

OLD LATVIAN COMPARATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

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1. Introduction

To the best of my knowledge, heretofore no one has examined the usage of comparative constructions of inequality (COI) in Old Latvian texts. The present paper appears to be the first attempt. As a basis I used *Euangelia und Episteln* (= EvEp, 1587) and three texts by Georg Mantzel: *Lettsich Vade mecum* (= LVM, 1631), *Das Haus=, Zucht= und Lehrbuch Jesu Syrachs* (= Syr, 1631) and *Die Sprüche Salomonis* (= Sal, 1637). I compared the data excerpted from these texts with *Evangelia Toto Anno* (1753), written in Latgalian and published over 100 years later. In excerpting data, I used a corpus of Old Latvian texts (senie.korpuss.lv). In the future, other Old Latvian texts should be also examined; however, at present the collected material enables us to establish:

- 1) the productivity of individual comparative constructions in Old Latvian texts of the seventeenth century,
- 2) similarities and differences between Old Latvian and Old Lithuanian; for Old Lithuanian, see Ostrowski (2018).

In order to avoid terminological misunderstandings, I have adopted, in accordance with Heine's work (1997: 110), the following terminology for comparative construction:

<i>David is smart-</i>	<i>er</i>	<i>than</i>	<i>Bob.</i>
X	Y	D	Z

X = comparee, Y = predicate, D = degree marker, M = marker of standard, Z = standard.

2. Old Latvian comparative constructions – philological and diachronic analysis

According to *Mūsdienu latviešu literārās valodas gramatika* (vol. 1: 461), the most common comparative construction of inequality in modern Latvian involves the preposition *par* 'about, for, over', e.g. (...) *mums jābūt ātrākiem par žiglo svīri* 'we have to be faster than the nimble swift'. Apart from *par*, constructions with *nekā* 'than' (literally 'not like'), e.g. *Rīts gudrāks nekā vakars* 'Morning is wiser than evening', are also used. If a verb is within the scope of negation, then, in the literary language, *kā* 'like' is used, e.g. (...) *viņas*

mūžs nebūs vieglāks kā manējais ‘(...) her life will be no easier than mine’. In the spoken language this restriction does not apply; *kā* may appear even if the verb occurs without negation, e.g. *ārā putnu kņada bij skaļāka kā vakar* ‘the chirping of the birds outside was louder than yesterday’. As we will see, this kind of COI is already evident in Old Latvian. Moreover, in folklore and dialectal texts, as a marker of standard, the following may occur:

- 1) the negation *ne*, e.g. *meitas vecākas ne ... māte* ‘the daughters are older than ... mother’ (Endzelīns 1951: 479);
- 2) the preposition *aiz* ‘behind’, e.g. *Anna smukāka aiz Trīnas* ‘Anna is prettier than Trīna’ (Endzelīns 1951: 478);
- 3) the preposition *uz* ‘to, on’, e.g. *lielāks uz tuo* ‘bigger than him’ (Endzelīns 1951: 479).

A completely different picture is offered by the analysis of Old Latvian texts. Table 1 presents the frequency of COIs in *Euangelia vnd Episteln*, table 2 in three writings by Georg Mantzel, and table 3 the same in *Evangelia Toto Anno*.

Table 1

Comparative constructions in *Euangelia vnd Episteln*

Marker of standard	Number of instances
<i>nekā</i> <neka, neeka, ne ka>	19
<i>ne</i>	0
<i>kā</i>	0
<i>par</i>	0
<i>aiz</i>	0
<i>uz</i>	0

Table 2

Comparative constructions in Mantzel’s writings

Marker of standard	Number of instances		
	LVM	Syr	Sal
<i>nekā</i>	27	45	37
<i>ne</i>	0	0	0
<i>kā</i>	4	4	0
<i>par</i>	3	0	0
<i>aiz</i>	0	0	0
<i>uz</i>	0	0	0

Table 3

Comparative constructions in *Evangelia Toto Anno*

Marker of standard	Number of instances
<i>nekaī</i>	9
<i>nekā</i>	1
<i>ne</i>	1
<i>kai</i>	0
<i>kā</i>	0
<i>aiz</i>	2
<i>par</i>	3
<i>uz</i>	0

Particularly striking is the lack of comparative constructions with *par* in *Evangelia und Episteln*. 19 instances with *nekā* suggest that the primary COI in Old Latvian was a construction with *nekā*. This state of affairs is supported by data in Mantzel's writings; see table 2.

