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Strategies of expressing imperatives: A journey from PIE to the modern Baltic languages

Starting from PIE times with the a overview of the imperative system (including the commonly reconstructed syntagma *meh_1 + injunctive for negative imperatives), this paper tries to present the mayor outlines of the transformations of a grammatical category from PIE via Balto-Slavic to the modern Baltic languages.

The emergence of special markers (as in Old Prussian *ni turri* 'you don't have to' or Latvian *lai*) or emphasizing particles (as *-ki* in Lithuanian, maybe a negative polarity marker) together with their dialectal distribution and function will be shortly discussed. Also the role of the pre-Balto-Slavic negated optative as a contributing factor in the substitution of the PIE imperative by the optative will be addressed and typologically compared with the usage of injunctive forms as imperatives in PIE and later languages (cf. Vedic *dhāḥ* 'put!' and *dāḥ* 'give!', Gr. σχές 'keep!').

This paper is an extract of my ongoing Ph.D. thesis: Die syntaktische Kategorie des Prohibitivs.

Literature (selection)

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