Terminology of spatial cases : Problems and prospects

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TERMINOLOGY OF SPATIAL CASES: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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BACKGROUND

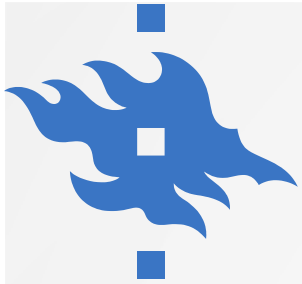- Terminology of spatial cases has not been reviewed extensively

  - However, see Haspelmath (2009)

- Usually different traditions of linguistic research (e. g. researchers of Indo-European, Uralic or Caucasian languages) have somewhat differing terminology

  - Alternatively, same terms are used in different manner

- Clear and compatible terminology is essential in any field of study, including the research of spatial cases

PROBLEMS

- Usually the terminology of spatial cases is bound to some linguistic tradition
    - Ill-suited terms can be used within the research paradigm without questioning
- Different terms for cases with same basic function makes it hard to compare languages
- Same terms for cases with different basic function can result in false comparison
- This makes it hard and time-consuming to compare languages described within different traditions
    - In studies of single languages (paralells)
    - In contrastive studies
    - In grammaticalization studies
    - In typology of cases
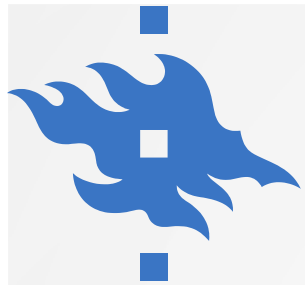
SAME NAME, DIFFERENT MEANING

	inessive	elative	ablative
Finnish (Uralic)	LOCATION IN	SOURCE IN	SOURCE ON/AT
Erzya (Uralic)	LOCATION	SOURCE	partial obj.
Udmurt (Uralic)	LOCATION	SOURCE	SOURCE (POSS)

- Finnish has a two-way distinction in coding LOCATION/SOURCE/GOAL
  - Appropriate two-way distinction in the terminology
- Erzya and Udmurt make on distinction regarding the relative location
  - No need to use terms that refer to the inside of a landmark
- Term ablative is used in Erzya and Udmurt of non-spatial cases
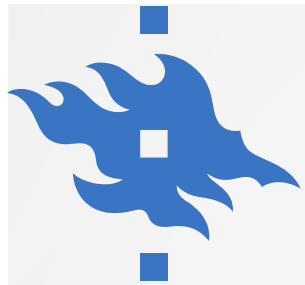
SAME NAME, DIFFERENT MEANING (CONT.)

|	Finnish (Uralic)	Erzya (Uralic)	Ingush (Nakh)	Rutul (Lezgian)
PATH	-	-	+	+
(internal) state	-	+	-	-
change of (internal) state	+	+	-	-

- In Uralic linguistic tradition the term 'translative' is used to express change of state and in some languages additionally being in a state

- In Caucasian linguistic tradition the term 'translative' refers to the spatial case expressing path

- This could pose serious problems in comparison of these languages

DIFFERENT NAME, SAME MEANING

|	LOCATION	SOURCE	GOAL
Moksha (Uralic)	inessive	elative	illative
Forest Enets (Uralic)	locative	ablative	lative

- Both Moksha and Forest Enets have only one case expressing LOCATION/SOURCE/GOAL

  - Forest Enets has better terminology, as the names refer to general cases

  - The term ablative is problematic in a different way
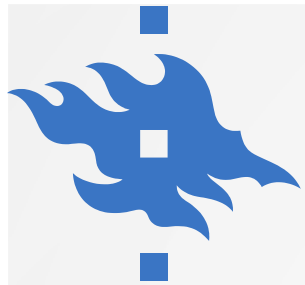
DIFFERENT NAME, SAME MEANING (CONT.)

|	PATH
Karelian (Uralic)	prolative
Ket (Yeniseic)	prosecutive
Ingush (Nakh)	tranlative
Wambaya (West Barkly)	perlative

- Cases expressing PATH are quite rare in languages of the World
  - Also semantically homogenous
- It seems unnecessarily complicated to have such diverse naming conventions for a rather marginal category
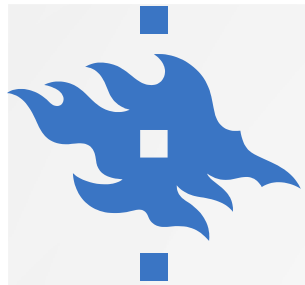
SERIOUS TERMINOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

PATH **(along)**	PATH **(through)**
prolative	transitive

- Komi (Uralic) has two cases expressing different kinds of paths

- The term 'transitive' has a lot of other, more central uses in linguistics
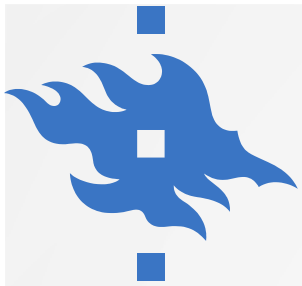
POSSIBLE SOLUTION

- Define a basic function for each term and use the term of a case only if the defined basic function and the basic function correspond

  - Probably some variation must be tolerated

- Parameters for defining the basic function (Tyler & Evans 2003)

  - Historically earliest (attested) function

  - A dominant spatial configuration in the functions

  - Functions attested in compoud forms

  - Contrast with functions of other elements on the same grammatical level

  - Centrality of one function among the functions of a case

- Frequency of a function

- Layspeakers opinion

IN PRACTICE

- Explain the terminological choices made and explain their relation to other traditions of naming cases

- Mark the correspondences explicitly

  - E. g. in parentheses after the term normally used in the paradigm

REFERENCES

HASPELMATH, MARTIN 2009: Terminology of case. In Andrej Malchukov and Andrew Spencer (eds.) *The Oxford handbook of case* p. 505–517. Oxford: Oxford university press.

TYLER, ANDREA AND VYVYAN EVANS 2003: *The semantics of english prepositions. Spatial scenes, embodied meaning and cognition*. Cambridge: Cambridge university press.