

# Abstract

The thesis consists of five articles and an introduction with a summarizing and complementing overview of the articles.

The study describes the morphology, syntax and semantics of non-finite verb forms in contemporary literary North Saami. According to the received view, there are about a dozen non-finites in North Saami, but the morphosyntax and semantics of these have not yet been investigated thoroughly. In the present study, these verb forms are re-evaluated from the functional-typological perspectives of general linguistics: they are further classified into the subcategories of infinitives, participles, converbs and action nominals.

A major portion of this study discusses adverbial non-finites or converbs and comparable action nominal constructions, the types of constructions in which many of the independent converbs originate. On the basis of abundant data on actual language use, it is concluded that contemporary North Saami possesses both old and more recently developed non-finites that have not received due attention in earlier descriptions of the Saami languages, whereas certain alleged non-finites are better analyzed as belonging to the lexicon rather than productive inflection. An important result of the study is that there are as many as six converbs and five participles in the language. The study provides a comprehensive description of the use and mutual relations of these verb forms.

In addition to the literary language and traditional dialects of North Saami, the study also addresses corresponding non-finites in the immediately neighboring Saami languages. Attention is also paid to the influence of the surrounding national languages (Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish) on the morphosyntax of the Saami languages, especially in translations.

The North Saami system of non-finites is undergoing a process of restructuring, and the rise of new non-finites through agglutination and analogy indicates that the Saami languages have developed not only in the direction of the fusional western European type of language, but recent developments also point back to an agglutinative type characteristic of the Uralic languages. Contemporary North Saami exhibits considerable morphological variation that may diminish in the future either as a result of unconscious change in the language or through conscious language planning.