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Grammatical changes caused by contact between Livonian and Latvian languages

Livonians and Latvians have a long history of social and linguistic contacts, which resulted in changes in both languages. The presentation provides an insight into the process of various grammatical changes in the Livonian and Latvian developed by the prolonged contact situation. Livonian is strongly influenced by the Latvian at different levels due to the close and endured contact between the speakers of two languages, it is necessary to note that speakers of Livonian were bilinguals for a long time. It is clear that Livonian has affected the Latvian in similar way. The process of mutual borrowings can be observed in the vocabulary most clearly; however, there are changes that have occurred in the phonetics and grammar as well.

Different changes can be found as a result of mutual influence. The presentation presents case studies illustrating the changes of case system in Livonian – disappearance of exterior locative cases and formation of dative, merging of translative and comitative and formation of instrumental, development of prefixes from inherited words, composition of negation, as well as semantic changes in Latvian locative, formation of Latvian compounds using Livonian pattern (furthermore remained in several place-names), formation of adverbs instead of Latvian prefix verbs etc. Although the grammatical structure of the language is considered to be relatively resistant to change, grammatical changes may occur in languages that are not related languages but are located in close geographical area for a long time. The results of Livonian and Latvian contact demonstrate that clearly. Unfortunately, there is a lack of studies on language contact between Livonian and Latvian to clearly discern their interactions. To understand and evaluate the interrelation of Livonian and Latvian it would be necessary to carry out contrastive studies covering the whole contact area of Baltic and Baltic-Finnic languages, i.e. Estonian, Livonian, Latvian languages and dialects, considering data of Finnish and Lithuanian.