

Theses of a PhD dissertation

**The Expressions of Cardinal Directions
in Sami Languages**

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Delineation of the topic and objectives of the dissertation:

The present paper studies the linguistic projections of orientation in the Sami (Lapp) culture. It is a crucial fact in this matter that the Sami people live in the northern part of the Scandinavian Peninsula, and thus, virtually everything is situated south from them. This is such a determining influence on their outlook on the world and in their way of thinking that the map of Lapland often appears in Sami atlases upside down (as far as our concepts are concerned).

This study is a monographic treatment of the Sami system of cardinal directions as well as a description of the entire Sami lexicography as a source for this end. The study of cardinal points has been superficial until the past few years and has not been discussed at depth either within general Finno-Ugric linguistics or Sami linguistic studies. At the same time, Sami comparative studies have not considered Sami dictionaries as potential sources for linguistic studies.

The subject matter is closely connected to cultural-historical data and raises important epistemological issues as well. This paper aims to find out about the origins of the cardinal directions. Through the examination of the triggering forces that affected the development of these words, explanation can be given for the phenomenon that names for certain times of the day and names for the cardinal points coincide in several languages (as in Hungarian or Polish). Following in the wake of cognitive linguists, another issue is the question of whether these expressions represent geographical particularities only or not, and also, in what extent the choice of viewpoint influences the description of a spatial relation basically designating a route of movement. The key questions concerning Sami cardinal directions are the following: how and why the same word can designate multiple directions; are there multiple names for the same direction; how the Sami system of cardinal directions is different from those of other languages?; and what results this study can come up with that can facilitate development in the field of Sami dialectological studies and the classification of dialects.

Methods and aspects of the processing work:

The general typological study of cardinal points is important for the proper understanding of the phenomenon, but such a systematic treatment of the topic has not been available until this point. For this purpose, I studied and processed a body of essays discussing cardinal directions in certain languages and language families and I complemented the outcome with my own studies and papers on Finno-Ugric languages. The Sami system of cardinal points, however, differs from those of the other languages⁷ so far researched (Germanic, African and Australian languages), which makes it especially important to take a closer look at the vocabulary of Sami. Beyond the etymological and semantic analysis of the words, a systematic comparison of the names of cardinal points in various dialects is also undertaken here. The analysis of these expressions is connected to the issue of variability as well. The detailed study of all sources available to me was of great help in this matter. Through the course of the study, I went through the

entire Sami lexicography that I know of and collected data from 41 Sami (9 Southern, 1 Ume, 2 Pite, 4 Lule, 14 Northern, 3 Inari, 5 Skolt, 3 Kildin) dictionaries. On the basis of this collection, I found 45 Sami names for cardinal directions evolved from different lexemes. This includes all the Sami dialects ever recorded in writing, covering the time period between 1738 and 2016. The written records are complemented with spoken and written communication from native speakers.

The results are the following:

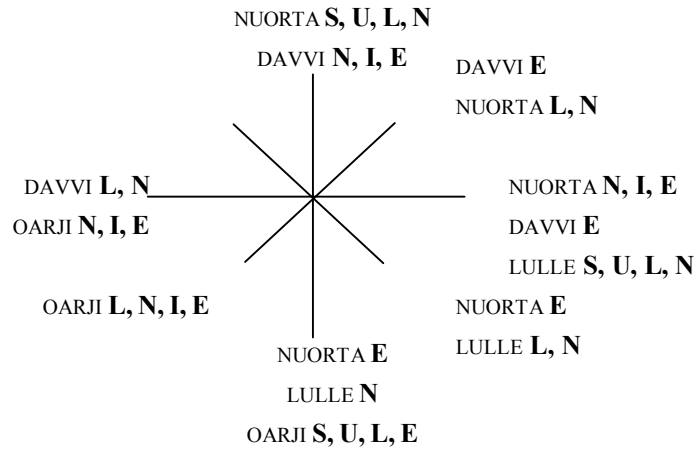
A curious characteristic feature of Sami cardinal directions is the fact that a single word form can refer to multiple directions. The explanation for this can be found in the uniqueness of orientation that requires a 90-degree rotation of the entire system, following the coastline of the Scandinavian Peninsula, in effect causing the main axes to be changed. After a close examination of the Sami cardinal points and directions, I came to the following conclusions:

