

Constituents of spatial adpositional phrases in Latvian and Mandarin Chinese

Telpisko adpozicionālo savienojumu elementi latviešu un ķīniešu valodā

Marija Nikolajeva

University of Latvia, Faculty of Humanities
Department of Latvian and General Linguistics
4a Visvalža Street, Riga LV-1050, Latvia

Beijing Foreign Studies University,
School of European Languages and Cultures
2 North Xisanhuan Avenue, Beijing, 100089, China
E-mail: mnikolajeva@inbox.lv

The article focuses on the syntactic and semantic aspects of the constituents of spatial adpositional phrases in Latvian and Mandarin Chinese. While studying the elements of the spatial expressions, one can discover that the properties of prepositions and nouns differ in Latvian and Mandarin Chinese. As a result, the constructions formed for describing spatial relations in the two languages are typologically different. The Chinese localizers are equivalent to Latvian prepositions, adverbs and nouns. The position of the spatial phrase affects the grammatical meaning of the sentence in Chinese and the pragmatic meaning in Latvian. In Latvian, prepositions and cases are polysemous – each may perform several semantic roles. Chinese prepositions are not polysemous in this sense.

Keywords: spatial prepositions, case endings, localizers, place words, semantic roles, Latvian, Chinese.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to compare the formal features, combinational abilities and semantic roles of the constituents of spatial expressions before undertaking research on the semantics of spatial constructions in Latvian and Mandarin Chinese. The choice of the two languages for comparison is motivated by practical reasons: being a language teacher, I experience the growth of the mutual interest in learning the languages of each other in the Latvian and Chinese communities. Sooner or later, a systematic typological research on the two languages will be necessary, and this paper is intended as a contribution in this field.

1. Types of adpositions in spatial phrases in Latvian and Mandarin Chinese

In Latvian, prepositions are functional heads of spatial phrases, they specify both the orientation of spatial relations and semantic roles (location, source, goal, etc.). Besides, the semantic roles are expressed by case endings, such as location in Ex. 1a and direction in Ex. 1b. Hence, the Latvian spatial phrase consists of three elements: **Preposition + Noun + Case ending**.

- | | |
|----------------------------|------------------------|
| (1) a. <i>būt uz jumta</i> | b. <i>iet uz skolu</i> |
| to be on roof.GEN | to go to school.ACC |
| ‘to be on the roof’ | ‘to go to the school’ |

Before starting the discussion of spatial phrases in Mandarin Chinese, it should be explained that nouns in this language constitute two categories: those that name places (Italy, seaside, north, etc.) and those that name entities that are not places (cup, table, tail, etc.). When a non-place object is described as a place, the phrase must be marked linguistically by adding a localizer to the noun (Ex. 2):

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| (2) a. 在杯子里 | b. 在桌子上 |
| <i>zài bēizi lǐ</i> ¹ | <i>zài zhuōzi shàng</i> |
| to be at.PRE cup in.LOCZ | to be at.PRE table on.LOCZ |
| ‘in the cup’ | ‘on the table’ |

Semantically, Chinese localizers correspond to spatial prepositions in Latvian: the localizers are functional heads of spatial phrases, they specify locations of objects (on, in, behind, etc.).² However, they cannot perform the syntactic functions of prepositions. The prepositions in Mandarin Chinese, on the other hand, are “semantically underspecified” (Chu 2010, 79; Sun 2013, 210): they indicate the presence of a spatial relation, a semantic role, but not a concrete location: 在 *zài* ‘to be located, to be at’, 到 *dào* ‘to reach; to’. For this reason, the basic spatial construction in Chinese consists of three elements: **Preposition + Noun + Localizer**.

Chinese prepositions (前置介词 *qiánzhì jiècí*) have originated from verbs (Hagege 2010, 158; Shi 2011, 177). The borderline between prepositions and verbs is not always straightforward, and many modern Chinese prepositions “at the same time perform grammatical functions of usual verbs,”³ e.g., 给 *gěi* ‘to give; for’, 用 *yòng* ‘to use; with’, 顺 *shùn* ‘to obey, to follow; along’, etc. (Shi 2011, 177). Basically, if a sentence does not have a verb in it, the preposition-like item is a

¹ The Pinyin phonetic system is used in this article for transcribing Chinese characters.

² Some popular monosyllabic localizers are 上 *shàng* ‘on’, 下 *xià* ‘under’, 里 *lǐ* ‘in’, 外 *wài* ‘outside’, 前 *qián* ‘before’, 后 *hòu* ‘behind’, 中 *zhōng* ‘in’, 南 *nán* ‘south’, etc. Compound localizers include 上面 *shàngmian* ‘upper part’, 周围 *zhōuwéi* ‘surroundings’, 南方 *nánfāng* ‘south’, 左边 *zuǒbian* ‘the left side’, 西北角 *xīběijǎo* ‘north-west corner’, etc.

³ “大部分现代汉语的介词同时兼有一般动词的语法功能” (Shi 2011, 177).

verb (Ex. 3a, 4a). If there is the main verb in the sentence, consequently, this item is a preposition (Ex. 3b, 4b)⁴ (Shi 2011, 178).

