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Concurrence of Case Forms – Lapse or Norm in Standard Latvian

Andra Kalnača

Abstract. The grammatical and semantic systems of noun categories are undergoing obvious changes in modern Latvian. The most vivid example of such change is in the category of case and it's semantic structure. There is a concurrence between case forms for different syntactic functions, e.g., for negation **G//N** '*makā nav naudas//nauda*'/'there is no money in the wallet'; in debitive construction (these constructions express necessity in Latvian, e.g., Man ir jālasa grāmata 'I must read a book'. Debitive belongs to the system of moods in Latvian) **N//A '***man ir jālasa grāmata//grāmatu*'/'I must read a book'; and for a negated direct object **G//A '***neteikšu neviena vārda//vārdu*'/'I'll not say a word'.

These grammatical processes are handled inconsistently in Latvian grammar-books. The concurrence of the accusative and the genitive is treated as an allowable variant, while the concurrence of the nominative and the genitive or the nominative and the accusative are considered as a lapse in Standard Latvian. This paper deals with the reasons for the concurrence of case forms and tries to ascertain why there are ambiguous grammatical descriptives in Latvian.

The language material in this paper has been sourced from "*Mūsdienu latviešu literārās valodas gramatika*" (1959:388-408) and Alfrēds Gāters "*Lettische Syntax/Die Dainas*" (1993:70-205). Insofar as Latvian linguistics lacks extensive research into the semantics of the case system, the theoretical basis of this paper has been derived from the monographs and scholarly researches of Lithuanian as well as other linguists – Jonas Šukys *"Lietuvių kalbos linksniai ir prielinksniai"* (1998), Elena Valiulytė *"Dabartinės lietuvių kalbos sintaksiniai sinonimai"* (1998), Aldona Paulauskienė *"Lietuvių kalbos morfologija"* (1994) and *"Lietuvių kalbos kultūra"* (2000), Barry J. Blake *"Case"* (1997), Jerzy Kuriłowicz *"The Inflectional Categories of Indo-European"* (1964), Sturla Berg-Olsen *"A syntactic change in progress: The decline in the use of the non-prepositional genitive in Latvian, with a comparative view on Lithuanian"* (1999).

The case classification of nouns is complicated in Latvian. The declension system consists of seven case forms – nominative, genitive, dative, accusative, instrumental, locative and vocative. Every case form (excluding vocative) has a rich polysemy of meanings, which is closely associated with the semantic and grammatical structure of utterance. The case system, therefore, can be classified as morphologically syntactic (Paulauskienė, 1994:105). There is one semantic invariant among the different meanings of every case form. The semantic invariant is the paradigmatic meaning, whereas the others are derivative syntagmatic meanings. The paradigmatic meaning depends directly on the syntactic and semantic functions of the case form in utterance. The syntagmatic meanings are usually derived from paradigmatic ones, thus the synonymic relationship is definable between them (Kuriłowicz, 1964:179-206), e.g., the paradigmatic meaning of the nominative is the subject of utterance ('*Bērni rotaļājas*'/'The children are playing '*Saule spīd*'/'The sun shines'). Derivative syntagmatic meanings of the nominative are: that of a direct object in passive voice – '*Nams tiek celts*'/'The house is being built'; as a direct object in debitive construction – '*Man ir jālasa grāmata*'/'I must read a book'; and the function of address – '*Aija, nāc šurp!*'/'Aija, come here!'.

Grammatical synonymy causes a polysemy of grammatical forms. The synonymy of case forms is linked to their syntactic usage – in formal representation of a subject, an object or in negation, address or apposition. Thus the subject of utterance can be both nominative and genitive and the direct object can be accusative, genitive and nominative etc. Such grammatical synonymy creates concurrence of case forms. One case form tries to replace another or both function in parallel. The concurrence of case forms had already been established in Latvian folklore texts, especially in the *dainas* (Gāters, 1993). Jānis Endzelīns and Kārlis Mīlenbahs had discussed this topic in their earliest grammar books (Endzelīns, Mīlenbahs, 1907). Very similar manifestations of synonymy have been found in Lithuanian (Paulauskienė, 1994, 2000; Šukys, 1998; Valiulytė, 1998, etc.), Russian (Jakobson, 1971; Современный русский язык, 1999:491 etc.) and Latin (Blake, 1994:22-23, Coleman, 1976). This is an indication that the synonymy of case forms is an old and universal process, which is associated with the unification of functions and specialisation of semantic, grammatical and