a) The system of cardinal directions in the various Sami dialects is adjusted to the geographical features of the peninsula. The main guiding principle is the flow of rivers as well as the countryside full of valleys and fjords. On the basis of this, the starting point of orientation is a west–east main axis in the case of Ume. The first changes in meaning can be noticed in Lule Sami, where the main direction is north-west to south-east. As we go further up north and then east, the main direction of the axis changes based on the coastline of the Scandinavian Peninsula and on the flow of the rivers arriving to the area from southern regions: first south-east to north-west, then south–north in the northernmost regions. In the eastern areas, where Skolts and especially Akkala and Ter Sami people live, the direction of the main axis is north-east to south-west and west–east.

b) This is how there is a 45-degree difference between the main directions from dialect to dialect, and the difference is as much as 180 degrees between the two extremes. This shows how close a connection there is between reality and language; the determining factors of the cardinal directions play an important part not only in everyday orientation, but also in the change of meaning.

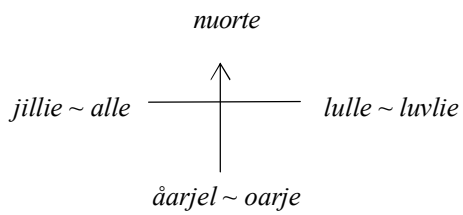
The best example for the “rotation” described above is the word *nuorta*, which is present in all the dialects, but the direction it designates is different depending on the given dialect and geographical place.

The system of cardinal directions in the various Sami dialects (S = Southern, U = Ume, L = Lule, N = Northern, I = Inari, E = Eastern (Skolt and Kildin)):

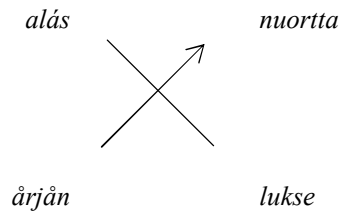


The expressions and the “rotation” of the cardinal directions in:

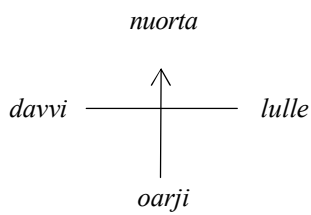
a) South, Ume and Lule Saami



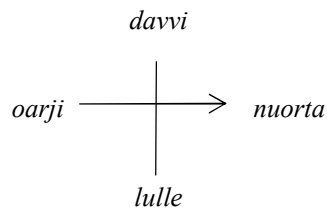
b) Lule Saami dialects



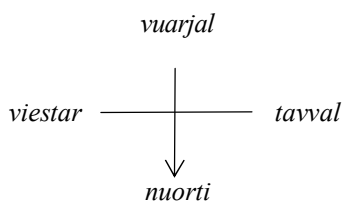
c) the west part of North Saami dialects