- | | | |
|-----|---|--|
| (3) | a. 他在教室里。
<i>Tā zài jiàoshì lǐ.</i>
He be-at.V classroom in.LOCZ
'He is in the classroom.' | b. 他在教室里学习。
<i>Tā zài jiàoshì lǐ xuéxí.</i>
He be-at.PRE classroom in.LOCZ study.V
'He studies in the classroom.' |
| (4) | a. 他到北京了。
<i>Tā dào Běijīng le.</i>
He reach.V Beijing ASP.PERF
'He has arrived in Beijing.' | b. 他到北京去了。
<i>Tā dào Běijīng qù le.</i>
He to.PRE Beijing go.V.ASP.PERF
'He has gone to Beijing.' |

The category of localizers, or orientation words (方位词 *fāngwèicí*, literally meaning 'direction and position words'), in Mandarin Chinese has been a point of disagreement for about a hundred years. Localizers were categorized as a distinct word class in 1924 when Li Jinxi classified them as a subtype of adverbs that could function as nouns. Later, Li himself and others classified localizers as a subclass of nouns with a further division into localizers and place words (Qiu 2008, 8–12; Chappell, Peyraube 2013, 19). Nowadays, localizers are distinguished as a separate category – a closed class with fuzzy boundaries because they can act as function words and as content words (see Qiu 2008; Chu 2010; Yuan 2010).

Some scholars, such as Hilary Chappell and Alain Peyraube (2013), have adopted the Chinese term *localizer* focusing on the semantic functions of this item. Another term that emphasizes the syntactic features of the element is *postposition* (后置介词 *hòuzhì jiècí*). It seems to have been adopted in order to fit a unique Chinese phenomenon into the international framework and it may be practical in contrastive studies (see Xi 2013).

Xi Jianguo points out that the items used in abstract expressions (Ex. 5) are not localizers since they do not describe spatial configuration and no prepositions are used in such phrases. These items replace prepositions, they are postpositions that indicate reference to the abstract domain (Xi 2013, 63).

- | | | |
|-----|---------------------------|--|
| (5) | a. 理论上
theory on.POST | <i>lǐlùn shàng</i>
à 'theoretically, in theory' |
| | b. 实际上
reality on.POST | <i>shíjì shàng</i>
à 'in reality' |

On the other hand, Sun Chaofen argues against the term *postposition* because, to his knowledge, the Chinese spatial construction has never undergone a change of the word order and there seems to be no motivation for postpositions to appear (Sun 2013, 215). If a postposition is a preposition that has moved to the post-nominal position (see Hagege 2010, 110), then using this term for Chinese is not reasonable because the preposition is still there, functioning to link words and

⁴ For convenience, the translation of 在 *zài* in the examples here and further in the text will be written 'be-at'.

express semantic roles. Sun uses the term 方位词 *fāngwèicí* ‘localizer’ in Chinese, quite traditionally, and proposes the term *enclitic* as its English equivalent (Sun 2013, 208–210).

Localizers form inseparable phonological units with nouns to which they are attached. As a result, these phonological units can be treated as noun phrases that are “structurally equivalent to the place names in Chinese” and can participate in the same syntactic operations, namely, as complements of spatial prepositions (Sun 2013, 213–214). In Sun’s opinion, *enclitic* is a more suitable term than *postposition* because clitics are “morphologically more bound than... adposition[s] but freer than... bound morpheme[s]” (Sun 2013, 215).

The term *enclitic* seems appropriate concerning the phonological nature of these elements, especially regarding the monosyllabic localizers, but I find the term 方位词 *fāngwèicí* ‘localizer’ in both English and Chinese⁵ more suitable for my research due to the priority of the lexical meanings of these items.

To accommodate different views, Xi suggests considering these items as “an ambiguous category of localizers and adpositions.”⁶ Xi concludes that, since Chinese grammar lacks morphological markers and ambiguity is one of its main features, defining word classes is a very complicated and sometimes impossible task (Xi 2013, 63).

One more topic of discussion among linguists is the existence of *circumpositions* (框式介词 *kuàngshì jiècí*) in Mandarin Chinese. A circumposition “is made of two parts, which occur simultaneously in a phrase, one at its beginning and one at its end” (Hagege 2010, 115). This word class is not represented in Latvian.

Liu Danqing (2002) proposes that such combinations as in Ex. 6 are circumpositions:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| (6) 在 <i>zài</i> ‘be located ... | 里 <i>lǐ</i> ‘in’ | à ‘in ...’ |
| 从 <i>cóng</i> ‘from ... | 外 <i>wài</i> ‘outside’ | à ‘from outside ...’ |
| 到 <i>dào</i> ‘to’ ... | 上 <i>shàng</i> ‘on’ | à ‘onto ...’ |

According to Liu, circumpositions are “a very important phenomenon of Chinese syntax, it is an important typological feature of the Chinese language, but the majority of circumpositions are *ad hoc* syntactic combinations, not regular fixed items”⁷ (Liu 2002, 241). The so called *ad hoc* character of circumpositions justifies the ability of their constituents to function separately, forming three types of constructions: **Preposition + Noun + Localizer**, **Preposition + Noun** and **Noun + Localizer**.

Liu admits that circumpositions do not always contain both constituents, because, when “the verb, the noun, or both of them are of inherent spatial meaning, static or dynamic, the grammatical marking might and sometimes must be omitted”

⁵ The author suggests the term *lokalizētājs* as the most appropriate for Latvian.

⁶ ““方位词-介词”兼类词” (Xi 2013, 63).

⁷ “框式介词在汉语中是一种重要的句法现象, 构成了汉语的重要类型特征, 但大部分框式介词都属于临时性句法组合, 而未必是固定的词项” (Liu 2002, 241).

