

ON THE AVOIDANCE  
OF THE DOUBLE ACCUSATIVE IN LATVIAN

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Several types of constructions with double accusatives are attested in the older stages of Lithuanian and Latvian, but in the modern standard languages they have been completely eliminated. The evidence for double accusatives in Baltic and Slavonic has recently been brought together by V.B. Krys'ko<sup>1</sup>. In this article I will be concerned with some of the mechanisms involved in the elimination of the double accusative in Latvian and with some of its further consequences.

The classical examples of the double accusative are, of course, the equivalents of *docere (aliquem aliquid)*; for Latvian Endzelīns cites *es viņu [...] izmācīšu vissmalkāko amatu* and (with retention of the accusative in the passive construction) *vai mēs esam valodu mācīti?*<sup>2</sup> For Lithuanian cfr. Fraenkel<sup>3</sup>.

Another type of double accusatives occurred with transitive verbs of motion. The accusative is used both for the object put in motion and the space traversed by the object. This type may be illustrated by *tas mani dzīlus dubļus kājiņām brīdināja*<sup>4</sup>. The accusative of spatial extension which occurs with basically intransitive verbs of motion and is also transferred to the corresponding causatives, is somewhat ambiguous

<sup>1</sup>V.B. Krys'ko, Двойной объектный винительный и транзитивные возвратные глаголы в балто-славянских языках, "Linguistica Baltica", 1, 1992, pp. 11-24.

<sup>2</sup>J. Endzelīns, *Latviešu valodas gramatika*, Rīga 1951, p. 577.

<sup>3</sup>E. Fraenkel, *Syntax der litauischen Kasus*, Kaunas 1928, p. 76.

<sup>4</sup>J. Endzelīns, *Op. cit.*, p. 577.

between an object and an adverbial accusative<sup>5</sup>. It has been largely eliminated and replaced by prepositional expressions, and this has, of course, been applied to the causative constructions as well. The accusative is still used with verbs containing the prefixes *ap-* and *pār-*, but alongside with other constructions: we thus have *pārkāpt slieksni* 'to cross the threshold', but also *pārkāpt pār slieksni* and *pārkāpt pāri slieksnim*. There is even an adpositionless construction with the dative: *pārkāpt slieksnim*. This construction (an innovation of Latvian) has probably arisen from the preceding one by deletion of the semi-adposition *pāri*<sup>6</sup>. This type of substitution of the dative for the accusative is therefore of a different nature than those discussed below. With the corresponding causative verbs, like *pārvest*, *pārceļt*, etc., the accusative of spatial extension is not used any more. No special strategy was required to eliminate the double accusative with the causative verbs of motion: a variety of constructions is available with the corresponding intransitive verbs, and all but one can simply be transferred to constructions with the causative ones.

A special solution was needed to eliminate the double accusative with *mācīt*, and, subsequently, with some other verbs as well.

In Lithuanian the accusative of the inanimate object with *mokyti / mokinti* has been replaced with the genitive. This usage can already be observed in Old Lithuanian (Fraenkel cites examples of both the accusative and the genitive from the *Enchiridion* of Vilentas<sup>7</sup>). In Latvian the accusative of the animate object is normally replaced by the

<sup>5</sup>A. Holvoet, *Objects, cognate accusatives and adverbials in Latvian*, "Linguistica Baltica", 1, 1992, pp. 103-112.

<sup>6</sup>A. Holvoet, *On the syntax and semantics of adpositional local phrases in Latvian*, "Linguistica Baltica", 2, 1993, pp. 143-144.

<sup>7</sup>E. Fraenkel, *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

dative when another accusative object is added: *māci dziesmas ... māsiņām*<sup>8</sup>.

There is also a second pattern, with the animate object in the accusative and the inanimate one in the locative, as in *dēlu māca amatā, tā mēs grāmatā mācīti*<sup>9</sup>. Inanimate objects in the dative are also attested: *kas mācīja bārenīti ... darbiņam*<sup>10</sup>.