d) North Saami



e) Eastern Saami

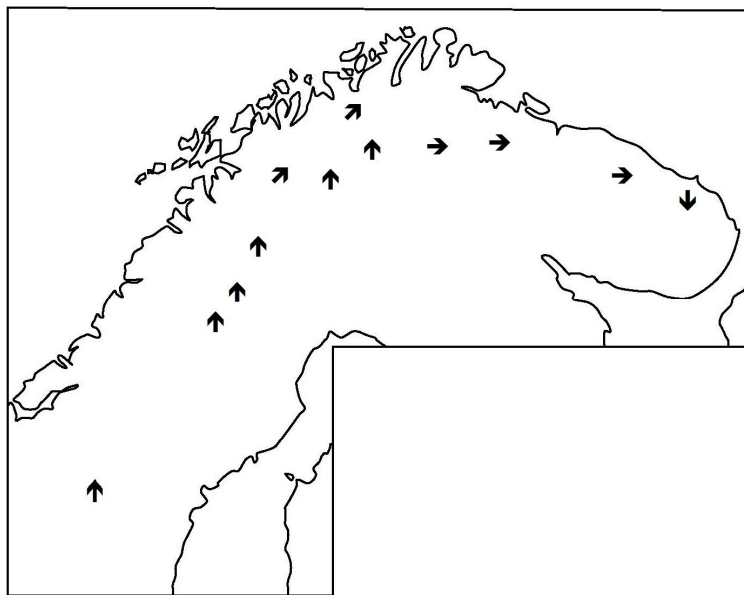


The high degree of variability in Sami cardinal directions can be traced back to the following reasons:

a) One is linguistic/dialectal variability, due to which different languages/dialects use different lexemes for referring to the same direction. Although there are differences among the various systems according to this, this cannot cause a change in meaning. Southern and Ume (and Pite) Sami use the same four lexemes (*alle, lulle, oarji, nuorta*). The Lule Sami people have a considerably richer set of vocabulary for naming the various directions. Northern Sami has the largest number of native speakers, it is also the most researched, and most of the dictionaries and other written sources come from this dialect, therefore it was this dialect that I was able to collect the most expressions and compounds. Due to its wide geographical extension, and the diverse geographical features of the area it is spoken in, it is also the Northern Sami language that offers an example for the “one lexeme – multiple directions” phenomenon, which makes it an especially important dialect to research from the point of this study.

The 45 degree rotation (from north to north-east) in the system of cardinal directions is first observable between Lule and Northern Sami, but I was able to support this observation only from earlier written sources. In Northern Sami – in the northern, Swedish regions (Figure C) and in the north-eastern, Norwegian and Finnish areas (Figure D) – both meaning(-systems) are in use. Inari Sami has the simplest system of directions, with lexemes identical with the Northern Sami (Norwegian/Finnish) directions, without any change in meaning.

The Skolt and Kildin Sami vocabulary is, again, very rich and diversified. Another 45 degrees are added to the 90-degree rotation seen in Northern Sami. Then, in the eastern corner of the Kola Peninsula, in Akkala and Ter Sami, the system undergoes another 45-degree rotation. All these can be illustrated with the help of the word *nuorta*, showing the shift in meaning while moving from the southernmost to the easternmost corner of Lapland: *nuorta* 'north (S, U, L)' > 'north-east (L)' > 'north (N_{Sw})' > 'east' (N_{No}) > 'south-east' (Sk) > 'south' (Sk).



b) Apart from linguistic/dialectal variability, the external triggering forces also play an important role. As previously seen in the discussion of main naming methods, in Sami, the basis of coinage is most often the natural environment and the observations related to it. At the same time, in the majority of the cases (in 37 cases of the 47 in my study), these expressions always designate the same direction – in other words, they can refer to one of the cardinal points. The explanation for this is that these expressions are not very frequent and are not used as names for the cardinal points in all the Sami dialects – only in a few of them. Moreover, these words are not from the standard varieties of the given dialects, but are dialectal or subdialectal synonyms.

The natural environment and geographical features are of great importance in the evolution of cardinal directions, since the differences between various areas result in different external triggering forces. It is also important, whether the given language is unified or has a standard form, because the system of cardinal directions can be the result of conscious language planning work (i.e. various dialectal forms can cease to exist as a result of standardization processes). The relationship of the given community with nature is, again, an important motif. As the Sami people consider this especially important, the original meanings of the cardinal directions has not faded (cf. *alle* 'tall; west'; *lietni* 'summer; south' etc.) The orientation of a given cardinal direction can change because of the geographical environment as well.