(Liu 2013, 50). That is, localizers are not always needed with nouns that have an inherent spatial meaning, such as ‘Melbourne’ or ‘countryside’. Likewise, prepositions can be omitted, when the verbs of movement or location are used. The range of “spatial-role-assigning verbs” varies across dialects but these verbs usually “denote static existence (being), movement (come, go, walk, run, fly, swim...), placement of things (put, hang, carry...) and so forth” (Liu 2013, 48). This group of verbs also includes 插 *chā* ‘insert’, 安 *ān* ‘install, fit’, 奔 *bēn* ‘rush’, 经过 *jīngguò* ‘pass’, 趴 *pā* ‘lean’, 游览 *yóulǎn* ‘go sightseeing’, 住 *zhù* ‘reside’, 坐 *zuò* ‘sit down’, etc. (Lu 2005, 56). In addition, the post-verbal and pre-verbal location of spatial phrases and their syntactic functions determine the presence or omission of prepositions (Chu 2010, 151; Liu 2013, 53).

Liu’s innovative approach was a significant contribution in advancing Chinese linguistics because it gave rise to new research questions (Chu 2010, 80). To some, for example, Xi, circumpositions are full members of the Chinese class of adpositions, alongside prepositions and postpositions (Xi 2013, 62–64). Others, like Chu Zexiang, are ready to accept the term, but the question that needs to be answered is the following: what exactly is “the semantic (non) necessity”⁸ for using one of these constructions (Chu 2010, 80). Sun, on the contrary, does not accept the term *circumposition*, because its constituents should always co-occur, which is not so in Mandarin Chinese (Sun 2013, 213).

In my opinion, it is more appropriate to analyze prepositions and localizers as elements that are closely related, but not bound to each other. The data coming from classical and modern literary sources shows that circumpositional spatial constructions have not been the most frequently used throughout the history of the written Chinese. The analysis of several contemporary novels reveals 227 occurrences of **Preposition + Noun + Localizer** versus 367 occurrences of **Noun + Localizer** and 83 occurrences of **Preposition + Noun** (Chappell, Peyraube 2013, 27, 36). The conditions under which the elements of the spatial construction can be omitted are discussed in the next section.

2. The variants of spatial adpositional phrases in Mandarin Chinese

In Latvian, there are nouns that semantically are place words, for example, *Latvija* ‘Latvia’, *universitāte* ‘university’, *iekšpuse* ‘inside, inner side’, but neither syntactically, nor morphologically do they differ from other nouns and they follow the same grammar rules as the other nouns do (Ex. 7, 8).

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| (7) | a. <i>Viņš ir lekcijā.</i>
He is lecture.LOC
‘He is at the lecture.’ | b. <i>Viņš aizgāja uz lekciju.</i>
He went to lecture.ACC
‘He went to the lecture.’ |
| (8) | a. <i>Viņš ir ieradies Pekinā.</i>
He has arrived Beijing.LOC
‘He has arrived in Beijing.’ | b. <i>Viņš aizbrauca uz Pekinu.</i>
He went to Beijing.ACC
‘He went to Beijing.’ |

⁸ “语义（不）需要” (Chu 2010, 80).

Place words (处所词 *chùsuǒcí*) in Mandarin Chinese are usually defined as a subclass of nouns with inherent locative meaning or as words that denote places, for example, geographic names and public institutions, such places as 街头 *jiētou* ‘street’, 当地 *dāngdì* ‘local area’, 山区 *shānqū* ‘mountainous area’, 野外 *yěwài* ‘countryside, non-urban area’, 乡下 *xiāngxià* ‘countryside, rural area’, 内地 *nèidì* ‘inland territory’. Compound localizers can function as place words too, e.g., 上端 *shàngduān* ‘top’, 前方 *qiánfāng* ‘front’, 北部 *běibù* ‘north’, etc. (Lu 2005, 55; Chu 2010, 13, 31; Yuan 2010, 57; Liu 2013, 51; Chappell, Peyraube 2013, 18). Like the verbs of movement or location that do not take prepositions, place words do not require localizers to specify location (Ex. 9):

- (9) a. 他在北京。
 tā zài Běijīng
 he be-at Beijing
 ‘He is in Beijing.’
 b. 他在山区。
 tā zài shānqū
 he be-at mountainous area
 ‘He is in the mountains.’

Nevertheless, there are place words that can take localizers (Ex. 10):

- (10) a. 坐在客厅里 b. 到医院里去 (Lu 2005, 57)
zuò zài kètīng lǐ dào yīyuàn lǐ qù
sit be-at.PRE living room in.LOCZ to.PRE hospital in.LOCZ go
'to sit in the living room' 'to go into the hospital'

Such words as names of institutions and architectural constructions, mountains or bodies of water, e.g., 出版社 *chūbǎnshè* ‘publishing house’, 书店 *shūdiàn* ‘bookshop’, 东海 *Dōnghǎi* ‘East China Sea’, are “not really classical place words,”⁹ they stand between the classical place words and the ordinary nouns, and they may take the localizers 上 *shàng* ‘on’ and 里 *lǐ* ‘in’ (Chu 2010, 32). If all Chinese nouns were ranked, then at one end of the scale there would be the place words, at the other end, the ordinary nouns, and the majority of nouns would be between these two extremes (Ex. 11) (Chu 2010, 90):

(11) Place word	>					Entity noun
西部 > 火车站 > 长江 > 走廊 > 电梯 > 家具						
<i>xībù</i> > <i>huǒchēzhàn</i> > <i>Chángjiāng</i> > <i>zǒuláng</i> > <i>diàntī</i> > <i>jiājù</i>						
'west' > 'train station' > 'Yangtze River' > 'corridor' > 'lift' > 'furniture'						

Adding a localizer to a place word may change the semantic or pragmatic meaning of the phrase (Liu 2013, 51). For example, by adding the localizer 里 *lǐ* ‘in’, as in Ex. 10b, one emphasizes entering the hospital. And a phrase without a localizer indicates direction: 去医院 *qù yīyuàn* ‘go to the hospital’.