morphonological systems of language. Specific manifestation of this process can differ in different languages, but the guidelines are common. The synonymy and concurrence of case forms are linked to the opposition of central (**N, G, A**) and peripheral (**D, I, L**) cases and occur mainly in these groups. Central or grammatical cases are the backbone of the semantic and grammatical structure of utterance. Peripheral or semantic cases provide differing additional information about the relationship between the subject and the object, but these cases are not obligatory to the structural plot of the utterance. The vocative stands outside central and peripheral cases.

The most typical occurrences of concurrence of case forms in Latvian are:

- **Vocative – Nominative** for the function of address – '*tēv!//tēvs!*'/'Father!';

- **Nominative – Accusative** in debitive construction – '*man ir jālasa grāmata // grāmatu*'/'I must read a book';

- **Genitive – Nominative** in negation – '*makā nav naudas//nauda*'/'there is no money in the wallet'; for a partitive meaning with indeclinable numerals – '*viņam ir desmit gadu//gadi*'/'he is ten years old'; and for adverbs of measure – '*šovasar saules//saule bija tik maz*'/'There was so little sunshine this summer';

- **Genitive – Dative** for meaning indicating purpose or content – '*puķu vāze//vāze puķēm*'/'vase of flowers//for flowers';

- **Genitive – Accusative** as a direct object in negation – '*neteikšu neviena vārda//vārdu*'/'I'll not say a word'; for a partitive meaning - '*bērns grib siera // sieru*''/'the child wants cheese'; and for a meaning indicating purpose – '*iesim zivju//zivis zvejot'*/'Let's go fishing';

- **Genitive – Instrumental** to function as a subject adjacent to an adjective – '*dārzs ir pilns ābolu//(ar) āboliem*'/'the orchard is full of apples'; or a subject adjacent to a verb '*pagalms ir egļu//eglēm pieaudzis*'/'the courtyard is overgrown with fir-trees'.

The above mentioned examples lead to the deduction that the concurrence of case forms and the development of polysemic and synonymic systems are closely associated with the transformation of the polysemy of the genitive. It declines as some of the primary meanings of the genitive are substituted, or sometimes functions in parallel with other cases or prepositional constructions. All changes are primarily linked to the peripheral meaning and not to semantic invariance.

Replacement of the genitive by other cases is usually explained as a departure from formal homonymy in order to function as a direct object. Thus in Latvian '*māsas*' can be a form of the genitive singular and the accusative plural ('*Es neredzu māsas*'/'I don't see my sister/sisters'); '*koku*' can be accusative singular and genitive plural ('*Es neredzu koku*'/'I don't see the tree/trees') (Lepika, 1967:107-115; Berg-Olsen, 1999:175-178). The accusative gradually is substituted for the genitive precluding formal homonymy.

Nonetheless, an analysis of Latvian language material shows that the concurrence of case forms is associated with more capacious processes in language – the separation of the subject and object domains in utterance. Specifically, the unambiguous tendency to establish the subject and object domains with one case is the norm in Latvian. The subject of utterance always tries to be nominative, while the direct object is accusative, but the genitive preserves only it's attributive function.

Every case form has its representative function or semantic invariant (Lyons, 1968:295). The semantic invariant of the subject is nominative; the accusative is the invariant of the direct object. The dative and the instrumental serve as indirect objects. The following sections of this paper will outline this schema of semantic invariance.

SUBJECT

Nominative (semantic invariant)

G//N for a partitive meaning ('*makā ir desmit latu//lati*'/'there are ten lats in the wallet');

G//N in negation ('*mājās nav cukura//cukurs*'/'there is no sugar in the house');

V//N for the function of address ('*tēv!'//tēvs*'/'Father!').