It became obvious in the course of the study, that the location of the speaker is crucial in determining the direction and in the naming of it. This relativity is the cause for meaning shifts – since the route of movement changes if the starting point or the goal changes. As opposed to this view, cognitive linguistics considers cardinal points as notions that are not affected by the choice of viewpoint. It is impossible, however, to understand the naming methods discussed here if this relativity is discarded. Also, in the case of Sami (e.g. within Northern Sami, and also in various dialects), the issue of a single lexeme designating multiple directions could not be accounted for without considering the role of relativity.

The semantic study revealed that the most important naming method in Sami is coinage on the basis of geographical features and the natural environment (flow of rivers and the northernmost position of the Sami people in the Scandinavian Peninsula). As opposed to this, the most productive naming method used by other languages is coinage based on the sun's apparent daily movement across the sky. It is also important to highlight that there is considerable difference between the Sami system of cardinal directions and that of the Baltic Finnic languages', even though they are related languages and the peoples live on geographically neighbouring lands, with similarly extreme natural environment. The system of cardinal directions in Baltic Finnic languages does use the sun as an orientation point – even if not to such extent as Indo-European languages (or Hungarian) do.

The dialectological study and the detailed examination of cardinal directions in the Sami lexicography yielded important results. The Southern, Ume and Pite Sami languages are very close lexically. The standard version of Lule is in accordance with this, but as we go north, its system of cardinal directions becomes similar to that of the Swedish Northern Sami's. Northern Sami uses two, completely different systems simulta-

neously. Inari (as recently pointed out by Rydving as well) is the most central dialect between the western and eastern dialects. This is supported by the facts found about its system of cardinal directions. Moving to the east from Skolt-speaking areas, there is another lexical shift observable. In the case of Skolt, a small degree of Karelian influence can be detected, while in the case of Kildin, Akkala and Ter the Russian impact is also traceable.

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List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian book chapters (1)

1. **Tóth, A. N.:** A lapp szótáarak.
In: Rokon nyelveink szótárai: Fejezetek a finnugor lexikográfia történetéből / Maticsák Sándor, Tóth Anikó Nikolett, Petteri Laihonon, Tinta Könyvkiadó, Budapest, 131-158, 2014.
ISBN: 9786155219603

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (8)

2. Maticsák, S., **Tóth, A. N.:** A mordvin égtájnevekről.
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4. **Tóth, A. N.:** Motivációk és jelentésváltozás a lapp égtájnevek rendszerében.
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5. **Tóth, A. N.:** Az égtájnevek vizsgálata a karjalai nyelvjárásokban.
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7. **Tóth, A. N.:** Az égtájmegnevezések szemantikai vizsgálata a finnben és az észten.
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8. **Tóth, A. N.:** Földrajzi viszonyok és égtájmegnevezések a lappban.
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9. **Tóth, A. N.:** A lapp égtájnevek kialakulásának kérdéséhez.
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List of other publications

Hungarian book chapters (2)

10. **Tóth, A. N.:** A kisebb balti finn nyelvek szótárai.
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11. **Tóth, A. N.:** Észti-magyar, magyar-észti szótárak.
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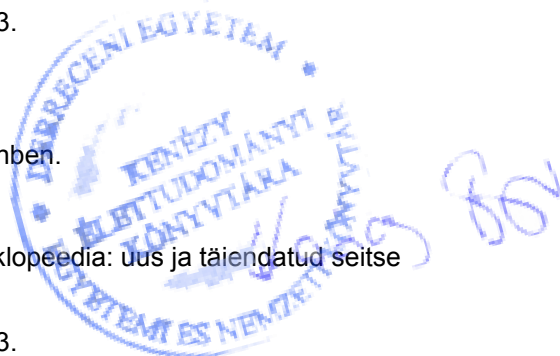
12. Maticsák, S., **Tóth, A. N.:** Bilingual Finno-Ugric Dictionaries in Hungary.
In: Hungarian lexicography I., Bilingual dictionaries. Szerk.: Fábíán Zsuzsanna, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 227-254, 2011. ISBN: 9789630591799

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