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"A TRADITIONAL APPROACH" TO DESCRIPTIONS OF URALIC LANGUAGES IN RUSSIA

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В статье рассматривается проблема индоевропейского влияния на описание грамматических систем языков, принадлежащих к иным языковым семьям. Исследование, проводимое с помощью описательного метода, обращает внимание на влияние русской грамматической традиции на описание грамматик уральских языков (в частности, языков этнических меньшинств), проводимых на протяжении 20 века, а именно создании грамматик по «русской модели». Полученные результаты указывают на особую роль русской грамматической традиции при создании учебников по уральским языкам и представлении языкового материала. Актуальность данного исследования обусловлена двумя факторами: 1) интересом к языкам этнических меньшинств в Российской Федерации (часто находящихся на грани исчезновения, 2) необходимостью в точном описании грамматической системы любого языка с учетом его типологических особенностей.

As it is known "the Russian grammatical tradition", that is the pattern which is used for the description of a language system, originates from the European (earlier Latin) pattern in which all units of a language are distributed on classes according to some particular general characteristics, namely: lexical meaning, grammatical categories and syntactic function. Such scheme is well-known and standard, despite a number of disputes and discussions. The description of languages of the peoples of Russia is carried out according to the same scheme, as Russian description. This can be explained by the fact that after the establishment of the Soviet power the Russian language was taken as a basis, which was done to distribute new ideology among the people who did not speak Russian (the so-called education process). According to *the Resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR* (1938) «On the compulsory study of the Russian language in schools of the national republics and regions», the unsatisfactory teaching of the Russian language in national schools «is aimed at sabotaging Lenin-Stalin national policy and undermining the fraternal unity of the peoples of the USSR and the Russians» [1]. On these grounds, the Russian language was declared a compulsory subject in all non-Russian primary schools of the Soviet Union starting from the second grade. At the same time, the study of native languages in schools of the Soviet republics and regions was also proclaimed compulsory. To attain the objectives set by the Soviet government an active training of national teaching staff was conducted; new curricula and textbooks on the languages of the peoples of the USSR were created and published. The textbook «Russian Grammar» made at Institute of Linguistics, Academy of Sciences of the USSR (1952 – 1954) was used as a "model" for grammar textbooks in other national languages [2, p. 36]. As a result, the authors of grammars of national minority languages considered the Russian grammatical tradition as the main tool which resulted in the "involuntary" transfer to these languages.

In general, the grammar descriptions of the above-mentioned period show the tendency to follow Russian grammatical traditions. Such kind of "copying", named «shapirography»[1], stood for «mechanical transfer of Russian grammar phenomena to the grammar of another language with minimal adjustments or corrections such as, for example, an exclusion of a category where it does not exist» [5, p. 122].

However, some linguists made attempts to overcome "the Indo-European heritage" in the description of language material of the national minority languages, in particular, Uralic languages.

«Allocation of parts of speech in any language can be made only on the basis of the actual system of this language, and it is equally inadmissible to mechanically introduce grammatical categories from other languages (the categories which are not originally typical of the language), and ignore those categories which are characteristic of this language» [6, p. 29].

In the majority of textbooks in the Uralic languages, published in Russia, the material is organized the way it is done in Russian textbooks. On the one hand, in this case researchers find it easier to introduce new material; on the other hand, it is not always possible to show the actual grammatical system of a language. For example, the Khanty language textbook (1951) introduces grammar material using Russian terms, as there was not a required conceptual framework in the Khanty language at the time when the textbook was written. Chapters, focusing on syntax, are entitled in the following way: «*Podlezhashchoy, skazuemoy, nerasprostranyonnoy predlozhenie, rasprostranyonnoy predlozhenie*» (cf. in Russian «*Podlezhashchee, skazuemoe, nerasprostanyonnoe predlozhenie, rasprostanyonnoe predlozhenie*»); see also parts of speech – «*Imya sushchestvitel'noy, imya prilagatel'noy, imya chislitel'noit*» (cf. in Russian «*Imya sushchestvitel'noe, imya prilagatel'noe, imya chislitel'noe*») [7]. Similar examples can be found in the textbooks on Mansi (1940): «*Predlozhenie, sushchestvitel'nyy imya, lichnyy mestoimeniet, glagol*» (cf. in Russian «*Predlozhenie, imya chislitel'noe, lichnye mestoimeniya, glagol*) [8] and Udmurt (1940): «*Predlozhenilen vtorostepennoy chlen"yosyz*» (cf. in Russian «*Vtorostepennyye chleny predlozheniya*»), «*Opredeleniye, dopolneniye, obstoyatel'stvo*» (cf. in Russian «*Opredeleniye, dopolneniye, obstoyatel'stvo*»), «*Prilagatel'noyyoslen sklonenizy*» (cf. in Russian «*Skloneniye prilagatel'nykh*») [9]. Furthermore, the Russian terms were definitively fixed in the descriptions of the Mordvin languages, which is confirmed by tables of contents of the textbooks published in recent decades. See, for example, a textbook in the Moksha language (2000): nouns – «*Sushchestvitel'nays'*» (cf. in Russian «*Sushchestvitel'nyye*»), pronouns – «*Mestoimeniyas"*» (cf. in Russian «*Mestoimeniya*»), adjectives – «*Prilagatel'nays'*» (cf. in Russian «*Prilagatel'nyye*») [10].