Table 1, based on Yuan Yulin’s research on the distribution of word classes in Mandarin Chinese (2010), contains the information on the combinational properties

⁹ “不太典型的处所词” (Chu 2010, 32)

of localizers, place words and nouns. In this table ‘c’ stands for a content word, ‘f’ for a function word, ‘r’ for a root of a compound.

X	1-syll. Locz	2-syll. Locz ¹⁰	Place word	Noun
Possible constructions				
No SpPre + X	—	+ c	+ c	—
SpPre 在 <i>zài</i> ‘be at’ + X	—	+ c	+ c	—
SpPre 向 <i>xiàng</i> ‘toward’ X or 从 <i>cóng</i> ‘from’ X 到 <i>dào</i> ‘to’ X	+ r	+ c	+ c	—
SpPre + Noun + X	+ f	+ f	+ c	—
Noun + X	+ f	+ f	+ c	+
SpPre + Noun + 的 <i>de</i> + X	—	+ c	+ c	—
Noun + 的 <i>de</i> + X	—	+ c	+ c	+
SpPre + X + 的 <i>de</i> + Noun	—	—	—	—
X + 的 <i>de</i> + Noun	—	+ c	+ c	+
SpPre + X + Noun	—	—	—	—
X + Noun	—	—	+	+
最 <i>zuì</i> ‘the most’ X 到 <i>dào</i> ‘reaches’...	+ r	—	—	—
最 <i>zuì</i> ‘the most’ X	—	+ c	—	—
X as answer to ‘Where?’	—	+ c	+ c	—
Numeral + Classifier + X	—	—	—	+

Table 1. Possible spatial phrases in Chinese

As Table 1 shows, the non-place nouns without localizers cannot be used after spatial prepositions. This is what Sun calls the “selectional restriction” (Sun 2013, 216): prepositions must take either place words or combinations of nouns and localizers equivalent to them.

Both monosyllabic and disyllabic localizers participate in spatial constructions ‘Preposition + Noun + Localizer’ and ‘Noun + Localizer’ as function words that specify the orientation of the spatial relation (Ex. 12):

- (12) a. 在词典里 b. 到电视机左边 c. 河东 (Yuan 2010)
 zài cídiǎn lǐ *dào diànshìjī zuǒbian* *hé dōng*
 be-at.PRE dictionary in.LOCZ to.PRE TV left.LOCZ river east.LOCZ
 ‘in the dictionary’ ‘to the left of the TV’ ‘to the east of the river’

¹⁰ In this paper the localizers with the prefixes 之 *zhī*- and 以 *yǐ*- are not being analyzed. In the spatial domain they are dependent elements that can only be attached to preceding nouns like monosyllabic localizers, but not to prepositions. In the post-nominal position, the particle 的 *de* cannot be inserted in between, it is redundant, because the prefixes 之 *zhī*- and 以 *yǐ*- are equivalent to 的 *de*.

Disyllabic localizers and place words can form the construction ‘Preposition + Disyllabic localizer / Place word’, and localizers in such constructions are content words (Ex. 13):

- (13) 从里面儿到外面儿 (Yuan 2010, 135)

cóng lǐmianr dào wàimianr

‘from inside to outside’

Monosyllabic localizers can become complements of prepositions without nouns in the constructions **Preposition of Source / Direction / Goal + Localizer**. I consider that in such phrases prepositions and monosyllabic localizers form compound adverbs (Ex. 14):

- (14) a. 争议是向上还是向下延伸 (Peking University Corpus) b. 往西走

zhēngyì shì xiàngshàng háishì xiàngxià yánsēn

dispute is upwards or downwards spread

‘Is the dispute spreading upwards or downwards?’

wàng xī zǒu

to west go

‘go westwards’

Monosyllabic localizers cannot be attached directly to the preposition of location 在 *zài*: *在西 *zài xī*, in these cases, disyllabic localizers must be used: 在西部 *zài xībù* ‘in the west (western part)’. The preposition 在 *zài* ‘be located at’ is subject to “the multi-syllabic constraint” – no monosyllabic phrase is allowed after this preposition (Sun 2013, 219).

Monosyllabic localizers can be used in constructions expressing the furthestmost location (最 *zuì* ‘the most’... 到 *dào* ‘up to, reaches’...), disyllabic localizers cannot. Again, localizers form compound adverbs with the preceding *zuì*, they are roots of the compounds (Ex. 15):

- (15) a. 最北达北纬82°, 最南到北纬55° (Peking University Corpus)

zuì běi dá běiwěi 82°, zuì nán dào běiwěi 55°

most north reach northern latitude 82°, most south reach northern latitude 82°

‘Northernmost it goes up 82° northern latitude, southernmost it reaches 55° northern latitude’.

- b. 最上到天花板 (Yuan 2010, 132)

zuì shàng dào tiānhuābǎn

most top reach ceiling

‘Uppermost it reaches the ceiling.’

Disyllabic localizers do not form compounds with 最 *zuì* ‘the most’, but they can be modified by it when they express locations with gradable properties (最左边 *zuì zuǒbian* ‘leftmost area’, 最下面 *zuì xiàmiàn* ‘the lowest part’), *most around (Ex. 16). Place words cannot be modified by 最 *zuì* because they are non-gradable: *the most countryside, *the most London.