The concurrence of **G//N** for a partitive meaning and in negation continue to be topical questions of standardisation beginning at the inception of Standard Latvian at the end of 19th century and continuing today. It seems that the answer must be found in the development of the syntactic structure of utterance and in the syntactic functions of case forms. All the above-mentioned examples of **G//N** concurrence are linked to the function of subject. The semantic and syntactic invariant of the nominative case is the subject of utterance. This is the basic function of the nominative in language. Genitive seldom is the subject of utterance. Other cases are very rarely in the position of subject Perhaps this is the principal reason why the nominative tends to challenge the genitive for the position of subject. This process continues irrespective of the standardisation of Latvian.

A word in the vocative case cannot be the subject of utterance, but it points to a significant link: the vocative always denotes the subject of the text pertaining to the addressee, e.g., '*Aija, nāc šurp!*'/'Aija, come here!'; '*Kā jums klājas, kungi?*'/'How are you, gentlemen?'. It is possible, therefore, to include the vocative in the subject domain, even though the vocative case cannot be either the subject, object or attribute in utterance (Kalnača, 1999:87-93). In addition, the synonymy of the nominative and the vocative for the function of address also applies to the subject domain. The nominative as an unmarked member of the case paradigm is used in Latvian to function as a vocative with specific intonation and within syntactic context. This synonymy creates the concurrence of two grammatical forms, e.g., '*Lūdzu, jaunkundz!* **(V)**'/'Please, miss!' and '*Piedodiet, jaunkundze!* **(N)'/'**Excuse me, miss!' (Kalnača, 2000:180-182). This process is not a specific feature of Latvian, but is found in every Indo-European language with different consequences

(Kuriłowicz, 1964:197-199; Jakobson, 1971:179; Coleman, 1976:50).

OBJECT

Direct object
Accusative (semantic invariant)

N//A in a debitive construction – '*man ir jālasa grāmata// grāmatu*'/'I must read a book'; '*man ir jāturpina lasīt grāmata//grāmatu*'/'I must continue to read the book';

G//A in negation – '*neteikšu neviena vārda//nevienu vārdu*'/'I'll not say a word';

G//A for a partitive meaning – '*bērns grib siera//*sieru'/ 'the child wants cheese';

G//A for a meaning indicating purpose – '*iesim zivju//zivis zvejot'/'Let's go fishing'*.

The accusative in Latvian dynamically competes with the nominative in debitive constructions. Endzelīns already wrote about this unacceptable synonymy in his *"Dažādas valodas kļūdas"*, which was first published in 1928 (Endzelīns, 1980:41). Nonetheless **N//A** synonymy prevails in both colloquial speech and written texts, albeit it contradicts the norms of standard language (Freimane, 1993:249; Skujiņa, 1999:41, 47, etc.). Inconsistency in standardisation is also seen in debitive constructions using the infinitive e.g., Valentīna Skujiņa acknowledges only the accusative if a finite verb in the debitive is followed by an infinitive (Skujiņa, 1999:47). Inta Freimane and Dzintra Paegle allow both the nominative and the accusative in this position, specifically, their synonymy (Freimane, 1993:249; Paegle, 1998:207).

The concurrence **G//A** in negation with transitive verbs is currently an active grammatical process in Latvian, however, claiming a victory for the accusative case would be premature. Nonetheless, variations in use may be found to exist in the fiction of the 19th century, the 1st half of 20th century, Latvian exile literature and contemporary fiction. As a direct object in negation, the genitive predominates in older texts. Analysing parallel instances of grammatical synonymy in Lithuanian Paulauskienė points out a tendency to use the uniform construction of the accusative for affirmation and negation in Lithuanian e.g., '*rašau laišką* (**A**)'/'I am writing a letter' - '*nerašau laišką//laišką* **(G//A)'/**'I am not writing a letter' (Paulauskienė, 1994:114; Paulauskienė, 2000:176)**.** There is not a semantic difference between the genitive and the accusative in this syntactic position. Hence we must conclude that the genitive has been gradually excluded from expression of negation in Latvian. This pertains to both a negated subject and a negated object, e.g., '*Šodien ir saule* **(N)'/'**Today it's sunny' - '*Šodien nav saules//saule* **(G//N)**' 'Today it isn't sunny'**; '***Es pazīstu Maiju* **(A)**'/'I know Maija' – '*Es nepazīstu Maijas//Maiju* **(G//A)**'/'I don't know Maija'. The only retained expressions of negation are the particle '*ne*' and the verb '*nebūt*' in Latvian. In the standardisation of Latvian, partial inconsistencies can be found in the situation where the concurrence **G//N** for a negated subject is classified as a lapse in standard Latvian, while the concurrence **G//A** for a negated object is classified as an allowable variant.