It is worth noting that the pattern ultimately adopted by Lithuanian is in agreement with the Polish one, whereas Latvian has a pattern also used in Estonian. It is hard to tell, however, whether this is more than a mere coincidence, since the genitive of the inanimate object with verbs for teaching seems to be ancient<sup>11</sup>, and the constructions with the dative of the inanimate object, are attested not only in Latvian, but in Lithuanian as well<sup>12</sup>. There was thus initially a large variety of constructions from which both languages could choose.

The constructions ultimately generalised as the standard patterns in Latvian and Lithuanian differ not only with regard to the case forms selected to replace the accusative, but also with regard to the type of solution adopted. Whereas Lithuanian consistently differentiates the case forms used for the animate and the inanimate object, Latvian differentiates them only in constructions where both co-occur. When they occur in isolation, both types of objects are in the accusative; we thus have *mācīt latīņu valodu* 'to teach Latin' (as with the reflexive *mācīties* 'to learn') and *mācīt bērņus* 'to teach children'. Both the animate and the inanimate object may become surface subjects in the debitive construction: *jums būs jāmāca vācu un franču valoda* (P.

<sup>8</sup>J. Endzelīns, *Op. cit.*, p. 569; A. Gāters, *Lettsche Syntax. Die Dainas* (hrsg. H. Radtke), Frankfurt a.M., p. 135.

<sup>9</sup>J. Endzelīns, *Op. cit.*, p. 589; A. Gāters, *Op. cit.*, p. 184.

<sup>10</sup>J. Endzelīns, *Op. cit.*, p. 569.

<sup>11</sup>E. Fraenkel, *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>12</sup>E. Fraenkel, *Op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.

Rozītis) 'you will have to teach German and French'; *jums jā māca jaunatne* (P. Rozītis) 'you have to teach young people'. When both objects co-occur, the animate object is in the dative (a similar pattern may be observed in English and many other languages). In the debitive construction, only the inanimate object becomes a surface subject: *fermera meitai man jā māca latīņu valoda* (G. Janovskis) 'I have to teach Latin to the farmer's daughter'.

When the object of instruction is expressed by an infinitive clause, a free alternation of both case forms may be observed: *Un tad situācija pati man mācīja, ko darīt* (J. Grete) 'And then the situation itself taught me what to do'; *Tēvs viņu mazu mācīja peldēt* (J. Veselis) 'At a young age his father taught him to swim'. The cause of this alternation is apparent. On the one hand, the presence of a propositional object may have the same effect as that of the corresponding inanimate object noun, causing the animate object to be put in the dative; on the other hand, the accusative of the animate object may be retained because there is no co-occurrence of two object nouns in the accusative here.

The case of *lūgt* 'to beg' is similar in some respects to that of *mācīt*. There is, of course, a difference inasmuch as *lūgt* cannot be interpreted as a causative with respect to some other verb governing the accusative, as Lith. *mokyti / mokinti* with respect to *(iš)mokti, mokėti*. But *lūgt* can also have two different types of objects, which are in the accusative when occurring in isolation. Again, the accusative of the animate object is replaced by the dative when both objects occur together; and the animate object may be either in the accusative or in the dative when an infinitive clause or an embedded clause with *lai* occurs instead of the inanimate object: *Es kungam lūdzu, lai mūs te ielaiž* (K. Skalbe) 'I beg the gentleman to let us in'; *viņi [...] bieži vien palūdza bijušos krievu armijas virsniekus piecelties un atbrīvot viņiem galdu* (P. Rozītis)

'they often requested former Russian army officers to stand up and clear a table for them'.

In the case of *lūgt* the need to avoid a double accusative arose probably as a consequence of a certain development within Latvian. According to Fraenkel<sup>13</sup>, the double accusative with verbs meaning 'to beg' or 'to ask' is not attested at all in Baltic. Lithuanian uses genitives either for the animate or the inanimate object<sup>14</sup>, and this was probably the original state of affairs in Latvian as well (examples of the genitive for both the animate and the inanimate object with *lūgt, prasīt* are cited by Endzelīns<sup>15</sup>). In Latvian, however, the adverbial use of the genitive was considerably restricted, which created the need for an alternative way of differentiating the objects with these verbs.