At a later date special terms were literally translated into Uralic (the so-called loan-translation) that also contributed to the adoption of the Russian scheme of grammatical description. For example, a Russian «*imya sushchestvitel'noye*» (noun substantive) was translated into Udmurt as «*makenim*» (lit. something noun), «*imya prilagatel'noye*» (adjective noun) as «*todmosnim*» (lit. attribute noun), «*narechiye*» (adverb, in Russian *a local language*) – «*syamkyl*» (lit. common language). In contrast to the Uralic languages in Russia, the Baltic-Finnic languages adopted the European grammar terms as a result of intense influence of European description tradition. Cf. «*substantive*» – «*substantiivi*» in Finnish, «*substantiivu*» in Karelian, «*substantivat*» (pl.) in Ingrian; «*noun*» – «*noomen*» in Estonian; «*adjective*» – «*adjektiivi*» in Finnish, «*adjectiiv*» in Estonian, «*adjektiivu*» in Karelian, «*adjektivat*» (pl.) in Ingrian; «*adverb*» – «*adverbi*» in Finnish and in Karelian, «*adverb*» in Estonian, «*adverbat*» (pl.) in Ingrian etc.

In the descriptions of the Finno-Ugric language a separate part of speech – the Adjective – is often described. According to the Russian grammatical tradition, "adjective" needs special morphological markers of number, case and degrees of comparison, and a special ending typical only of words of this class: «*big*» – in Russian «*bol'sh=oy*» / «*dlinn=yy*» (M.Sg), «*bol'sh=aya*» (F.Sg), «*bol'sh=oye*» (N.Sg). However, in the Permic, Mordvin, Mari and Ugric languages the

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[1] This term can be treated in two different ways. On the one hand, the basis for the term is 'shapirograph', i.e. improved hectograph, a device for making copies of handwritten or printed works [3]; a device for making multiple copies of a manuscript [4, p. 919]. On the other hand, it seems rather convincing that the term could be named after A. B Shapiro, one of the authors of Russian academic grammar [5, p. 122].

so-called adjectives do not change, that is do not agree with nouns in number and case (see examples 1-3):

Moksha
(1) *otsyu venezh*   a big boat,
otsyu venezhe=n'   a big boat=Gen:Sg
otsyu venezhe=ndi   a big boat=Dat:Sg
otsyu venezh=sa   a big boat=Loc:Sg
otsyu venesh=t'   the big boat=Pl

Udmurt
(2) *vyl' korka*   new house,
vyl' korka=len   new house=Gen:Sg
vyl' korka=ly   new house=Dat:Sg
vyl' korka=os=yn   new house=Pl=Loc

Mansi
(3) *jomas apa*   good cradle,
jomas apa=n   good cradle=All:Sg
jomas apa=t   good cradle=Loc:Sg
jomas apa=*t=nьl*   good cradle=Pl=Abl

They have no special endings, and the markers of the comparative degree coincide with the markers of the moderate degree of different meanings (quality, time, place, manner, quantity, process, etc.). See examples (4-5):

Mari
(4) *-rak*: *kuzhu**rak*** «taller», *ushan**rak*** «cleverer» – *orady**rak*** «silly, doltish», *küren**rak*** «brownish» (quality meaning), *ongych**rak*** «a bit earlier» (time attribute), *umbany**rak*** «a little farther away» (place attribute), *lüdyn**rak*** «being rather afraid» (process attribute).