The concurrence **G//A** for a partitive meaning is presumably associated with the fact that the primary semantic opposition *specific/general* has lost it's grammatical topicality in Latvian. In the partitive construction '*bērns grib siera*'/'the child wants cheese', the genitive indicates a part, specifically – 'the child wants some cheese', whereas the accusative denotes the object as a totality, e.g., '*bērns grib sieru*'. The grammatical expression of this partitive opposition becomes lexical. In modern Latvian, specificity is indicated by the use of adverbs of measure '*drusku, nedaudz, mazliet*'/'some, a little bit, somewhat', etc.

The genitive and the accusative currently coexist as grammatical synonyms functioning as direct objects. This process can be observed in all possible instances, creating concurrence of both cases.

Indirect object

Dative (semantic invariant)

G//D for a meaning indicating purpose or content ('*puķu vāze//vāze puķēm*'/'vase of flowers//for flowers').

An interesting interdependence of central and peripheral cases is observed in Latvian. Specifically, the dative case has been incorporated in the domain of the subject and the object, where the nominative, accusative or genitive typically dominates. A number of dative constructions provide proof of this fact, e.g., '*man ir grāmata*'/'I have a book'; '*man sāp galva*'/'I have a headache'; '*man ir jālasa grāmata*'/'I must read a book'; '*man gribas dzert*'/'I'm thirsty'; '*man salst*'/'I'm cold'. All of these constructions demonstrate the syncretism of the subject and the object and are linked to the meaning indicating possession. The basic function of the dative serves as an indirect object in utterance – '*Es rakstu vēstuli māsai*'/'I am writing a letter to my sister'. Blake argues that the dative also has a list of secondary functions: i.e., as a direct object, indirect subject, as well as indicating possession in different languages (Blake, 1997:144-151). This argument allows for the inclusion of the dative in the group of central cases (Kuriłowicz, 1964:190-194). The listed Latvian dative constructions tend to support the arguments of Blake and Kuriłowicz, demonstrating semantic and syntactical asymmetry of the dative versus other cases. Thus possession is expressed by both the genitive and the dative in different constructions. This is the semantic history of the synonymy of the genitive and the dative in Latvian. A historic link between the genitive's meaning indicating possession or content and the dative's meaning indicating purpose or the addressee (*datīvus commodi/incommodi*) has been established.

In recent decades the concurrence **G//D** for a meaning indicating possession is being observed in colloquial speech as well as in newspapers, on sandwich-boards, in various signage in offices, shops etc., e.g., '*Māte viņai ir igauniete*'/'Her mother is Estonian'; '*šampūns bērniem*'/'a shampoo for children'; '*apģērbi sievietēm*'/'women's apparel'; '*materiāli celtniecībai*'/'building materials'. The

genitive is preferable in all instances, as it expresses possession more clearly (Freimane, 1993:217-218; Strazdiņa, 1974:129-140).

Instrumental (semantic invariant)

G//I to function as a subject – '*dārzs ir pilns ābolu//(ar) āboliem*'/'the orchard is full of apples'; or to function as a verb – '*pagalms ir egļu//eglēm pieaudzis*'/'the courtyard is overgrown with fir-trees'.