- (16) 从最前头儿往最后头儿 (Yuan 2010, 135)

cóng zuì qiántour wàng zuì hòutour

from most front to most back

‘from the very front to the very back’

Sometimes, monosyllabic localizers are used individually in set expressions, but this cannot be taken as the norm: Ex. 17 is an idiom describing the beauty of Suzhou and Hangzhou:

- (17) 上有天堂，下有苏杭。(Lu 2005, 51)

shàng yǒu tiāntǎng, xià yǒu Sū Háng

on.LOCZ has Heaven, under.LOCZ has Suzhou Hangzhou

‘There is Heaven above and there are Suzhou and Hangzhou below.’

The preposition 在 *zài* ‘be at’ can be omitted and the resulting constructions are **Noun + Disyllabic localizer** and **Disyllabic localizer / Place word**. According to Chu, this mostly happens when the spatial phrase functions as an adverbial at the beginning of a sentence (Ex. 18) and when the spatial phrase functions as an attributive (Ex. 19) (Chu 2010, 151).

- (18) 墙上布满了鞋印 (Corpus of Mandarin Chinese)

qiángshàng bùmǎnle xiéyìn

wall on.LOCZ cover.ASP.PERF shoeprint

‘The wall was covered by shoeprints.’

- (19) 墙上的电子钟 (Corpus of Mandarin Chinese)

qiángshàng de diànzǐ zhōng

wall on.LOCZ ATTRIB electronic clock

‘the electronic clock that is on the wall’

Place words and disyllabic localizers can be used alone to answer the question ‘Where?’ (Ex. 20a), but monosyllabic localizers cannot (Ex. 20b):

- (20) a. 坐哪儿? — 前面!

Zuò nǎr? — Qiánmiàn!

sit where – front

‘Where are we sitting?’ – ‘In the front!’

- b. 坐哪儿? — *前!

*Zuò nǎr? — *Qián!*

Like disyllabic localizers, place words can be used after nouns, the construction is **Noun + Place word**. The nouns (which can be place words as well) before place words become their attributives. The place word ‘Beijing’ in Ex. 21 is an attributive of the place word ‘suburbs’.

- (21) 北京郊外 *Běijīng jiāowài* ‘the suburbs of Beijing’

Place words and disyllabic localizers can take attributives with the particle *de* which marks the attributive (Ex. 22) or without it (Ex. 21). Disyllabic localizers occupy the position between function and content words. When they directly follow nouns, they are function words like monosyllabic localizers that enable nouns to express place (Ex. 12b). When they follow nouns but are attached to them by the particle 的 *de*, they are content words modified by attributives (Ex. 22). These constructions can be complements of spatial prepositions.

- (22) 在我办公桌的右边儿。(Peking University Corpus)

zài wǒ bàngōngzhuō de yòubianr

be-at I desk ATTRIB right side.LOCZ

‘on the right side of my desk’

Reverse constructions are possible, too: **Place word + (的 *de*) + Noun or Disyllabic localizer + 的 *de* + Noun**, in which the place words and localizers are attributives (Ex. 23). In the latter construction, the particle 的 *de* is compulsory (Ex. 24) (Yuan 2010, 137).

- (23) a. 野外的热风 (Yuan 2010, 140) b. 乡下朋友 (Peking University Corpus)

yěwài de rèfēng

non-urban area ATTRIB hot wind

‘the hot wind outside the city’

xiāngxià péngyou

countryside friend

‘a friend from the countryside’

- (24) a. *上面住户 (Yuan 2010, 137) > b. 上面的住户

**shàngmian zhùhù*

*above household

‘the household above’

> *shàngmian de zhùhù*

> above ATTRIB household

Sometimes the use or omission of 的 *de* may result in the change of meaning (Ex. 25):

- (25) a. 北京大学 *Běijīng dàxué* ‘Beijing University’

b. 北京的大学 *Běijīng de dàxué* ‘universities of Beijing’

Monosyllabic localizers cannot function as attributives, no matter if 的 *de* is used or not (Ex. 26a, 26b), nor can they take attributives (Yuan 2010, 131, 132, 137) (Ex. 26c):

- (26) a. *中的房子 *zhōng de fángzi* ‘middle house’

b. *东木头 *dōng mùtou* ‘eastern wood’

c. *房子的后 *fángzi de hòu* ‘behind the house’

The essential feature of ordinary nouns is that they cannot become complements of spatial prepositions because nouns do not express location even if their attributives are place words (Ex. 27).

- (27) *从日本的车子 > 从日本的车子里

**cóng Riběn de chēzi*

‘from a Japanese car’

> *cóng Riběn de chēzi lǐ*

from.PRE Japan ATTRIB car in.LOCZ

‘from (inside) a Japanese car’

Nouns are usually modified by numerals or quantifiers, but place words are not (Ex. 28):

- (28) a. 我有一只狗。

wǒ yǒu yì zhī gǒu

I have one CLASS dog

‘I have a dog.’

b. *我住在 一个北京。

**wǒ zhù zài yí ge Běijīng.*

*I live be-at one CLASS Beijing

*‘I live in a Beijing.’

To summarize, what distinguishes monosyllabic localizers from disyllabic ones and place words is their dependent character: they are glued to nouns or to prepositions of source, direction and goal.

