

*Нико Партанен (Niko Partanen),
Рику Эрккиля (Riku Erkkilä)
Финляндия, г. Хельсинки,
Хельсинкский университет*

DIALECTAL VARIATION IN THE PATH-CODING CASES IN KOMI

Аннотация. В нашей статье мы исследуем, каким образом варьируется выражение перехода в диалектах коми и удмуртского языков, в том числе мы изучаем, каким образом формы *-õt* и *-mi* распространены в трех коми диалектах: ижемском, удорском и северном диалекте коми-пермяцкого языка. Наша работа основана на языковой типологии, корпусной лингвистике и коми диалектологии. Результаты по удорскому и диалектам коми-пермяцкого языка достаточно близко соответствуют нашим ожиданиям, в то время как в ижемском диалекте обе формы встречаются очень редко. Мы классифицируем коми диалекты по разным категориям соответственно тому, каким образом в них используются пролатив и транзитив с существительными. Мы также выражаем предположение, каким образом могло возникнуть такое диалектное распространение. Мы также обсуждаем параллельные явления в других пермских диалектах.

Ключевые слова: диалекты коми языка, языковая типология, пролатив, транзитив, имя существительное.

1. Introduction

The Zyrian Komi (Komi-Zyrian, ISO 639-3: kpv) literary language has two path-coding cases variably called prolativ (suffix *-öd*) and transitive (suffix *-mi*) [Bartens 2000: 107], prolativ I and prolativ II, transitive I and II, or *вуджан вежелӧг* I and II [ÖKK 2000: 89; Попова and Сажина 2014: 122]. In the Zyrian Komi written standard, this means that two forms of a noun such as *вӧр* ‘forest’, *вӧр-öd*

(prolative) and *šöp-mi* (transitive), can be used interchangeably with the meaning ‘through the forest’. In addition to the different naming traditions, there are different views on the meaning of these cases. ÖKK [2000: 17, 60] states that the cases are synonymous, whereas Bartens [2000: 107] suggests that there is a slight distinction in the types of paths denoted by the two cases, so that prolative marks more oblong paths. We have argued elsewhere (Partanen & Erkkilä submitted) that there actually is a distinction between the meanings of these cases in literary Zyrian Komi, and similar distinctions in the contexts where these cases are used have also been shown recently by Некрасова [2019]. The situation in Zyrian Komi is curious, because cases coding path are typologically rare [Creissels 2009: 618]. It is argued that this is because path is a less basic spatial relation than location, source, or goal [Luraghi 2014: 102–104]. In this light, the fact that Zyrian Komi uses two different cases to express path merits investigation.

Even the literary standard shows are syntactic and semantic tendencies favouring one or the other case in different situations. For example, nouns take the prolative far more often than the transitive when expressing path, whereas adverbs and postpositions favour the transitive. In noun inflection, oblong objects (e.g. *улица* ‘road’, *ю* ‘river’) occur more often in the prolative, whereas open spaces (e.g. *сынӧд* ‘air’) are more likely to take the transitive (see also [Некрасова 2019: 57]). We suggest that the distribution by part of speech represents the original Permic distribution of these allomorphs, found in distinct varieties across the language group. Various developments at the dialect level have resulted in different generalizations in this system, from which it follows that in the Zyrian literary standard, these cases are analysed as semantically distinct in the noun paradigm. It must be mentioned that besides these cases, also different postpositions can be used to encode path, but thus far we haven’t analysed them separately.

In the dialects of Komi, however, we find variation that is different from (and more extensive than) that encountered in the literary standards. In this paper, we attempt to describe the variation in path-coding in the dialects of Zyrian Komi and compare it to the related languages Permian Komi (Komi-Permyak, ISO 639-3: koi), Yazva Komi and Udmurt (ISO 639-3: udm). For the Izhma, Udora and four Northern Permian dialects, we have analysed text collections and recorded materials in order to identify the occurrences of prolatives and transitives. This way, we aim to show the dialectal distribution of the cases at least in these varieties, and based on a wider description, suggest a putative historical origin for the present situation in the literary standard and the dialects.¹

2. Prolative and transitive in the Permic languages and dialects

2.1. Prolative and transitive in Komi dialects

Based on the literature, we can divide the Komi dialects into three types when it comes to their use of transitive with nouns. These are 1) prolative in nouns and transitive in adpositions and adverbs, 2) prolatives and transitives both used with nouns and 3) transitive used as the only path-coding case.