Komi-Zyrian
(5) *-dzhyk*: *yon**dzhyk*** «stronger» – *udzhavs'ö**dzhyk*** «work is going more» (process attribute).

Besides, the so-called adjectives mostly act as adverbs, which does not permit to clearly qualify these words. See examples (6-7):

Udmurt
(6) *korka **duno** syl"* «a house costs too much» – ***duno** korka so bas'tÿz* «he bought an expensive house».

(7) *so **shuldyr** serek"ya* «(s)he laughs merrily» – ***shuldyr** kyrzan kotyr kylÿs'ke* «a merry song is heard around».

Nevertheless, the textbooks in the Udmurt language traditionally define these words as *todmosnim*, thereby, the process of learning the Udmurt language (and other aforementioned Uralic languages) appears to be complicated and somehow misleading.

Another controversial issue deals with the status of the Accusative case in the Uralic languages. In his paper *The Uralic languages*, Pirkko Suihkonen states that «in the basic form, the core case system of the Uralic languages contains grammatical cases (nominative, accusative, and genitive) as well as cases expressing information on locational relations» [11, p. 170]. In Russian papers and textbooks this viewpoint is generally supported and justified. This can be proved by the fact that in Russian books the Uralic languages are traditionally referred to nominative-accusative languages with the opposition between the subject and the direct object which in its

turn is based on the opposition between two cases – Nominative and Accusative. This means that in accordance with the tradition of language description by analogy with Russian and other Indo-European languages a separate case for the direct object, the Accusative, should be distinguished. However, this presents a problem for most of the Uralic languages. For instance, in the nominal system of modern Ugric languages (Khanty and Mansi) no Accusative is found, here the Nominative is the case of the subject and of the direct object. In Finnish two Accusatives are distinguished: Accusative 1 with a particular ending (Genitive), Accusative 2 with no ending (Nominative). The same situation is in the Mordvin languages which also have two Accusatives: unmarked Accusative (Nominative) and marked Accusative (Genitive) [12, pp. 132–133, 144]. According to *Languages of the World* [13, pp. 52, 60, 70], there is no Accusative in the nominal case system of the Baltic-Finnic languages (Karelian, Votic, Ingrian), while Permic Udmurt is said to possess two Accusatives – marked and unmarked forms that demonstrate the dependence on various factors including definiteness / indefiniteness of the direct object, aspect and subject-object characteristics of verbs [14, pp. 41–42]. In Samoyedic Enets, the Accusative case is included in the noun declension paradigm though it has no special marker and coincides in form with the Nominative and the Genitive [15, p. 442]. Thus, it may be concluded that the use of the term «nominative-accusative language» in relation to Uralic does not seem to be accurate enough as normally no opposition between the two cases could be seen; as a result, the status of the Accusative case appears to be controversial.

Let us consider some examples of the Khanty language which is often described as a nominative-accusative language. The problem is that a present-day noun paradigm of whether that be Western or Eastern dialects of the Khanty language does not comprise the Accusative. However, it should be noted that formerly a separate marker of the Accusative case was singled out in some of the dialects. For instance, in the 19th century Matthias Castrén [16, p. 25] in his work devoted to the grammar studies of the Irtysh and Surgut dialects of Khanty distinguished the Accusative in *–et, –t*. In the first part of the 20th century Pavel Zhivotikov [17, p. 18] wrote about a separate Accusative form in the Middle-Ob dialect of the Khanty language, which, however, coincided with the markers of the Ablative and the Translative. Nowadays no evidence to prove the presence of the Accusative case in the nominal system of the Khanty language is found and none of the specialists studying Khanty include the Accusative into the noun paradigm. The case which is normally used to express the subject-object relationships in Khanty is the Nominative case that coincides with the stem of a singular noun and has no special marker.

(8 – 11) show the use of the Nominative case in Khanty.

The Vasjugan dialect, Khanty
(8) **qu qul welkas** [18, p. 37]
qu=ø   qul=ø   wel=kas
man=Sg   fish=Sg   catch=Past:3Sg
The man caught a fish.

