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Adposition or relator noun: Grammaticalization processes in Central and Southern Selkup

Selkup is the southern branch of Samoyedic, it splits further into Northern, Central, and Southern Selkup subvarieties. Whereas Northern Selkup dialects are least endangered, only a few speakers are left who speak the Central or Southern Selkup dialects. This study is based on the Central and Southern Selkup text corpus currently being constructed at the University of Hamburg.[1]

The spatial relation in (1) is expressed by a construction containing the noun phrase *moqqo* 'back' and a preceding modifier, a personal pronoun. The noun phrase appears as a relator noun to express the spatial relation 'behind'. The question rises whether these relator nouns in Selkup still have a full nominal status.

(1) Ütč'ega tepan   moqqon   üt'imba.
     ütč'ega [tep-a-n   moqqo-n]   üt'i-mba
     child   3SG-EP-GEN back-LOC.ADV send-PST.REP[3SG.S]

     'The child runs behind her [lit.: in the back of her].'

                              [KKN_1971_WhiteHeadedWoman_flk: 20], Middle Ket

We may provide an answer if we take a look at localization. A basic localization scheme is described by Stolz (1992, p. 16): LOCALIZATION = {LOCALISATUM; LOCALIZER; LOCUS}.[2] The *localisatum* is the object to be localized, the *locus* is the item with respect to which the localisatum is related to, the *localizer*[3] is an element acting as a relator between locus and localisatum. This general scheme is modified by Haase (2001, pp. 737–740). He describes so-called ligators, i.e. additional elements which connect the complex localizer with localisatum and locus. A ligator is usually an adposition or a general local case.

Central and Southern Selkup use case morphology, adpositions, relator nouns and local adverbs[4] to express spacial relations. The five spacial cases (dative/allative, locative, illative, ablative[5] and prolative) are used to express general location, like in (2).

(2) Īde mātqɨnd   qwanba.
     īde [māt-qɨnd]NP   qwan-ba
     Itja house-LOC.PX.3SG go.away-PST.REP-[3SG.S]

     'Itja went home.'

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[1]The project: "Syntactic description of the Southern and Central Selkup dialects: a corpus-based investigation" (WA 3153/3-1, PI: Beáta Wagner-Nagy) is founded by the German Research Foundation.

[2]Scholz´s scheme is based on Lehmann (1983), with a different terminology.

[3]The localizer is redundant in the case of minimal or inherent localization.

[4]Local adverbs does not play any role in the assuming grammaticalization process, so it will be ignored in this study.

[5]The ablative case is used to express ablative as well as elative meaning

[TMR_1981_AboutItja_flk: 30], Middle Ob

From the four[6] existing postpositions in the corpus *čompɨ* 'during', *opti* 'with', *tare* 'like' and *t'āt* 'instead', only for the first one there exists an example giving a spatial relation. The nominal modifier of such an postpositional phrase is normally marked for genitive case as in (3).

(3) It'e üt'imb'ikuŋ   madam   t'ombɨ,   asse
     it'e üt'i-mb'i-ku-ŋ   [mada-m   t'ombɨ]_{PP}, asse
     Itja let.go-HAB-ITER-3SG.S house-GEN during   NEG
     orralǯelǯaquŋ.
     orra-lǯe-lǯa-qu-ŋ
     hold-TR-INT.PF-ITER-3SG.S

     'Itja runs around in the house, [Loz] could not hold him.'

[KKN_1971_Itja_flk: 15], Upper Ket

Relator nouns as in example (1) given above, occur much more frequently than postpositions. In the vast majority of the corpus data relator nouns only appear in constructions expressing spatial relations. The original lexical meaning moves into the backround. In the corpus the following nouns act as relator nouns: *tōp* 'edge', *par* 'top', *s'ünc'ə* 'inside', *pužo* 'inside', *moqə* 'back', *tibə* 'end', *kö* 'side', *īl* 'bottom'. They are almost always inflected in one of the spatial cases (dative/allative, locative, illative, ablative and prolative).

My data suggest that relator nouns in Central and Southern Selkup could be seen as adpositions (concerning the grammaticalization path mentioned by Haase (2001, pp. 737, 739): relator noun > localizer > adposition > local case > 0).

References

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[6]A possible further postposition *miqin* 'near' that appears in Northern Selkup cannot be clearly analysed as a postposition in Central and Southern Selkup too, because examples exist only in lexems as *oqqamiqin* 'together'.