Now in the case of *lūgt* Mühlenbach states that there is a semantic differentiation between the accusative and the dative<sup>16</sup>. He mentions *lūgt* together with a number of verbs characterised by alternative use of both object cases. These are verbs denoting various types of physical impact on a (typically animate) object, such as *durt* 'to stab, to prick', *dzelt* 'to sting', *grūst* 'to prod', *kost* 'to bite', *spert* 'to kick', *sist* 'to hit' and many expressive synonyms of this verb (such as *cirst, gāzt, kraut, uzlaist, zvelt*, etc.); *mest* 'to throw' and its synonyms, etc. The use of the dative (alternating with the accusative) as an object case with verbs of this semantic class is observed in Lithuanian as well<sup>17</sup>. With regard to the semantic differentiation, Mühlenbach writes:

<sup>13</sup>E. Fraenkel, *Op. cit.*, p. 159.

<sup>14</sup>E. Fraenkel, *Op. cit.*, pp. 69-71.

<sup>15</sup>J. Endzelīns, *Op. cit.*, p. 558.

<sup>16</sup>J. Endzelīns/K. Mühlenbach, *Latviešu gramatika*, Rīga 1907, p. 176.

<sup>17</sup>E. Fraenkel, *Op. cit.*, pp. 114-115; V. Ambrazas (ed.), *Граммати́ка литовского языка*, Vilnius, p. 586; N. Sližienė, *Lietuvių kalbos veiksmažodžių valentingumas ir sintaksinė klasifikacija*, "Lietuvių Kalbotyros Klausimai", 25, p. 61.

«Akuzatīvs pa savai dabai izsaka, ka darbība sagrābusi zināmu personu pilnīgi savā varā, ar sevišķu sparū to aptverdama un turēdama, datīvs turpretim izteic, ka darbība notiek zināmai personai vai par labu, vai par ļaunu»<sup>18</sup>.

From this description it appears that the use of the dative reflects a slight degree of affectedness of the object. The basic opposition is one between causative and non-causative meaning. If the verb is characterised by causative entailment (i.e. if a change in the situation of the object is implicit in the meaning of the verb), the use of the dative is impossible; if the object is merely stated to be affected by the action, without any necessary change in its situation being expressed, then the dative will often be used. The following examples illustrate this: *Maruža ... pagrūž mani sānis* (I. Grebзде) 'Maruža pushes me aside' (causative meaning, as a change in location is implied); *Laucis ar dūri [...] spēcīgi iegrūda Gailim pažodē [...]* (P. Rozītis) 'Laucis dealt Gailis a powerful blow on the chin' (affective meaning, without causative element). When there is no causative element, a further semantic differentiation may be observed: the dative is associated with a slight degree of affectedness; semelfactive or momentaneous meaning may be among the realisations of the semantic feature "slight degree of affectedness", as can be seen from Mühlenbach's account.

As to the of this dative, Fraenkel associates it with the directional dative<sup>19</sup>, which is no doubt correct in view of the use of the dative with the verbs *mest*, *sviest* 'to throw' and *šaut* 'to shoot' (with verbs of "throwing" the dative is attested in Old Indic and other archaic Indo-European languages<sup>20</sup>. If this is so, then the animate dative used with verbs of physical impact can be traced back to Indo-European, but, as Fraenkel rightly notes, its productivity in Baltic exceeds that in any

<sup>18</sup>J. Endzelīns/K. Mühlenbach, *Op. cit.*, p. 176.

<sup>19</sup>E. Fraenkel, *Op. cit.*, pp. 114-115.

<sup>20</sup>E. Fraenkel, *Op. cit.*, p. 114fn.

other Indo-European language group. Moreover, the news class of verbs to which this dative has been extended has become dissociated from the original one by the introduction of a different syntactic pattern. With verbs like *mest*, the accusative is restricted to the noun denoting the instrument, and it alternates with *ar* + accusative: *mest kādam akmeni* or *mest kādam ar akmeni* 'to throw a stone at someone'. With verbs of the new group, the dative and the accusative alternate in the same syntactic position: *sist kādu / sist kādam*. The differentiation of case forms is purely semantic here.

