

What is the position of the locative in the case system of Mordvin languages?

In the paper I discuss the status of the locative forms in the spatial case system of Mordvin languages, Erzya and Moksha. The locative is a form that has the ending *-o*, *-e* in Erzya and *-a* in Moksha and, which is used to express location with certain words, mostly relational nouns, for example, *al-o* 'under [underside-LOC]' (Erzya), *al-a* 'id.' (Moksha). Previous research has proposed three analyses of the form:

1. Locative forms are indivisible, i.e., there is, synchronically, no distinct locative ending.
2. Locative forms consist of a stem and a case ending (locative case), which is on par with other spatial cases in Mordvin languages.
3. Locative forms consist of a stem and a separate ending, but the ending is, strictly speaking, a case, and is not some other type of spatial marker.

I evaluate the previous analyses based on three criteria put forward by the previous research, namely the behavior of the locative with possessive inflection and the diminutive derivation, as well as the position of the locative ending in the inflectional paradigm of the words that take it. I also take into account the limited number of words with which the locative occurs.

With possessive inflection and from the point of view of paradigmatic relations, the locative is best seen as a separate ending. However, the restricted occurrence points towards the conclusion that it is not a case. Based on this analysis, the second option of analyzing the locative is clearly refuted, and the third option seems more plausible than the first from the typological and functional perspective of language description.

Keywords: *locative, place expressions, underused cases, paradigmatic relations, Mordvin (Erzya, Moksha)*

RIKU ERKKILÄ