Revisiting comitative constructions and related matters: the Circum-Baltic data from a typological perspective

Comitative constructions cross-linguistically tend to be semantically and/or formally close to other types of constructions dealing with the plurality of participants, e.g., coordinating ones. In this talk, I address several cases of relationship between such constructions with the major focus on some interesting phenomena found in the Circum-Baltic languages.

First, in some Circum-Baltic languages, in addition to primary comitative markers covering a wide range of functions, more specialized markers are used. Stolz and his associates argue that such markers are used in the contexts of companion-orientation, “the description of situations from the point of view of the participant who has less control over the action than the accompanee, if there is one at all” (Stolz et al. 2006: 315), cf. (1a-b). However, the analysis of the data shows that such interpretation, formulated in terms of control and participant-orientation, is not completely correct. Instead, the pragmatic perspective seems to be more accurate, if one tries to capture the essence of such comitative markers. For instance, Latvian *līdzi*, a specialized comitative marker, seems to work as a presuppositional trigger, see (2). Putting the focus on pragmatic properties allows to find the link between *līdzi*-like markers, more typical comitative markers, coordinating conjunctions and additive particles. It also explains why such markers as *līdzi* are often used in elliptical constructions.

The importance of presupposition-related properties of comitative markers seems to be overlooked cross-linguistically and can be probably taken into consideration by linguists working on languages with unordinary comitative markers. Second, sociative-comitative polysemy, characteristic of Altaic and some other languages (Nedjalkov 2007: 16ff.), is also attested in the Circum-Baltic area. Interestingly, it is first of all manifested in verbal prefixes, cf. Russian *so*- in *sotrudnikat* ‘to collaborate’ and *soputstvovat* ‘to accompany’. However, the Lithuanian data show that sociative-comitative polysemy can be extended to non-verbal sociative markers, as Lithuanian adverbs *kartu* and *drauge* ‘together’ can be used in both sociative and comitative contexts, depending on whether one uses a singular or plural reference NP.

In my talk, I’m going to analyse the abovementioned phenomena in the context of related constructions in languages under discussion and similar constructions in other languages of the world.

(1a) ...Zinaīd-a... atnāc-a ar meit-u uz dievkalpojum-u. 
Zinaida-NOM.SG come.PST-3 with daughter-ACC.SG to service-ACC.SG

‘Zinaida came to the service with her daughter.’ (K)

(1b) Florenc-e ret-u reiz-i bij-a gāj-usi līdzi
Florence-NOM.SG rare-ACC.SG.F time-ACC.SG be.PST-3 go.PA.PST.SG.F LIDZI

māt-ei baznic-ā.
mother-DAT.SG church-LOC.SG

‘Occasionally, Florence went [along] with her mother to the church’. (K) (=joined her mother, followed her)

(2) Viņš viens-s ne-zinā-s cel-u uz stacij-u,
he.NOM one-NOM.SG.M NEG-know-FUT(3) to station-ACC.SG

es ie-š-u līdzi.
I.NOM go-FUT-1SG LIDZI

‘He won’t find the way to the station himself, I’ll go with him.’ (K)

→ He will go (to the station) (presupposition).

Abbreviations
ACC – accusative; F – feminine; FUT – future; LOC – locative; M – masculine; NEG – negation; NOM – nominative; PA – active participle; PST – past; SG – singular.

K = Līdzsvarots mūsdienu latviešu valodas korpuss (www.korpuss.lv)

References