In Permian Komi, we encounter types 1 and 3. In the Permian written language, only the prolative form appears in the noun paradigm, which stands in contrast to the Zyrian written standard [Лыткин 1962: 192–193; Цыпанов 1999: 45]. The variant *-öm'* is attested in individual southern Permian dialects, while at Upper Kama, the variant *-mu* is typical [Баталова 1982: 117; Batalova 1975: 142–143, 155]. Finally, in the Permian dialects, adpositions and adverbs that use transitive *-mu* are considered historical relics with a narrow distribution [Баталова 1975: 156; Баталова 1982: 117].

¹ In this study, we use the Cyrillic transcription system commonly used in Permic studies while discussing dialect examples.

Yazva Komi is described as functioning similarly to Permian Komi, so that only the prolicative is part of the case paradigm, although with a different vowel than in other Komi varieties [Лыткин 1961: 44; Баталова 1982: 117]. A recent text collection in Yazva Komi published by Паршакова [2008] contains examples of proliatives with both nouns and adpositions, with *бөрту* as the only adposition where transitive is used. Due to the small size of this collection, we have not included it in the later comparison. We can establish, however, that Yazva Komi belongs to type 1 in our classification.

The second type can be found in the Zyrian Komi written standard. There, prolicative and transitive are both used in very similar contexts in the noun paradigm, with the prolicative occurring in the forms *-öd* or *-ed*, and transitive occurring as *-ту*. According to Баталова [1982: 117], proliatives and transitives are used in this manner in the Komi dialects of Upper Sysola, Middle Sysola, Syktyvkar, Upper Vychegda, Pechora and Vym. In Upper Sysola, however, the prolicative is described as rare [Попова, Сажина 2014: 123]. The map in Баталова [1982: 118] shows the geographical spread of this feature. In the dialects that expanded along the Vychegda river at a late stage, the situation follows that observed along the Sysola river: the Syktyvkar dialect [Жилина, Бараксанов 1971: 59–61], Upper Vychegda dialect [Сорвачева 1966: 93] and Pechora dialect [Сахарова 1976: 24] are described as using both cases.

The third type can be seen in the Komi dialects where the transitive is described as the predominant path-coding case. Сажина [2012: 192] states that this is the case for the Permian Komi dialect of Upper Kama, and the Zyrian Komi dialect of Upper Sysola is also reported to use the transitive in the noun paradigm [Жилина 1975: 62]. This appears to be a very important and specific shared isogloss between these two dialects. The current literature also indicates small differences between these varieties in this respect. One of the typical uses of the prolicative is to express a point of interaction. Сажина [2012: 192] provides an example from Upper Kama in which the transitive is used

to mark a point of interaction, which shows that in this dialect the transitive covers the whole domain of the prolicative as it occurs in other Komi varieties. The monograph on the Upper Sysola dialect contains examples of the prolicative used in this function [Жилина 1975: 71], so there appears to be at least some difference in how the two dialects use these cases. Another possibility is that there is variation in the use of the cases within the Upper Sysola dialect itself, as the map provided by Баталова [1982: 118] would suggest. Попова and Сажина [2014: 123] also provide a comparable point of interaction example from Upper Sysola.

