute strong evidence against the argumental status of the temporal phrase. A characteristic case is that of the constructions with the preposition *līdz* 'until':

(7) Jānis aizskrēja uz ganībām, līdz vēlai naktij notupēja pie Dzidrupītes.
(A. Bels)

It seems quite reasonable to assume that the prepositional phrase represents a temporal argument 'the space of time stretching until a given moment', and that there is therefore no fundamental difference with regard to the constructions illustrated by (5), (6).

But it should also be noted that the treatment of the temporal phrase as a direct object is not as consistent with Latvian verbs containing the prefix *no-* as with the corresponding Slavonic verbs. One also finds debitive constructions where the accusative is retained:

(8) Visu vakaru tam bija vienam pašam jānosēž kaktā. (J. Veselis)

(9) Vai tiešām viņai būs jānodzīvo visu mūžu kā nokaltušam kokam? (A. Dziļums)

Furthermore one should take into account the relationship of the uses of verbs with *no-* discussed here to the other uses of verbs with this prefix. One of these uses is the one illustrated in (10):

(10) Jaunam cilvēkam tornī ir diezgan grūti nosēdēt. (A. Bels)

Nosēdēt here means 'to maintain a sitting position'. The most typical use is that with the modal verb *varēt*. In Slavonic we find such formations as Pol-

ish *usiedzieć* (*nie mógł usiedzieć w domu*). In order to provide an acceptable semantic description for a verb like *nosēdēt* in (10) one could conjecture that in semantic structure it has a temporal argument corresponding to the space of time the subject intends or is expected (but is not able) to spend sitting somewhere. The absolute extension of this space of time being irrelevant, its surface expression would then be systematically deleted.

However, some uses of *no-* are less easy to explain in this way. Consider the following:

(11) Kas zina, varbūt šoruden nokalpošu. Ziemu – tad redzēs, kas būs.
(A. Dziļums)

Of course *šoruden nokalpošu* is equivalent to *šo rudeni nokalpošu*, but *šoruden* denotes localisation within a certain space of time rather than extension in time. The indication of extension in time is implicit here, but it does not manifest itself syntactically. If this is so, then it follows that the verbs of the type *nosēdēt* have the element of temporal extension contained in their meaning, and that this element may either be further specified or may remain implicit. This opposes Latvian verbs like *nosēdēt* to Slavonic verbs like Polish *przesiedzieć*, as the latter require temporal extension to be made explicit. In Slavonic the obligatory specification of temporal extension is the main element opposing the types illustrated by Polish *przesiedzieć* and *posiedzieć* (Latvian *nosēdēt* and *pasēdēt*). In Latvian the distinction between both types must therefore be of a different nature. It seems obvious that the distinctive feature must be definiteness. In the case verbs like *nosēdēt* the space of time over which the action extends must be definite, though not in the sense of extension in time, but in the sense of localisation: the final (sometimes the initial) moment of this stretch of time must be readily identifiable on the basis of the context, as in (11). In Slavonic the use of verbs with the suffixes *prze-*, *pro-* often seems to be associated with definiteness too, but there it is not an obligatory feature, whereas the presence of a temporal object is.

As for the status of temporal phrases with verbs not containing a transitivity prefix, some curious facts are to be observed here as well, not only in Latvian, but also in Lithuanian and the Slavonic languages. In languages characterised by more or less regular use of the genitive as an object case with negated verbs, this genitive may extend to adverbial modifiers denoting duration, i.e. it may replace the accusativus temporis. On Lithuanian cf. Fraenkel (1928:52), Ulvydas e.a. (1976:26). For Russian this was noted

by Peškovskij (1956:297); the same may be observed in Polish. In Slavonic this feature is of ancient date, as it is attested in Old Church Slavonic, e.g. Matth. XXVI, 40 *ne vsmože edinogo časa pobsděti* (Vaillant 1964:85). In Polish the use of the genitive with negation is obligatory in the case of direct objects, but optional in the case of adverbials of duration; this points to the conclusion that its use is primarily a property of direct objects, but partly extends to adverbial modifiers as well. In Latvian the negative genitive with transitive verbs has ceased to be productive. But instances of adverbials of duration occurring in the genitive with negated verbs, in a similar way as objects, can be found in older writers, cf.