Both place words and disyllabic localizers can be attached directly to nouns. In such cases, disyllabic localizers are functional elements that change non-spatial noun phrases into spatial ones, they are “functional heads of the noun phrases” (Sun 2013, 216). When a place word follows a noun directly, the place word is the head word, which takes an attributive. For a disyllabic localizer to become a content word, it should be preceded by the attributive particle 的 *de*. Nevertheless, it is not always easy to draw a line between the two classes. I believe that between the two extremes, namely, absolute place words, such as 中国 *Zhōngguó* ‘China’, 海边 *hǎibiān* ‘seaside’, and absolute localizers, such as 之南 *zhīnán* ‘to the south’ and 以北 *yǐběi* ‘to the north’, there is a range of localizers that can belong to both categories, e.g., 面前 *miànqián* ‘in front’, 附近 *fùjìn* ‘nearby’, 外面 *wàimiàn* ‘outside’, etc.

In their ability to indicate the orientation of a spatial relationship, localizers are similar to Latvian prepositions and can often be translated as prepositions into Latvian, e.g., 后 *hòu* = *aiz* ‘behind’, 外 *wài* = *ārpus* ‘outside’, or sometimes as prepositional adverbs, e.g., 前 *qián* = *priekšā* ‘in front’, 中间 *zhōngjiān* = *starpā* ‘between’. Disyllabic localizers and monosyllabic localizers attached to prepositions are sometimes equivalent to Latvian adverbs, e.g., 向下 *xiàngxià* = *lejup* ‘downwards’, 向上 *xiàngshàng* = *augšup* ‘upwards’, and sometimes to prepositional phrases, e.g., 往北 *wàngběi* = *uz ziemeļiem* ‘northwards’.

In certain contexts Latvian prepositions can be used without their dependent nouns (Nītiņa 2013, 620) (Ex. 29):

(29)a. *nokļūšana uz un no Hītrovās lidostas* (Google.lv)

‘getting to and from Heathrow airport’

b. *ūdens sildītājs uzstādīšanai zem izlietnes vai virs* (Google.lv)

water boiler installation.DAT under sink.GEN or above

‘a water boiler that can be installed either under the sink or above it’

However, in such cases prepositions do not become content words: although their complements are not pronounced, they are suggested. Separated from nouns, Latvian prepositions cannot describe places. Chinese disyllabic localizers, on the contrary, can function as names of places (Ex. 30):

(30) a.

**zem dzīvo viens jauniešs*

*under.PRE lives one young man

*‘under there lives a young man’

b. 下面住一个男生

xiamian zhu yì ge nanshēng

below live one CLASS young man

‘downstairs there lives a young man’

3. Position of spatial phrases in sentences in Latvian and Mandarin Chinese

Adpositional phrases in Mandarin Chinese are normally placed before verbs (Ex. 3b, 4b, 14), the structure is **PP+V**. Although, if the verb expresses “being born,

happening, generating or residing,”¹¹ then the spatial phrase can either precede or follow the verb (Ex. 31) (Shi 2005, 18–19; Xi 2013, 125):

- (31) a. 住在东城 *zhù zài Dōngchéng* = 在东城住 *zài Dōngchéng zhù*
 reside be-at Dongcheng = be-at Dongcheng reside
 ‘to live in Dongcheng’
 b. 出生在北京 *chūshēng zài Běijīng* = 在北京出生 *zài Běijīng chūshēng*
 be born be-at Beijing = be-at Beijing be born
 ‘to be born in Beijing’ (Shi 2005, 19)

When an adpositional phrase follows the verb of movement or location, the initial element of the phrase, namely, 在 *zài* ‘be at’ or 到 *dào* ‘toward, reach’, is not a preposition, but an element of the resultative verb construction.

Prepositions cannot take the aspect markers 过 *guò*, 了 *le*, 着 *zhe* like verbs (Yuan 2010, 178; Xi 2013, 63).¹² On the other hand, “[i]t is a general constraint in Mandarin that verbs followed by a preposition cannot take any aspect markers, unless the aspect marker follows the preposition (V + Pre + Asp + NP)” (Liu 2013, 53). In other words, the aspect marker refers to the verb, but it must be placed after the preposition (Ex. 32). Prepositions here are functional elements in resultative verb constructions and together with verbs they form ‘resultative verb compounds’ that exist in syntax only, not in the lexicon (Paul 2015, 38, 43). Nevertheless, the spatial phrase does not change its meaning, it still denotes a certain location.

- (32) a. 挂在了墙上 *guà zài le qiáng shàng* (Shi 2011, 183)
 hang.RESULT.ASP.PERF wall on.LOCZ
 ‘have hung on the wall’
 b. 爬到山顶上 *pá dào shāndǐng shàng* (Shi 2005, 21)
 climb.RESULT.ASP.PERF mountain peak on.LOCZ
 ‘have climbed up to the top of the mountain’

The order of constituents of the Latvian sentence is relatively free. However, the grammatical, communicative and stylistic functions of the word order underlie actual expressions. The sentence may be added emotional or stylistic information, or serve a certain communicative goal, as a result, the neutral arrangement of words may become distorted (Lokmane 2010, 59–60). In Ex. 33 the meaning of the spatial phrase remains the same despite the change of its position in the sentence. But the sentence meaning changes: Ex. 33a is a statement of a fact, whereas Ex. 33b emphasizes the destination and in Ex. 33c the emphasis is on the person going to China:

- (33) a. *Es braucu uz Ķīnu.* b. *Es uz Ķīnu braucu.* c. *Uz Ķīnu braucu es.*
 I go to China.ACC *I to China.ACC go *To China.ACC go I
 ‘I go to China.’ ‘It is China where I go.’ ‘It is me who goes to China.’