This leaves Luza-Letka [Жилина 1985: 40], apparently Udora [Сорвачева, Безносикова 1990: 37], and possibly Lower Vychegda and Izhma (according to [ССКЗД: 466], not according to [Попова and Сажина 2014: 247]) as Zyrian dialects where the prolicative has been described as the predominant path-coding case used with nouns. What this means is that the geographically non-adjacent dialects do not show the variation characteristic of type 2 in our classification. The inclusion of Vym in this category is not necessarily obvious. The transitive in Vym and Izhma has also been described as occurring mainly with adpositions [Некрасова 2019: 53; Сахарова, Сельков 1976: 44; Жилина 1998: 56; Попова, Сажина 2014: 123]. The distribution of these cases in Vym and Izhma should therefore be investigated further, but we do not currently have access to a sufficient body of data from Vym. Izhma also deserves further attention, as Попова and Сажина's [2014: 247] summary table of all Zyrian dialects presents only the variant *-mu* for Izhma, which differs from previous presentations.

2.2. *Prolatives in Udmurt*

In the Udmurt literary language, the prolicative case has the variants *-эти*, *-йэти*, *-ыти* and *-ти*, with the last one occurring particularly in the plural [Некрасова 2020: 26]. In dialects, however, the variation is more complicated, and additional areal variants are attested [Csúcs

2005: 187]. In the Southern Udmurt dialects, the variants we encounter are *-mu*, *-эmu* and *-йэmu*, with areal variation in their distribution. The variants with *-m'*- and *-к-* in the place of *-m-*, which we find in the Northern dialects, do not seem to appear in Southern Udmurt. Among the Northern dialects, Beserman and certain others prefer the form *-Vmu* with varying vowels [Кельмаков 1998: 123]. A recent treatment of the Beserman prolatives does not include such a variant with a vowel, and the examples occur exclusively in the form *-mu* [Бирюк, Усачева 2010], with the exception of *om'* 'this way'. According to Кельмаков [1998: 122–123], the form *-mu* is generally predominant in the plural and with adpositions in the Southern dialects.

Кельмаков [1998: 122–123] goes on to state that in some Southern, peripheral Southern and Central Udmurt dialects, the variant *-mu* has been generalized to occur in all environments. This means that these Udmurt dialects, along with the Upper Kama and Upper Sysola dialects of Komi, would have generalized these multiple allomorphs into a system with only one path-case variant in a similar manner. Кельмаков [1998: 123] also states that some northern Udmurt dialects and Beserman tend to use the form with a vowel in plurals, too.

What this shows is that the existence of allomorphy in the path-coding case is a shared feature of both Udmurt and Komi, with different dialects of both languages having found various ways to generalize and simplify the variation. Next, we will discuss our findings concerning these processes in individual Komi dialects.

2.3. Prolatives and transitives in individual dialect corpora

When conducting this study, the authors had access to electronic corpora of three Komi dialects: Izhma, Udora and the Northern Permian varieties. The first corpus was compiled in a language documentation project funded by the Kone Foundation and is accessible

through a dedicated website². These materials are also currently being archived in the Language Bank of Finland (Blokland et. al. forthcoming). To control the sample better we used only recordings done in 2014–2016, although the corpus also contains archival materials. The Udora materials were collected by Partanen in 2012 and 2013 and combined with various older materials, principally *Образцы коми-зырянской речи* [Тимушев 1971], *Syrjänsche Texte Bd. III* (Uotila 1989) and parts of *Syrjaenica: Narratives, Folklore and Folk Poetry from eight dialects of Komi* [Vászolyi 1999]. We have also used materials collected by Erkki Itkonen [Itkonen 1958], Günter Stipa [1962] and Muusa Vahros-Pertamo [1963], which are archived in the Institute for the Languages of Finland. For Permian Komi, we used a text collection of Northern Permian Komi dialects published by Пономарева [2016]. The Izhma corpus sample contained approximately 210,000 tokens, the Udora corpus 42,000 tokens, and the Northern Permian Komi corpus 55,000 tokens. We are working to make these electronic materials available to other researchers of Komi.