This synonymy is another instance of the interdependence between central and peripheral cases. It demonstrates the syncretism of a subject and an indirect object, of a performer and the means of action. The primary meaning of instrumental is the means of or the guide to action. This semantic invariant contains a reference to an indirect/adjacent subject. For this reason the instrumental case is used in passive constructions to express a subject (Kuriłowicz, 1964:188-190; Blake, 1997:156). To be the subject of utterance is one of the genitive's secondary functions. The genitive or instrumental in constructions such as in '*pagalms ir egļu//eglēm pieaudzis*'/'the courtyard is overgrown with fir-trees'; '*ceļš ir ozolu //ozoliem ieskauts*'/'the road is surrounded by oak-trees' formally represents indirect objects, but they contain the meaning of a subject, too. It is important to mention that **G//I** synonymy is possible only with inanimate nouns (Gāters, 1993:105). Passive constructions with animate indirect objects prohibit **G//I** synonymy, e.g., '*nams ir tēva celts*'/'the house was built by father'; '*dārzs ir mātes kopts*'/'the garden is cared for by mother' (for further details see Paulauskienė, 2000:187-189).

Conclusions

All the analysed grammatical processes depend on syntactic usage of the case form. The nominative tries to make the primary genitive function as a subject in the same way as the accusative substitutes for the genitive or the nominative functions as an object. Hence the polysemic structure of every case undergoes certain change. Almost all changes are closely associated with different constructions for the genitive in Latvian. An adnominal genitive continues to function as an attribute, whereas an adverbial genitive is replaced by the accusative in order to function as an object and by the nominative to function as a subject. Examination of the case structure reveals the unification of functions for the surface structure of utterance, though the core structure remains unchanged. It appears that the assumption of German influence on polysemy and synonymy of case forms is not valid (Lepika, 1967:107-115). Analogous processes have been established in other languages such as Lithuanian (Šukys, 1998:92-118; Švambarytė, 1999:72-82) and Russian (Blake, 1997:47; Jakobson, 1971:180; Современный русский язык, 1999:491-496). The process of unification of functions has perhaps developed further in Latvian. Nonetheless it can be objectively verified and operates relatively independently from the norms of Standard Latvian. A chain of norms has tried to decelerate or to prevent this process, at the same time, however, treating some instances of synonymy as allowable variants. This inconsistency in standardisation implicitly points to the objective nature of the changes. The most significant conclusion is: the concurrence of case forms is neither a norm nor a lapse in Standard Latvian – it is the continuous process of semantic and syntactic evolution.

List of abbreviations

A	accusative
D	dative
G	genitive
I	instrumental
L	locative
N	nominative
V	vocative

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Andra Kalnača

Linksnių formų sutapimas – klaida, ar norma bendrinėje latvių kalboje

Santrauka

Dabartinėje latvių kalboje pastebimi gramatinės ir semantinės daiktavardžių kategorijų pokyčiai. Ryškiausias pavyzdys – linksnio kategorijos ir semantinės struktūros pokyčiai. Straipsnyje analizuojama skirtingų sintaksės funkcijų linksnio formų sutapimas, pvz. *neiginyje* **G//N** *'makā nav naudas//nauda*'/'piniginėje nėra pinigų'; debityvinėje konstrukcijoje **N//A** *'man ir jālasa grāmata//grāmatu*'/'Aš privalau perskaityti knygą'; ir tiesioginio papildinio neiginyje **G//A** *'neteikšu neviena vārda//vārdu*'/'Aš nepasakysiu nė žodžio'.
Šie gramatiniai procesai latvių kalbos gramatikose traktuojami prieštaringai. Galininko ir kilmininko linksnių sutapimas yra galimas, o vardininko ir kilmininko arba vardininko ir galininko linksnių sutapimas bendrinėje latvių kalboje yra laikomas klaida. Šis straipsnis analizuoja linksnio formų sutapimo priežastis ir siekia nustatyti, kodėl latvių kalboje yra dvipramiškų gramatinių deskriptyvų.

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The Author

Andra Kalnača, dr., assoc.prof. at University of Latvia.
Academic interests: linguistics, computational linguistics and sociolinguistics.
Address: University of Latvia, Department of Baltic Philology, Visvalža 4a, Riga, LV-1050, Latvia.
E-mail: kalnaca@latnet.lv