¹¹ “出生、发生、产生、居留” (Shi 2005, 19)

¹² Some prepositions have ‘grown together’ with the aspect markers, such as 顺着 *shùnzhē* ‘along’, 经过 *jīngguò* ‘pass by’, etc. The aspect markers in these prepositions are not grammatical elements.

In Mandarin Chinese, the pre-verbal or post-verbal position of the spatial phrase expresses syntactic-grammatical relations. In Latvian, the position of the spatial phrase is bound to the informative-emotional content of the sentence.

4. Semantic roles of spatial adpositions in Latvian and Mandarin Chinese

In Latvian, both prepositions and case endings determine the semantic roles of spatial phrases. In the Chinese spatial constructions, the semantic roles are specified by prepositions (see Table 2).

Spatial phrase with	Semantic role Of SpP	Governed case	
		Singular	Plural
a. <i>aiz</i> ‘behind’, <i>apakš</i> ‘under’, <i>pie</i> ‘next to’, <i>uz</i> ‘on’, <i>virš</i> ‘above’, <i>zem</i> ‘under’, <i>iekš</i> ‘in’	Location	Gen	Dat/Inst
	Goal		
the locative case ending	Location	Loc	Loc
	Goal		
<i>no</i> ‘from’	Source	Gen	Dat/Inst
<i>līdz</i> ‘up to’	Goal	Dat	Dat/Inst
<i>uz</i>	Direction	Acc	Dat/Inst
<i>ap</i> ‘around’, <i>caur</i> ‘through’, <i>gar</i> ‘along’, <i>pa</i> ‘on, along’, <i>pār</i> ‘over’, <i>pret</i> ‘by, against’, <i>starp</i> ‘between’	Range	Acc	Dat/Inst
	Path		
在 <i>zài</i> ‘be at’	Location	—	—
从 <i>cóng</i> / 自 <i>zì</i> / 离 <i>lí</i> ‘from’	Source	—	—
到 <i>dào</i> ‘to, reach’	Goal	—	—
往 <i>wàng</i> / 向 <i>xiàng</i> / 朝 <i>cháo</i> ‘toward’ s	Direction	—	—

Table 2. The semantic roles performed by spatial constructions in Latvian and Chinese

4.1. The semantic role of location

It is common in the evolution of the Indo-European languages, including Latvian, that the change goes from non-prepositional constructions to prepositional ones. The emergence of prepositions was motivated by the necessity to express meanings more precisely (Nītiņa 1978, 29; Nītiņa 2013, 628). In Latvian, the spatial prepositional constructions have in most cases replaced non-prepositional ones, however, the location inside an object can be expressed by the locative case ending without a preposition (Ex. 7a, 8a).

Despite the dominance of the locative case ending in expressing inner location, the preposition *iekš* ‘in’ can be used instead as a stylistic device to imitate old and colloquial language (Nītiņa 1978, 87). Besides, this preposition is used before words with foreign spelling, abbreviations or numbers, when adding a case ending is impossible (Ex. 34):

4.4. The semantic role of source

In Latvian, the preposition *no* ‘from’, used to describe the source of movement, governs the genitive case. In Mandarin Chinese, the prepositions of source are 从 *cóng* / 自 *zì* / 离 *lí* ‘from’ (Ex. 40, 41):

- | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (40) a. | b. 从家里出来 |
| <i>iziet no mājas</i> | <i>cóng jiā lǐ chūlái</i> |
| exit from house.GEN | from house in.LOCZ exit |
| ‘to exit the house’ | ‘to exit the house’ |
| (41) a. | b. 从桌子上拿来 |
| <i>paņemt no galda</i> | <i>cóng zhuōzi shàng nálái</i> |
| take from table.GEN | from table on. LOCZ take |
| ‘to take from the table’ | ‘to take from the table’ |

The meaning of the preposition *no* ‘from’ is underspecified. In order to describe the source precisely, such as ‘from inside the object’ or ‘from the surface of the object’, more information needs to be expressed by other items, e.g., by verb prefixes as in Ex. 40a, 41a or the context itself (the prefixes can be omitted in both examples: *iet* ‘go’, *ņemt* ‘take’). In Chinese, the ‘precision’ function is performed by the localizers.

4.5. The semantic role of goal

In Latvian, the preposition *līdz* ‘till, up to’ means reaching the destination, it governs the dative case that marks the indirect object, the target of an action (Smiltniece 2013a, 350). Also, the phrases of location can be used with verbs of motion, and in such cases they express goal (Ex. 42) (see Nītiņa 1978; Apse 2011). There is a difference between *līdz* and the prepositions of location: *līdz* means arriving at the border of the destination, the prepositions of location describe precisely the place of destination (in, on, behind).

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| (42) a. <i>uzkāpt līdz virsotnei</i> | b. <i>aiziet aiz stūra</i> | c. <i>ierasties Pekinā</i> |
| climb to top.DAT | go behind corner.GEN | arrive Beijing.LOC |
| ‘to climb to the top’ | ‘to go behind the corner’ | ‘to arrive in Beijing’ |

In Chinese, the preposition 到 *dào* ‘to, to reach’ assigns the role of goal to the spatial phrase when the phrase precedes the main verb (Ex. 4b, 10b). The resultative verb compounds with 到 *dào* ‘to reach’ and 在 *zài* ‘to be at’ (initially meaning location) also express reaching the goal (Ex. 32).

