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## EXPRESSIONS FOR 'RAINING' IN FINNO-UGRIC LANGUAGES

In many languages expressions for meteorological phenomena such as rain differ syntactically from those for ordinary actions: they either use a formal subject, as in the Germanic languages and French, or else the phrase has no subject at all as in most of the Finno-Ugric languages. These expressions, however, cannot be examined from a pure syntactic point of view, because in many Finno-Ugric languages the possible subject is semantically very restricted. It is also interesting to look at the semantics of the verb, since some languages have a special meteorological verb for raining, whereas others use, e.g., some verb of motion. This paper is mainly based on the dialect material collected for the Atlas Linguarum Europae (Saarinen 1997).

The most common way of expressing 'raining' in the Finno-Ugric languages is to use a verb alone impersonally (in the third person) without a subject. Most FU languages have a special verb reserved exclusively for this meteorological phenomenon. Etymologically some of these verbs go back to simple motivations like 'to fall down'. E.g. Finn. *sataa*, Est. *vihma*, Veps. *vihmub* etc., SaamiN *ar'va*, Mordv. *piži*, Komi *zere*, Udm. *zore*, Hung. *esik* 'it is raining'. In all the given examples we find a simple verb in the 3. Person Singular, which stands for the whole expression.

In many of the above mentioned languages it is also possible to use a verb denoting 'to go' or the like with the subject meaning 'rain': Veps *vihm astub* (rain step-PRS-3SG) lit. 'rain steps', EMordv. *mol'i pižimi* (go-PRS-3SG rain-VN) lit. 'rain goes'. These expressions may be calques from the most common expression for raining in Russian: *dožd' idët* 'rain goes'.

In some Finno-Ugric languages the syntagma "rain rains" is used: Hung. *esik az esö* (rain-PRS-3SG ART rain-PTC), Mari *jür jüreš* (rain rain-PRS-3SG), Mordv. *pižeme piži* (rain-VN rain-PRS-3SG). This structure where both the subject and the predicate are formed from the same stem denoting the meteorological phenomenon is typical of the Turkic languages, which do not seem to use any other way of expressing raining. In the above mentioned FU languages this type of sentence seems to be a calque from Turkic languages.

In Finnish and some other Finnic languages the meteorological verb can be used together with the noun 'water' in partitive: Finn. *sataa vettä*. The sentence constituent value of the noun has been discussed in Finnish grammars. Earlier it was considered an object, because it has the case marking (partitive) of an object and comes after the predicate. It is also possible to form a sentence like *satoi ensi lumen* (rain-IMPF-3SG

first snow-ACC) 'it snowed for the first time', where *lumen* has to be considered as an object because of its case ending. Nowadays most grammarians consider *vettä* in *sataa vettä* to be the subject, because the verb is intransitive.

In Votic the transitive verb 'to bring' can be used with the word meaning 'rain' as object: Vot. *tuõb vihmaa* (bring-PRS-3SG rain-PART). In Veps instead of the verb alone (*vihmub* see above) one can have an adverbial formed from the same stem with an adessive ending: Veps. *vihmou vihmub* (rain-ADE rain-PRS-3SG) lit. '(it) rains with rain'.

#### References

Il pleut. Cartes de syntaxe et de motivations. In: Atlas Linguarum Europae (ALE). Volume I – cinquième fascicule. Commentaires, pp. 1–34. Cartes I.45–46. Red. par Mario Alinei, -- Sirkka Saarinen et al. Roma 1997.