Perhaps the analysis of remaining seventeenth-century texts will change the picture slightly, but it is obvious that the primary COI in seventeenth-century Latvian comprised sentences with the conjunction *nekā* 'than' (literally 'not like'). Typologically, they represent the so-called *conjoined comparative* in Stassen's terminology (Stassen 1985: 38, 44).¹ This state of affairs is consistent with seventeenth-century Lithuanian, where as the primary COI we find constructions with conjunctions comprising negation: *neg(i)*, *nei(gi)*, *neng*, *nekaip*, *net*, *nent*, signifying 'than' (Ostrowski 2018). Old Lithuanian constructions with *nekaip* 'than' (literally 'not like') occur especially often (18 times) in *Margarita Theologica* (1600). Individual instances with *nekaip* are recorded in Willent's writings (1579) and in Daukša's *Postill* (1599). In LVM we find just three instances of COI with the preposition *par*:

- (1) *teek auxtahx **parr** teems Engeļeems tappis / czeek auxtaku Wahrdu **par** teems gir manntoyis.* (34:13–14)²

¹ In this kind of construction, consisting of two juxtaposed clauses, the comparison is not expressed directly but inferred from the fact that the compared clauses contain antonymous predicates or predicates conveying a positive-negative polarity (Cristofaro 2003: 46), e.g.: *Kaw-ohra naha Waraka, kaw naha Kaywerye* (Hixkaryana) tall-not he-is Waraka tall he-is Kaywerye ('Kaywerye is taller than Waraka'; Stassen 1985: 38, 44).

² The English renderings here and below are from the King James Bible (www.kingjames-bibleonline.org). The German renderings are from Luther's *Bibel* (1545) (<http://liederschatz.net/biblia/biblia2/index.htm>).

‘so viel besser worden denn die Engel / so gar viel einen höhern Namen er fur jnen ererbet hat.’ // ‘Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.’ (Hebrews 1: 4)

- (2) *Bett tam / katters dauds wairahk darryht war par wifsu / ko mehß luhdfam jeb šaprohtam (...)* (175: 23–24)

‘DEm aber / der vberschwenglich thun kan / vber alles / das wir biten oder verstehen (...)’ // ‘Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think (...)’ (Ephesians 3: 20)

It is worth noting that as early as the seventeenth century one can find constructions with *kā* ‘like’. Among them predominate these with *kā* in the scope of negation (4 in *LVM* and 2 in *Syr*), e.g.:

- (3) *Tas Mahzeklis nhe gir auxtahx{autahx} ka Meisters* (*LVM* 151: 13)

‘Der Jünger ist nicht vber seinen Meister’ // ‘The disciple is not above his master’ (Luke 6: 40)

- (4) (...) *nheneeka labbahk gir / ka Deewu biet / vnd nheneeka saldahk / ka Deewa baußlu währà jemt.* (*Syr* 559: 18–19)³

‘das nichts besser sey / denn Gott fürchten / vnd nicht süssers / denn auff Gottes gebot achten’ (23: 37) // ‘that there is nothing better than the fear of the Lord, and that there is nothing sweeter than to take heed unto the commandments of the Lord’ (23: 27)

More seldom are instances without negation; below are two examples from *Das Haus=, Zucht= vnd Lehrbuch Jesu Syrachs* (1631):

- (5) *Kas gir fpohfchahx ka ta Šauleh?* (547: 20)

‘Was ist heller denn die Sonne?’ // ‘What is brighter than the sun?’ (17: 31)

- (6) *Kas gir gruhtahx ka Swinß?* (556: 3)

‘Was ist schwerer denn bley?’ (22: 17) // ‘What is heavier than lead?’ (22: 14)

A bit more varied is the picture in *Evangelia Toto Anno* (1753), but constructions with *nekai* predominate here as well.

An archaic construction with the negation *ne* is recorded once:

- (7) *Patifz foku jums, un wayrok ne Profetu.* (3: 9).

‘ich sage euch / der auch mehr ist / denn ein Prophet.’ // ‘I say vnto you, and more than a Prophet.’ (Matthew 11: 9)

³ Other examples in *LVM*: 59:24–25, 79:1–2, 155:10–11.

Noteworthy are two instances with the preposition *aiz* ‘behind’:

- (8) *Bet jo styproks ayz jū atgois uzwares winiu* (27: 19)
 ‘Wenn aber ein Stercker vber jn kompt vnd vberwindet jn’ // ‘But when a stronger then he shal come vpon him, and ouercome him’ (Luke 11: 22)
- (9) *Tod nuūt, und jam liūd ar fiewim šeptinius cytus gorus, launokus ayz fiewi, un igojufzy dzeywoy tur.* (28: 2–5)
 ‘Denn gehet er hin / vnd nimpt sieben Geister zu sich / die erger sind / denn er selbs / Vnd wenn sie hin ein komen / wonen sie da / Vnd wird hernach mit dem selbigen Menschen erger / denn vorhin.’ // ‘Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself.’ (Luke 11: 26)

The counterpart of the ex. (9) is in Old Lithuanian Daukša’s *Postill* (1599), ex. (10), with *genetivus comparativus*:

- (10) *Tád eī ir prīma septīnes kitū dwāfių piktėfnių fawės:* (DP 118: 9)
 ‘Tedy idzie / y przybiera inszych siedm duchow / gorszych nad sie’.
 (Wj 125: 15)

In my paper (Ostrowski 2018) I put forward the hypothesis that two strategies, CONTRAST and INTENSIFICATION, underlie the diversity of Old Lithuanian comparative constructions. One instance of contrast is sentence (11), with the conjunction *neg*:

