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Locative and existential predication in Samoyedic languages

Agenda

- The project
  - General issues
  - Languages and data

- Overview: Existential and locative predication in Samoyedic languages

- Discussion: Open questions and topics

The project - Overview

- DFG-funded research project "Lokative und existentiale Prädikation in den Sprachen des Ob-Jenissej-Areals: Typologie und Informationsstruktur"
  - 07/2022 - 06/2025
  - Affiliated at IFUU, Universität Hamburg

- Overall goal:
  - Describe linguistic expressions of LOC-EX-predication + typology
  - Explore role of information structure in LOC-EX-predication

The project - Languages and data

- Languages
  - Samoyedic (except for Mator)
  - Ob-Ugric
  - Dolgan & Chulym
  - Ewenki
  - Ket

- Data
  - Corpora and databases (e.g. INEL, Ob-Ugric Database)
  - Texts and text collections
  - (grammars)
  - (previous research)

The project - Methodology and annotation

- Data collection
- Annotation of relevant clauses **within their context**
- Analysis with i.a. concordance searches → combination of qualitative and quantitative methods

Dĭn nüken koʔbdo ibi, i dĭ büz'en koʔbdo.

Dĭn	nüken	koʔbdo	ibi,
dĭ-n	nüke-n	koʔbdo	i-bi
dĭ-n	nüke-n	koʔbdo	i-bi
this-GEN	woman-GEN	girl.[NOM.SG]	be-PST.[3SG]
этот-GEN	женщина-GEN	девушка.[NOM.SG]	быть-PST.[3SG]
dempro-n:case	n-n:case	n-n:case	v-v:tense-v:pn
dempro	n	n	v
Poss:Cop.Aff			

У этой жены была дочь, и у этого мужчины дочь.

Locative and existential predication - Theory

- EX-LOC predication
    - relates two entities X and Y to each other
        - X: figure and Y: ground
        - often non-verbal predication
    - tightly interwoven in many languages of the world (Lyons 1967, Clark 1978, Freeze 1992, Koch 2012, Creissels 2019, Haspelmath 2022...)

- Wide variation of terminology: *plain-locationals* (Creissels 2019), *predlocatives* (Haspelmath 2022), *inverse-locationals* (Creissels 2019) etc

Locative and existential predication - Theory

	Locative	Existential	Possessive
Simplified Semantics	X is at Y	at Y, there is X	Y has X
Definiteness	X: mostly definite Y: definite or indefinite	X: mostly indefinite Y: (mostly definite)	X: mostly indefinite Y: (mostly definite)
Animacy	X: animate or inanimate Y: mostly inanimate	X: animate or inanimate Y: mostly inanimate	X: animate or inanimate Y: mostly animate
Information Structure	X: topic Y: focus	X: focus Y: topic (if expressed)	X: focus Y: topic
Perspectivization	X → Y	Y → X	Y → X

Loc/Ex-predication in Samoyedic languages

▪ Instances of non-verbal predication (but…)

▪ Linking element
  ▪ affirmative clauses
    ▪ Kamas & Selkup: copula
    ▪ Northern Samoyedic: copulas, locative verbs and existential items
  ▪ negative clauses: negative existentials in all languages

▪ Unmarked (?) word order: FIG-GR-COP in LOC, GR-FIG-COP in EX

LOC/EX-predication in Samoyedic languages - affirmative

(1a)　　*Wen'ako*　　*m'a-kəna*　　　　*me.*
dog　　　　　tent-LOC.SG　　　　be.at.3SG
'The dog is in the tent.'
(Tundra Nenets; Nikolaeva 2014: 263)

(1b)　　*Pedara-xəna*　　　　　*tudako-ʔ*　　　　*təńa-ʔ.*
forest-LOC.SG　　　　　mushroom-PL　　　　there.is-3PL
'There are mushrooms in the forest.'
(Tundra Nenets; Nikolaeva 2014: 251)