We searched for all prolatives and transitives in these corpora and classified the occurrences by the relevant parts of speech, which were noun, adverb and adposition. The utterances of the interviewers were excluded from the analysis. For the Izhma dialect, we performed a more detailed, location-based analysis. The picture that arises upon analysing the occurrences is that Udora and Permian Komi follow the expected distributions, lending further evidence to the idea that prolatives occur only rarely with nouns in Udora. In Udora, the distribution of the prolative and transitive is almost perfectly split by part of speech, with only minimal overlap. Some of the Udora transitive nouns can also be explained by priming effects, where a non-native interviewer, Partanen, regularly used the transitive forms *Вашкаму* ‘along the Vashka river’ and *ӱйму* ‘by the river’, which are then

² www.videocorpora.ru

repeated by the speakers in the following utterances. Among the occurrences of nouns used with transitives in Udora, there are also examples such as *увтиджык лыи* ‘I shot (at the grouse) too low’ [Vászolyi 1999: 502]. The word *ув* is usually an adposition with the meaning ‘under’, but as is often the case with Komi adpositions, it can also be used as an independent noun. Uotila [1989: 386] also provides the example *вывтиыс өскаласны йэджыд пыз’нон* ‘Flour is sprinkled on top (of the bread)’. Such instances are counted as nouns in the figure below.

In the Permian Komi data, transitives occurring with adverbs and adpositions are much fewer and, most importantly, they do not show variation with the corresponding prolative forms. The only adposition we find that occurs with transitive is *с’өрти*. This division also shows that it is possible to distinguish Permian Komi adverbs and adpositions from one another by their case, i.e. *вылөд* ‘along (adp.)’ and *вылти* ‘too much (adv.)’, as in expressions *вө-рөт’м’ис важ туй вылөт мунам* ‘We go through the forest **along** the old road’ [Пономарева 2016: 101] and *кор мэ с’өд йунка нас’та-ла, сэк и мэ-ным вылти шоз* ‘When I put on a black skirt, then I feel **very** sad’ [Пономарева 2016: 340].

Found examples are presented in the Table 1 and Figure 1 below:

Dialect	pro adv	pro adp	pro noun	tra adv	tra adp	tra noun
Izhma (kpv)	0	4	3	123	70	16
Udora (kpv)	0	3	46	115	48	9
Northern Permian (koi)	1	5	21	23	11	0