- (11) *Nėsq gerėfnis yrá wīras kántrus neg Rícierius dídifis:* (DP 130: 42)
 ‘Abowiem lepszy iest mąż ćierpliwy / niżli Rycerz wielki’ (Wj 138: 1)
 ‘Because a long-suffering man is better than a magnificent knight’

This instance may be interpreted as an asyndetically combined clause with sentence negation in the second clause, i.e. ‘Because a long-suffering man is better, not a magnificent knight’. On the other hand, in (10) we do not have two separate sets (i.e. ‘angels’ vs ‘devils’) as in *vyras kantrus* vs *Ricerius didysis*, therefore (10) does not concern the contrast but the intensification of the feature ‘bad’ that is common to the whole set consisting of evil spirits. In this way, Old Lithuanian comparative constructions of inequality correspond functionally to Latin constructions with *ablativus comparativus* (intensification) and the conjunction *quam* (contrast) — see Cuzzolin (2011: 581f.). In Old Lithuanian, inherited constructions with *genetivus comparativus* (= IE *ablativus comparativus*) were supplanted by constructions with the prepositions *ant* and *už*. In both cases we are dealing with calques of Slavonic constructions, Old Polish with the preposition *nad* ‘over’ and Old Byelorussian with *za* (Ostrowski 2018: 286). A good example is Old Lithuanian *vž fniegq baltėfneis*

(DP 430: 49) ‘nad śnieg bielszymi; whiter than snow’, which serves as an example of the consistency between the Old Lithuanian construction with *už* and the Latin construction with *ablativus comparativus* in *nive candidior* ‘whiter than snow’. Based on Lithuanian, the Latvian COI with *aiz* may also be suspected of being a Slavonic calque.

In *Evangelia Toto Anno* the COIs with the preposition *par* appear three times, two of them in supelative meaning [ex. (12)]; see:

(12) *kotrys (gryuds) wyffu mozoks ir por wyffom sâklom: bet kad izaug, leloks ir por wyffom dorza zòlom* (20: 1–3)

‘Welches das kleinst ist vnter allem Samen / Wenn es aber erwechst / so ist es das grössest vnter dem Kol (...)’ // ‘Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs (...)’ (Matthew 13: 32)

(13) *naway Moćiekliis (gudroks) por fowu Mocieytoju*: (49: 14–15)

‘Der Jünger ist nicht vber seinen Meister’ // ‘The disciple is not above his master’ (Luke 6: 40)

Ex. (13) has its counterpart in Mantzel’s (*LVM*) instance with *kā*; see ex. (3). The challenge for the future is to establish the distribution of COI’s with *nekā* and *par*. Can we prove that COI with *par* supplanted the older *genetivus comparativus*?

3. Conclusions

1. The primary Old Latvian comparative construction of inequality used the conjunction *nekā* ‘than’ (literally ‘not like’). In the future, it should be explained when the production of constructions with the preposition *par* began. Is it possible to indicate dialects in which the COI with *par* appeared first?
2. The Old Latvian state of affairs is compatible with sixteenth-century Lithuanian, where constructions with conjunctions comprising negation: *neg(i)*, *nei(gi)*, *neng*, *nekaip*, *net*, *nent* ‘than’ (Ostrowski 2018) functioned as primary comparative constructions.
3. Now the question arises: are we able to prove, on the basis of Latvian texts, that constructions with the prepositions *aiz* appeared as a calque of Slavonic constructions? Language contact is a particularly frequent source of new comparative constructions — see Stolz (2013: 39–42). Unfortunately, our hypothesis cannot be verified without corpora of Old Byelorussian and Old Ukrainian texts.

Source texts

- DP = *Postilla Catholica. Tāi est: Iżguldimas Ewangeliju kiekvienos Nedelos ir szwętes per wissús metús. Per Kúnigq Mikaloio Dawkszą Kanoniką Médnikų...* 1599, ed. Jonas Palionis, 2000. *Mikalojaus Daukšos 1599 metų Postilė ir jos šaltiniai*. Vilnius: Baltos lankos.
- Latviešu valodas seno tekstu korpus* (senie.korpus.lv).
- Wj = *Postilla Catholica Mnieysza. (...) Przez D. LAKVBA WVYKA z Wągrowcá (...) W KRAKOWIE*. W Drukárniey Andrzeiá Piotrkowczyká / Roku Pańskiego 1590.

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KOPSAVILKUMS

Salīdzināmās konstrukcijas veclatviešu tekstos

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Primārā salīdzināmā konstrukcija 17. gadsimta latviešu valodā ir bijusi konstrukcija ar saikli *nekā*, kas Stasena terminoloģijā tipoloģiski reprezentē tā saukto savienoto komparatīvu (angl. *conjoined comparative*, Stassen 1985). Tas atbilst stāvoklim 16. gadsimta lietuviešu valodā, kur kā primārās nevienlīdzības salīdzināmās konstrukcijas (COI) lietotas konstrukcijas ar saikļiem, kas ietver noliegumu: *neg(i)*, *nei(gi)*, *neng*, *nekaip*, *net*, *nent* ‘nekā’ (Ostrowski 2018).