

Maria Usacheva (The Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences), Maria Brykina (University of Hamburg), Alexey Leontyev (ABBY): How does contact influence actually work? The case of adjective plural marking in Permic languages

Abstract:

Permic languages (Fenno-Ugric<Uralic) are head-final with quite a strong tendency of nominal inflectional morphology to appear on NP's head. In particular, attributive adjectives usually precede nouns and do not inflect for case, number, and possessive. Predicative adjectives, on the contrary, tend to concord with the subject in plural. But the actual situation with plural marking is different in different varieties of Permic languages. In Komi, the adjective plural suffix practically has become a non-verbal predicate concord marker. In Northern Udmurt varieties, the suffix is obligatory for non-derived non-loaned adjectival predicates and secondary predicates; sometimes it also appears on attributive adjectives which precede nominal heads. In Southern Udmurt varieties, the adjective plural suffix is not obligatory for adjectival predicates, but it can be attached to predicatives and verbs. From the perspective of language contact, it is an interesting situation because all Permic languages undergo contact influence from Russian (where adjectives obligatory concord with nouns in number both in attributive and in predicate positions), but to different extent. The influence is very intensive in Komi and Northern Udmurt and not so intensive in Southern Udmurt.

In our talk we will primarily focus on Udmurt. On the basis of corpora of different Udmurt dialects, of the field data (grammatical judgement tasks, experimental data, segmentation on information structure units made by the speakers, and spontaneous texts), we will propose the syntactic structures which involve plural marking of adjectives and IS-units these structures correspond to. We offer the following questions for discussion: did Russian influence number marking of adjectives in Permic languages at all? If it did, how it could happen: via syntactic structure copying, borrowing of information structure patterns, or somehow else?