Table 1: Occurrences of prolative and transitive in the studied materials

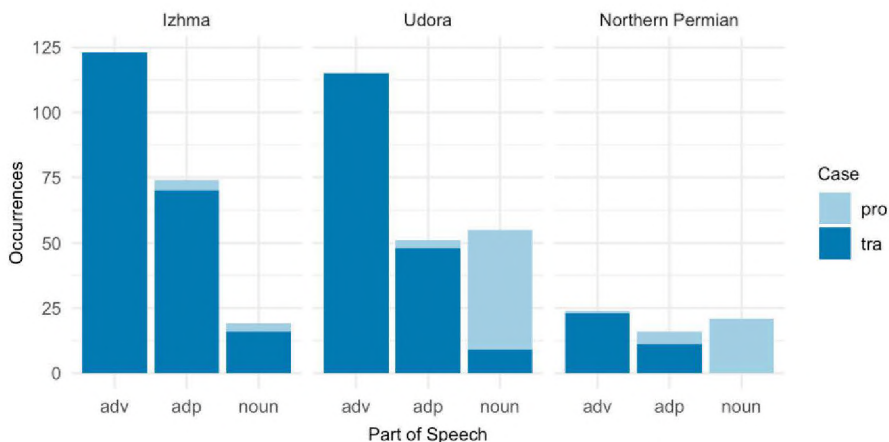


Figure 1: Occurrences visualized by part of speech

The situation with the Izhma dialect is much more complicated and unexpected. Since the Izhma corpus is much larger than the Udora corpus, we assumed we would find a much larger number of both prolatives and transitives. What we found, however, was that prolatives are extremely rare. At least for the Izhma dialect, the observation that the transitive occurs more commonly with adpositions than with nouns [Сахарова, Сельков 1976: 44; Попова, Сажина 2014: 122] appears to be entirely correct, but to our knowledge, the fact that prolatives are extremely rare in Izhma, almost on the verge of not being used at all, has not been thoroughly discussed before. As mentioned, in a concluding table, Попова and Сажина [2014: 247] do report transitive *-mu* as the only path case in Izhma, a finding that is also strongly supported by our analysis. However, our study suggests that both prolative and transitive are rather marginal cases in Izhma. The prolative does occur with individual forms, such as in the adposition *бӱрс'ан'эд* ‘from behind’³. The corresponding Standard Zyrian form, *бӱрсяньӱд*,

³ <http://videocorpora.ru/ru/content/терентьева-феонила-алексеевна?mode=searchкомі|бӱрсянед>

also currently occurs 12 times in the National Komi Corpus⁴ and three times in our Izhma corpus. Our entire Izhma sample contains only a handful of nouns that use prolativ or transitive. When we examine these occurrences, a clear areal delineation emerges: almost all of the examples are produced by speakers who were born in the Izhma or Upper Izhma region, both within the boundaries of the Komi Republic. The fact that this phenomena occurs in Pozhnya is particularly interesting, as this area has already been in closer contact with Upper Vychegda dialect.

That said, we cannot yet draw conclusions about the significance of this distribution, as there are numerous other factors involved. Among the prolatives in the Izhma and Pozhnya regions, several occur in songs and plays, such as *вэс'кыд кизэдыс бос'ны* 'to grab the left hand'⁵, which may have been learned from literary Komi sources, although many such texts have their origins in local traditions. Analysing the occurrence of the forms in distinct genres and text types is beyond the scope of this study, and the materials used would need to be larger, as songs and other recited texts such as poems are relatively rare in our corpora. In a corpus of contemporary speech, the participants also have complex backgrounds: they may have lived in different areas over the course of their lives and may not have been born in the dialect area under investigation. However, it seems clear that these kinds of texts are one way through which speakers of different dialects are exposed to standard language forms, perhaps particularly strongly so in the areas inside the Komi Republic, given the presence of Komi in the media and education.

We can thus conclude that the Udora and Permian Komi dialects follow the expected patterns, while Izhma deviates from them in a variety of ways. Izhma seems to have undergone a similar generaliza-

⁴ <http://komicorpora.ru>

⁵ <http://videocorpora.ru/ru/content/песни-и-частушки-0?mode=searchкомикиэдыс>

tion of path-coding cases as has occurred in the Upper Sysola and Upper Kama dialects, in that the transitive has been analysed as the primary path-coding case. However, this has not resulted in the introduction of the transitive into the noun paradigm, as such occurrences are still extremely rare, and at the moment we expect that expressions with other adpositions are preferred for this function. We do not find the adposition *ныр* ‘through’ used widely in this context, but *кыз’а* ‘along’ occurs regularly, and also *выытти* ‘along a surface’ is used in expressions of path. Further research is needed on the devices used in Izhma dialect for this function.

3. Historical development of prolatives and transitives

As our analysis shows, these case variants show a similar distribution across word classes in both Komi varieties and Udmurt. In the Zyrian Komi written standard, this distribution has been obscured by a process wherein the transitive has been introduced into the noun paradigm alongside the prolative. In terms of the geographical distribution, the use of transitive in the noun paradigm appears to be an innovation that is particularly constrained to the Upper Kama and Upper Sysola dialects. In these dialects, the change seems to be that the transitive has been generalized into all functions of path-coding cases, including those where the prolative is normally always used. This development, the generalization of the variant without a vowel to all functions, also appears to have taken place independently in some Southern Udmurt dialects, and the generalization of two allomorphs into one is not an unexpected morphological change. In the peripheral variants of the Izhma dialect, we find a similar change, where the prolative forms have largely disappeared from the noun paradigm, but without being actively replaced by transitives. This kind of analogical leveling can be expected in more peripheral linguistic elements, like path-coding cases, because their frequency in language use is not very high. One can see two possible competing motivations here:

1. The transitive is generalized over the prolicative because it is observed more often in expressions of path, namely in the more frequent path-coding with postpositions.
2. The prolicative is generalized over transitive because it is conceived as the (nominal) case coding path.