(12) Ja arī kāds redaktors Krievijā būtu sociāldemokāts, viņš nevienas nedrīkstētu savā vietā palikt. (A. Deglavs)

The case of spatial objects is less clear than that of temporal ones, as here some constructions, especially with nouns such as *ceļš*, could be interpreted as containing a cognate accusative. But there are more differences. Whereas temporal modifiers tend to be treated as objects when they denote extension in time, not localisation in time, spatial modifiers show no such rigid restrictions. Spatial accusatives often denote the surface over which an object moves rather than extension in space. This is the case in *iet, braukt ceļu, brist sniegu, zāli, braukt jūru* etc. These, however, seem to have become more or less idiomatic. As such they have their established syntactic properties, and the accusatives here are regularly treated as direct objects. On semantic grounds it does not seem appropriate to treat these as cognate objects, though they are not distinguishable from the latter syntactically. Though they are no longer productive, it is nevertheless interesting to note that they have survived, unlike the constructions with the accusative subsumed by Mühlenbach (1898:55 and Endzelīns-Mühlenbachs 1907:179) under the notion "virziena akuzatīvs", such as *sēd, laimīņa, divus krēslus, lai dus vieglu smilti, dzīvojam ... katrs savu malu* etc. (the only remnant of these seems to be the adverbialised *vienu vietu, vienuviet*). The latter are not so easy to classify and require a thorough investigation based on the language of the dainas.

The situation is slightly different for accusatives denoting extension in space in the same way as the accusativus temporis denotes extension in time, i.e. in a linearised way, with an initial point A and a final point Z, the accusative denoting the distance between A and Z. In order to show the difference with regard to syntactic status, transformational criteria are again

needed.

The transformational tests which can be applied here are more or less the same: the debitive construction, the construction with the passive present participle, passivisation.

In the case of the expressions *iet ceļu, braukt ceļu* the accusative is regularly replaced by a nominative in the debitive construction:

(13) tam jāiet savs ceļš (A. Jakubāns)

The same treatment of the spatial phrase is to be observed in constructions with the present passive participle:

(14) viņam piepeši likās, ka braucams cits ceļš (E. Virza)

(15) varbūt tev atkal nezināmi ceļi ejami (P. Rozītis)

In those cases where the spatial phrase denotes extension in space, the treatment of the accusative as an object is a tendency, not an absolute rule. Compare (16), where the addition of *tāls* 'far' with *ceļš* converts the spatial accusative into an accusative of extension in space:

(16) Tik tālus ceļus jums, mīļās, bija jāiet. (I. Grebзде)

Especially when the noun appearing in the accusative is a mere quantifier modifying an adverbial expression, there seems to be a tendency to retain the accusative:

(17) viņam bija jāiet gabalu tālāk līdz Gāršām (J. Veselis)

Once again, prefixation of the verb may somewhat alter the picture. Verbs with the prefix *no-* may be used with spatial adverbial modifiers as well, and here the treatment of the accusative as an object is again more regular, as can be seen from (18), which contains a regular passive construction:

(18) Šie divdesmit kilometri tika bieži vien nostaiģāti. (Anšlavs Eglītis)

In the case of spatial phrases denoting extension in space we are evidently faced with an optional, but synchronically productive rule replacing the accusative with the nominative in the above-mentioned constructions. Here the combinations with nouns are not lexicalised, and the lack of consistency in treating the accusatives as objects is a synchronic fact.

It thus seems that between objects and adverbials there is in Latvian a transitional zone encompassing temporal and spatial modifiers, which oscillate between object-like and adverbial treatment. Among the factors determining the choice of either kind of treatment we may probably mention the following:

1. object-like treatment may be more regular in those cases where the temporal or spatial modifier appears to represent an identifiable (localisable)

fragment of time or space rather than just a quantifier;

2. definiteness brings the temporal or spatial modifier closer to argument status and thereby also to the status of object (of course the feature mentioned in (1) is a precondition here);

3. the presence of a verbal prefix (usually *no-*) denoting total coverage of a fragment of time or space (which in turn presupposes the feature mentioned in (2), sc. definiteness) enhances the likelihood of the temporal or spatial modifier being treated as an object.