The Shuryshkar dialect, Khanty
(9) **njawrəmat ar rịhət akatəsat** [18, p. 37]
njawrəm=at   ar   rịh=ət   akat=əs=at
child=Pl   a lot   berry=Pl   pick=Past:3Pl
The children picked a lot of berries.

The Surgut dialect, Khanty
(10) **imi n'an' warl** [18, p. 37]
imi==ø   n'an'=ø   war=l
old woman=Sg bread=Sg   make= Pres:3Sg
The old woman makes bread.

The Shuryshkar dialect, Khanty
(11) **oməm wos əḷtị hiləma akan' tus** [18, p. 39]

om=əm=ø   wos=ø   əl̦ți   hil=əm=a
mother=PossSg1=Sg town=Sg   from   grandchild=PossSg1=Sg=All
akan'=ø   tu=s
doll=Sg   bring=Past:3Sg
My mother brought the grandchild a doll from the town.

(12 – 13) show the use of the Nominative case in the Mansi language, which is closely related to Khanty, where the Nominative is also the case of the subject and of the direct object.

(12) **пыгрись мойт ловиньти** [19, p. 20]
пыгрись=ø   мойт=ø   ловиньт=и
boy=Sg   fairy tale=Sg   read=Pres:3Sg
The boy reads a fairy tale.

(13) **rūt'iwan tin's'aŋ sahi** [20, 43]
Rodion=ø   tin's'aŋ=ø   sah=i
rodion=Sg   lariat=Sg   make=Pres:3Sg
Rodion makes a lariat.

Thus, examples 7 to 12 have shown that the Nominative case is used in Khanty and Mansi to denote the subject and the object, and here it is clearly seen that no nominative-accusative opposition exists, which explains why the Uralic languages are sometimes treated as *non-accusative languages*. The term introduced by Alexander Volodin (Institute of Linguistic Research in Saint-Petersburg) [21, p. 40; 22, p. 35] seems to be more exact; however, it could be replaced by some other term in the course of time. Now, in its present form, it serves to emphasize the specific character of the grammatical system of the Uralic languages, which is often neglected in most of the present-day descriptions.

On the other hand, it is often stated that personal pronouns in Uralic have special Accusative forms. Let us consider some more examples from the Khanty language, where, for instance, in the Surgut dialect the personal pronouns have an Accusative form in –t (*мант*, *нӱӈат*, *лӱват*, etc.) [23, p. 111]; in the Kazym dialect there are special Accusative forms (*манат, нангат, луват, минат, нынат, лынат,* etc.) [24, p. 90]; in the Vakh dialect of Khanty there are Accusative forms in *-t* [25, pp. 63–63], etc. In another Finno-Ugric language, Finnish, there are personal pronouns in *-t* (*minut*, *sinut*, *hänet*, *meidat*, etc.); in Hungarian the Accusative in *-t* is singled out not only in the system of pronouns but is also typical of nouns, adjectives, and numerals [26, pp. 136–138]. Similarly to the Uralic nominal system, where the status of the Accusative is debatable, the status of the Accusative form of personal pronouns is also open to discussion. The point is that the Accusative forms of personal pronouns should be rather treated as the realization of the category of definiteness / indefiniteness (to be exact, the marker of definiteness), common to the Uralic languages. To prove the interrelation between *-t* and the category of definiteness we may refer to the hypothesis which dwells on the supposed origin of the Accusative marker of personal pronouns from some deictic element or some demonstrative pronoun as it was suggested by Steinitz [27, p. 59], thus, it can be treated as one of the markers of the category of definiteness. According to the Russian linguist D. G. Kiekbayev, the category of definiteness / indefiniteness penetrates the whole grammatical system of the Uralic languages and is expressed in various ways: in the nominal system, in the verbal system or the nominal and verbal systems simultaneously [28, p. 77]. It seems that the hypothesis developed in relation to the Uralic-Altaic languages may be proved true for the Finno-Ugric languages and it appears that with the category being of such importance for the Uralic languages in general (cf. the Udmurt language (see above)), the status of the "Accusative" in the case system of the Uralic languages should by determined and defined, which is essential for the precise description of the unique grammar system of the Uralic languages.