LOC/EX-predication in Samoyedic languages - negative

(2a) *Da   tăn   gijen=də   i   nago-bia-l,   […].*
    and   you   where=INDEF   and   NEG.EX-PST-2SG
    'But you haven't been anywhere, [you lived here].'
    (Kamas; Gusev et al. 2019, PKZ_196X_AngryLady_flk.044)

(2b) *Naga,   man'ək-kən   ne   naga.*
    NEG.EX.3SG   vicinity-LOC   woman   NEG.EX.3SG
    'There is no [woman], there is no woman around.'
    (Kamas; Gusev et al. 2019, AA_1914_Corpse_flk.003)

LOC/EX-predication in Samoyedic languages - quantifiers

(3a)   *Măn   turan'i   ugandə   tumo   **iʔgö.***
          I.GEN   house-LOC.1SG   very   mouse   **many**
          'In my house, there are many mice.' [lit. 'In my house, the mice are very many.']
          (Kamas; Gusev et al. 2019, PKZ_196X_SU0229.202)

(3b)   *D'urak   noda-ʔ,   to-ne   d'a-xan   te   **oka.***
          Nenets   hear-3PL.S   that-LOCADV   earth-LOC   reindeer   **many**
          'The Nenets got to know [that] there are many reindeer in this land.'
          (Forest Enets; Unpublished Enets Corpus, YKD_1969_War_flk.007)

LOC/EX-predication in Samoyedic languages - posture verb

(4a) [...] *n'arɨ-t*   *pɛläš-šaŋ*   **ɔːmta.**
     tundra-GEN   side-COR   **sit.3SG**
     '[Then he sees a tent, a large tent,] it is (standing) in the middle of the tundra.'
     (Northern Selkup; Budzisch et al. 2019; AAI_1973_Okyle_flk.054)

(4b) *Mannɨ-mpa-tɨ*   *konnä,*   *warqə   mɔːt*   **ɔːmna-ntɨ.**
     give.a.look-DUR-3SG.O   upwards   big   tent   **sit-INFER.3SG**
     'He looks upwards, a big tent is (standing) there.'
     (Northern Selkup; Brykina et al. 2020; SAI_1965_LittleDoll_flk.027)

Previous research

- Comparative studies
  - Wagner-Nagy 2011: focusing on negation, covering all Samoyedic languages, both LOC and EX constructions
  - Wagner-Nagy 2016: focusing on existentials and definiteness
  - Däbritz 2022: focusing on LOC (morphosyntax and typology)
  - ???

- Language-specific studies (apart from grammars): Budzisch 2017 (Selkup)…

Discussion: Domain of LOC-EX-predication

- Semantic-pragmatic definition (as shown above) →
  - Advantage: linguistic expressions can be included regardless of their morphosyntax (posture verbs, quantifiers...)
  - Disadvantage: Rather fuzzy limits

- Morphosyntactic definition (e.g. „clauses with figure subject, locational predicate") →
  - Advantage: clear-cut limit
  - Disadvantage: semantically fitting expressions may be excluded

Discussion: Terminology of linking elements

- Nganasan: existential verbs *təisʲa, tənijsʲa* and *dʼaŋgujsʲa*, existential particle *dʼaŋku*, copula *isʲa*

- Enets: existential verbs FE *tɔnee-* TE *tɔne-*, FE *dʲago-* TE *dʲigu-*, copulas TE *a-* FE *ŋa-* and *ɛ-*

- Tundra Nenets: existential verbs *təńa-* and *jəŋku-*, copulas *ŋa-* and *me-*

- Selkup: existential verb *čääŋkɨ-* (+ variants), copula *ɛ-*

- Kamas: existential verb *nago-*, copula *i-*

Discussion: Topics and open questions (not exhaustive)

- Non-canonical constructions
  - Posture verbs: How to decide whether sentences like (4a-b) are instances of LOC-EX predication? Criteria?
  - Quantificational constructions (3a-b): semantics clearly LOC/EX, but syntax rather predicate nominals/adjectives

- Polarity split: variation in affirmative, but consistently NEG.EX in negative
  - Coincidence? Ideas for functional motivation?

- Semantics (e.g. animacy) of figure element - any relevance?

References

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