From a synchronic point of view this dative should, of course, be treated otherwise than from the historical one, since (a) the directional dative proper has fallen into disuse; (b) the class of verbs taking this dative has been extended; (c) the new group of verbs taking this dative has become dissociated from the original one as a result of the differentiation of syntactic patterns; and (d) in the new group the object dative regularly alternates with the accusative in a way that is motivated by semantic rules which can best be described in terms of "affectedness".

Now among the verbs mentioned by Mühlenbach as following this pattern, *lūgt* is the only one that does not belong to the semantic class of verbs denoting a physical impact. In this case only the secondary shades of meaning associated with the feature "degree of affectedness", i.e. "durative/iterative vs. momentaneous/semelfactive", are applicable.

As *lūgt* belongs to a completely different semantic class than the above-mentioned verbs denoting various types of physical impact, we may assume that the original motivation for the alternative use of the dative and accusative was of a different kind here, and that *lūgt* was subsequently drawn into the orbit of the affective verbs described above. Originally there probably was an alternative use of the accusative and the dative as a result of the avoidance of the double

accusative, and between both case forms a semantic differentiation borrowed from another class of verbs was introduced. The syntactic motivation was thus replaced by a semantic one.

It is conceivable that other instances of alternative use of accusative and dative objects are caused by this avoidance of the double accusative as well. Both accusative and dative may occur with causative verbs like *piespiest* 'to compel' and *pierunāt* 'to persuade'.

Examples with the accusative: *Tas viņus tikai spiedīšot pārdomāt savu stāvokli* (A. Deglavs) 'That would only compel them to reconsider their situation'. *Pļavenieks mēģināja savus strēlniekus pierunāt, lai ietu atsvabināt ieslodzīto tautas varoni* (P. Rozītis) 'P. tried to persuade his riflemen to go and set free the captive national hero'. With the dative: *Krievu kazaki postīja bagātās kurzemnieku druvas [...], pašiem kurzemniekiem spiezdami uzņemties [...] bēgļu gaitas* (P. Rozītis) 'The Russian Cossacks devastated the rich cornfields of Courland, forcing the Courlandians themselves to become refugees'. *Katrs ... parakstīja savu vārdu un pierunāja to darīt arī saviem paziņām* (A. Deglavs) 'Everyone signed and persuaded his acquaintances to do the same'.

There seems to be no semantic differentiation here. The motivation for the alternative use of the dative and the accusative seems to be purely syntactic.

As can be seen from the above examples, the use of the accusative with *piespiest* and *pierunāt* may lead to the cooccurrence of two accusative objects in close neighbourhood, though one of them depends on the verb of the matrix clause and the other on that of the embedded clause. The situation is thus different from that of a lexical causative like *macīt*, where both noun phrases depend on the same verb. Nevertheless the case of *piespiest* and *pierunāt* would seem to indicate that the principle of avoidance of double accusatives has

operated not only within one clause, but even across clause borders, though in a less consistent way. Of course, there is also a second possibility which may not be excluded here. The syntactic pattern with *piespiest*, *pierunāt* may have arisen under the influence of the constructions with *macīt*, *lūgt*, *prasīt*, where both the accusative and dative of the animate object may be used if an embedded clause occurs instead of an inanimate accusative object. In this case the tendency to avoid double accusatives would have been the ultimate cause of the alternation of accusative and dative as well, but its influence would then have been an indirect one.

Whatever may have been the case, it seems that in Latvian the avoidance of the double accusative has given rise to a recurrent process involving the substitution of dative objects for accusative objects. This was one of the sources of the considerable productivity of the dative object in Latvian, when compared to Lithuanian.

**On the avoidance of the double accusative in Latvian.**  
Axel Holvoet (Warszawa)

As is known, the double accusative (of the type *docere aliquem aliquid*) is attested in Baltic, but has been largely eliminated. Latvian has done this by replacing the accusative with the dative for the animate object. The rule "acc. + acc. --> acc. + dat." seems to have been subsequently applied to the valency pattern with other verbs, and it might have been at the source of the alternative use of accusative and dative for the animate object with such verbs as *lūgt* (with a secondary semantic differentiation). The tendency to avoid double accusatives is particularly strong in Latvian, and it seems to have worked even across clause borders (in the case of embedded clauses with such verbs as *piespiest* 'to compel', *pierunāt* 'to persuade').