The first possibility can be seen as an instance of constructional contamination (cf. Pijpops et. al. 2018), where two constructions that are (almost) synonymous but differ morphosyntactically from each other yield a new construction with properties of both of the original constructions, in this case a path-coding nominal case that is originally used as a path-coding postpositional case. In the second case, the transitive suffix appearing only in closed-class forms such as pronouns and postpositions is reanalysed as something other than a case. In this case, the prolicative as the productive path-coding case of the nominal paradigm is chosen as the default path-coding case in all instances. A parallel could be the Finnish forms *taka-na* ‘(in) behind’, *taka-a* ‘from behind’ and *taa-kse* ‘(in)to behind’, where the old case forms essive *-na*, partitive (functioning as a separative) *-a*, and translative *-kse* are not recognized as cases by contemporary speakers (cf. VISK §690). The dialects that use both cases could be exhibiting an ongoing grammaticalization process affecting the distribution and functions of path-coding cases.

We postulate that the innovation has spread from the Upper Sysola dialect into the neighbouring Central Sysola dialect, and onward along the Sysola river, not replacing the prolicative, but having been interpreted as a secondary path-coding case. This explains why the phenomenon is not present in the geographically discontinuous Luza-Letka, Lower Vychegda or Udora dialects, and may be present in geographically adjacent Vym. Having reached the dialect of the Syktyvkar area, which later became the basis for the Zyrian Komi written language, the distinct use of prolicative and transitive is currently established in the Zyrian Komi written norm as well. This proposal is entirely tenta-

tive and should be verified by further research. Further studies could investigate the Central Sysola dialect in minute detail and see if the transitive use in the noun paradigm has a geographical distribution there that indicates contact with Upper Sysola. Additionally, the question of how exactly the distribution we have described for the Izhma dialect fits into the history of Komi dialects requires more research.

The main implication for historical morphology is that we can assume that the way to use the case variants that contain a vowel, *-əmu*, *-öm* or *-öd*, with nouns is a shared Permic feature. The form *-mu* is predominantly used in adpositions and adverbs, the majority of which also have a monosyllabic stem. Thereby the distribution could also have originally been determined by phonotactics. We also must then assume that in Permian Komi, the prolativ has shifted more to the adpositional use, and that the current instances, regularly described as relics, would have earlier had a wider distribution. From this point of view, the most straightforward explanation appears to be that Proto-Permic also had a similar complementary distribution of path-coding case forms.

4. Conclusions

Our study provides an overview of the recent descriptions of path-coding cases in different Permic varieties, with a focus in Komi dialects. We note that different generalizations and changes in this allomorphy are reported across Permic dialects. We have accompanied this with an analysis conducted using three transcribed speech corpora from different Komi varieties, and have contextualized the results against the historical background of this phenomenon given in different descriptions.

In the Udora dialect of Zyrian Komi and the Northern Permian Komi dialects, we can report that prolatives and transitives are split clearly by parts of speech. The materials on the Izhma dialect show a very different distribution, where especially prolatives are very rare.

We propose that Izhma has also undergone a process wherein the path-coding case system has been simplified to use only one variant, but in such a way that the transitive has not entered the noun paradigm as it has in the dialects along Sysola and Vychegda rivers. Due to the geographic distribution of the use of prolatives and transitives in nouns, we propose that this must be an innovation that has spread along a geographically continuous and expanding Komi dialect continuum, not including the more remote varieties.

More research is needed on the distribution of these cases in Lower Vychegda, Vym and Izhma, since the existing descriptions are not entirely conclusive as to which categories these dialects belong to, and our research has found an unexpected system in Izhma as well. We hope that as more Komi dialect materials are digitized, the research into their features, particularities and exact developments will continue to flourish.

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