4.6. The semantic role of direction

I believe that it is reasonable to distinguish between goal, path and direction as semantic roles: a path along which an object moves toward the goal is oriented in a certain direction. In Latvian the accusative case ending marks the direct object of a transitive verb (Smiltniece 2013a, 351), as well as the argument of a verb of movement. The preposition *uz* ‘to, toward’ governs the accusative case (Ex. 43):

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| (43) a. <i>skatīties uz gleznu</i> | b. <i>iet uz veikalu</i> |
| look to painting.ACC | go to shop.ACC |
| ‘look at the painting’ | ‘go to the shop’ |

The Latvian preposition ‘uz’ ‘toward’ may seem ambiguous, since it is not really clear if the direction of movement or reaching the goal is meant (Ex. 7b, 8b, 43). According to Apse, *uz* “denotes direction, a goal-oriented motion where *uz* combined with a motion verb expresses the meaning of something moving to a particular destination, as in *skriet uz skolu* (run to school)” (Apse 2011, 73). Unlike the preposition *līdz* ‘up to’, *uz* ‘toward’ does not express arriving at the goal, so it can be concluded that in the phrases with *uz* the sense of orientation of the movement dominates over the sense of reaching the destination.

In Chinese, the role of direction is clearly specified by the prepositions 向 *xiàng* / 往 *wàng* / 朝 *cháo* ‘toward’ (Ex. 44):

(44) 火车向上海开去。 (Xi 2013, 196)

huǒchē xiàng Shànghǎi kāiqù

train toward Shanghai leave

‘The train is leaving for Shanghai.’

After the verbs of movement, the spatial constructions perform the role of direction without prepositions: 去学校 *qù shāngdiàn* ‘go to a shop’.

The case endings in Latvian do not only show semantic roles, but also express the number. Since the dative and the instrumental case endings coincide in the plural form, any of them can be used. In Mandarin Chinese, number is marked neither in prepositions, nor in localizers. When necessary, ordinary nouns, not place words, can be added the plural form suffix 们 *mén*.

Both cases and prepositions in Latvian are polysemous (Paegle 2003, 182; Smiltņiece 2013a, 343). Besides, their meanings and semantic roles are bound with the meanings of verbs and dependent nouns. The Chinese prepositions are not polysemous, moreover, localizers are obligatory in spatial constructions, thus, locations are always described precisely.

Conclusions

Basically, Latvian and Mandarin Chinese spatial adpositional phrases contain three elements each, however, the number of constituents in the spatial phrases may differ.

In Latvian, the construction is **Preposition + Noun + Case ending**, in which the preposition describes the location of the Figure object with relation to the Ground object. Besides, both the preposition and case ending determine the semantic role of the phrase. The locative case ending expresses a concrete location and the semantic role on its own, this makes the preposition redundant. There is no distinction between place and non-place nouns in Latvian, therefore, the same grammar rules apply to both types.

The Chinese spatial phrase **Preposition + Noun + Localizer** can have less than three elements, too. Since the preposition does not express location, but only introduces the spatial phrase, it can be omitted after the verbs of motion. When performing certain syntactic functions, the preposition can be omitted too. Nouns in Mandarin Chinese belong to two categories: place words and ordinary nouns. Since place words suggest location, localizers are not used with them. On

the contrary, localizers are compulsory for the non-place nouns, since they enable these words to express location.

Although Mandarin Chinese localizers and Latvian prepositions may seem to express similar lexical meanings, there is no direct correspondence between these two word classes. When translating from Chinese into Latvian, different linguistic items can be used: prepositions, prepositional adverbs, adverbs, and nouns. When translating from Latvian into Chinese, one can use the non-spatial prepositional phrases of manner in addition to the spatial constructions.

The cases and prepositions in Latvian are polysemous, whereas Chinese prepositions are not: they perform one semantic role each. However, the prepositions of source, goal and direction in Latvian seem to describe the properties of motion rather than the exact position of the object named by the phrase. In Mandarin Chinese spatial phrases, the information on location is always clearly stated by localizers or place words in phrases of source, goal and direction, too. The post-verbal position of the spatial phrase in Mandarin Chinese can express the properties of motion: reaching the goal and direction.

The position of the spatial phrase in the Latvian sentence performs the communicative function, whereas in Mandarin Chinese it has a grammatical meaning.

Abbreviations

ACC/Acc	Accusative case
ASP/Asp	Aspect
ATTRIB	Attributive particle
CLASS	Classifier
Dat	Dative case
GEN/Gen	Genitive case
Inst	Instrumental case
LOC/Loc	Locative case
LOCZ/Locz	Localizer
NP	Noun phrase
PERF	Perfect
POST	Postposition
PP	Prepositional phrase
PRE/Pre	Preposition
RESULT	Resultative particle
SpP	Spatial phrase
SpPre	Spatial preposition
V	Verb
1, 2-syll	1, 2-syllable

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Kopsavilkums

Rakstā sintaktiskā un semantiskā aspektā aplūkoti telpiskas nozīmes adpozicionālie savienojumi latviešu un ķīniešu valodā. Pētot telpisko konstrukciju komponentus, vērojams, ka prievārdu un lietvārdu funkcijas latviešu un ķīniešu valodā atšķiras. Tāpēc telpisko attieksmju izteikšana abās valodās ir tipoloģiski atšķirīga. Ķīniešu lokalizētāju ekvivalenti latviešu valodā ir prievārdi, adverbi un lietvārdi. Telpiskā savienojuma pozīcija ietekmē teikuma gramatisko nozīmi ķīniešu valodā un pragmatisko nozīmi latviešu valodā. Latviešu valodā prievārdi un locījumi ir polisēmiski – katram no tiem var būt vairākas semantiskās lomas, turpretim ķīniešu prievārdi ir monosēmiski.