The similar treatment given to objects and temporal adverbials is not restricted to Indo-European; in Fennic the same case forms ("accusative" and partitive) encode both objects and temporal adverbials (for Finnish cf. Fromm & Sadeniemi 1956:137-8). This has even led Sauvageot (1972:362-3) to question the viability of the notion of object with reference to Fennic; to his view, this notion was imported from Indo-European and is alien to Fennic language structure. However, the fact that we encounter similar difficulties when dealing with Indo-European suggests that this feature need not necessarily be language-specific. There must be a good reason for spatial and temporal arguments to be treated in the same way as "objects" proper.

This reason is most easy to detect in the case of local phrases. It is to be sought in the resemblance between telic transitive predicates and motion predicates. This resemblance is accounted for in a systematic way in the theory of thematic relations advocated by Gruber and Jackendoff. In former publications (Holvoet 1991:84:92) I have formulated this analogy in the following way. Telic transitive predicates denote the causation of processes involving objects (denoted by the grammatical object). If this process can be represented spatially (as in the case of, say, the painting of a wall), then the gradual completion of this process can be compared to a kind of motion encompassing the object, the spatial dimensions of the object determining the range of the variable implied by the telic predicate.

The case of temporal modifiers is similar. The similarity in the treatment of temporal and spatial modifiers is striking. It is reflected in the use of case forms as well as in that of identical verbal prefixes (such as *no-* and Slavonic *pro-/prze-*). The motion through a stretch of time is exactly analogous to the motion through a space. The fact that movement in time is always one-dimensional, whereas a movement in space can be two- or three-dimensional, does not alter this. Spatial representations are probably primary, and the conceptualisation of time is based on one of the types of spatial representa-

tions.

Telic predicates, denoting processes evolving in time and space, are, in a sense, two-dimensional: they have a temporal and a spatial dimension, or, alternatively, a temporal dimension and a quantificational variable which can be conceptualised in spatial terms. Normally these two kinds of "quantification" of the process denoted by predicates are in complementary distribution. Only one variable at a time is assigned to the predicate: either an identificational one (*plaut plavu*) or a temporal one (*plaut visu dienu*). There is a tendency to treat the quantifying phrase as an object, even though the status of object is primarily reserved for the object of causation.

The above-mentioned facts seem to point to the conclusion that the fuzziness of the border between objects on the one hand and temporal and spatial adverbial phrases on the other is a natural phenomenon which may manifest itself in various ways and at various stages of language development. Thus, rather than viewing this fuzziness in Latvian as an inherited feature, I am inclined to think that it partly inherited but has been partly renewed as well. If the treatment of spatial and temporal modifiers as objects is indeed an archaic feature of Indo-European, then the subsequent split into an object proper and a spatial or temporal accusative has not occurred in a consistent way in all Indo-European languages.

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Altpreußisch *mercline* (E 48)

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Abstract

Concerning the 48th headword of the Elbing Vocabulary *mercline melcowe* the facts that 1. the words are interchanged and 2. the word *melcowe* has to be read *meltowe* have been accepted for a long time. An explanation of the two words is still lacking; however, as, among others, it seemed impossible to link the words with some kind of weather, which they must denote. To solve this problem one has to proceed from the Germ. word *meltowe*, which undoubtedly means 'mildew', nowadays only known as a plant disease. But there must be a connection with some form of precipitation, for *Mehltau* contains the word *Tau*. With the help of various dialect dictionaries and the *Universal-Lexicon* by Zedler it is possible to prove that in ancient times people called drizzle *Mehltau*, believing that the plant disease was caused by it. Presuming the meaning 'drizzle' for E 48 it is not difficult to explain the OP. *mercline* etymologically. I link it with various derivations from the root *merq-* (*merk-*), denoting 'soak, steep', e. g. with Lith. *merkti* and Latv. *mērcēt*, which have even today among others the meaning 'drizzle'. Apart from the root *merc-* the OP. word contains two suffixes *-l-* and *-in-*, which are very frequent in Latv. and especially in Lith. Therefore I understand E 48 as having the meaning 'drizzle'.

0. Das wahrscheinlich aus dem 14. Jh. stammende sogenannte "Elbinger Deutsch-Preußische Vokabular", das in einer Abschrift vom Ende des 14. oder Anfang des 15. Jhs. überliefert ist, hat seit seiner Entdeckung im "Codex Neumannianus" und insonderheit seit der ersten Herausgabe durch