One more evident problem that arises through the description of the grammatical system of the Uralic languages is an attempt to distinguish separate forms of the future tense according to the traditional format of Indo-European / Russian grammar description. It is a fact that the Uralic

languages demonstrate the opposition between past and present (non-past) tenses but it is also well-known that most of these languages have no morphologically expressed future tense (except for Permic). However, it is sometimes stated that grammatical future could be found in Hungarian and in the Khanty dialects. This opinion expressed not only by Russian linguists could be argued by the example of the above-mentioned languages.

For example, in the textbook in the Khanty language (the Kazym dialect), edited by E. A. Nyomysova, three different tenses are distinguished: present, past and future. It is noted that the present tense is formed by adding the suffix -л to the stem of the verb, the past tense is characterized by the marker -с.The future tense, which is used to denote an action following the moment of speech, is formed with the help of the present-tense suffix [24, p. 98]. See examples (14-15):

(14) **Мунг вэнта манлув** [24, p. 98].
Мунг   вэнт=а   манн=л=ув
We   forest=SgDat   go=Pres:1Pl
We go (will go) to the forest.

E. A. Nyomysova also notes that future tense can be also formed with the help of the present form of the verb *pitti* (the auxiliary verb which means '*to start*') plus the infinitive of the verb in *-ti*.

(15) **Мин яха ариты питлумн** [24, p. 98].
Мин   яха   ари=ты   пит=л=умн
We (two)   together   sing=Inf   start=Pres:1Dual
We (two) together start singing (will sing).

The idea is supported by the contemporary scholar I. L. Nikolaeva who also distinguishes 3 tenses in the Obdorsk dialect of Khanty: the non-past, the past, and the future, where the future is «analytical and is formed with the help of the non-past form of the auxiliary verb *pit-* («to start») plus the infinitive of the verb in *-ti*» [29, p. 26].

Another Khanty linguist, V. Ya. Yadobcheva-Dresvyanina, also distinguishes 3 tenses (present, past, future) for the Obdorsk dialect of Khanty and shows that the present is marked by -л, and the past tense is formed with the help of -с. Future being mentioned is no further considered in the study [30, p. 14].

One more Ugric language, Hungarian, does not have grammatically expressed future tense, too, except for the verb *lesz* «to be» which has the future form. The common means of expressing future action include a verb in the present tense form in combination with an adverb, for instance, *majd* «then, later» or the infinitive of the notional verb in combination with the auxiliary verb *fog* (from *fogni* – literally «take, seize») in the form of the present tense [26, 180]. It appears that the contextual future meaning of the present tense form does not stand for the future tense itself, thus, to provide the complete and exact description of the languages this characteristic should be also taken into account.

Finally, it should be added that the Uralic languages are not the only example where some of the distinguished future forms may and often coincide with the present tense forms (see, for example, T. A. Maisak and S. R. Merdanova talking about the future tense in Aghul, a Nakho-Dagestanian language [31, pp. 82, 88-89]. It seems that in all the cases special attention should be paid to the terminology used, the issue which of importance in the language description.

Drawing a conclusion, it must be mentioned once again that Russian influence is not only felt in the grammar description but also in the creation of textbooks in Uralic languages (for instance, in Khanty, Mansi, etc.), as most textbooks have the same divisions and even organization of material within a book, typical of Russian textbooks. But it should be also remembered that these textbooks especially in the Uralic languages spoken in Siberia are often the only books which are designed to take into the needs of speakers who wish to learn and to preserve their native languages. It should be also emphasized that some of these textbooks are often not only the

only teaching material produced to meet the demand for language learning but also the only source of information on the language and culture of these people.

Still, it should be noted that despite the fact that the tradition of the Uralic grammar description through the prism of Russian / Indo-European grammatical tradition retains its strong position, attempts aimed at revising approaches to the description of the languages in order to more adequately reflect the linguistic facts are being made.

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Abbreviations

Abl – the Ablative case
All – the Allative case
Dat – the Dative case
Def – definite declension
Dual – dual number
F – feminine gender
Gen – the Genetive case
Inf – Infinitive
Loc – the Locative case
M – masculine gender
N – neuter gender
Past – past tense
Pl – plural number
Poss – possessive pronoun
Pres – present / future tense
Sg – singular number
1 – first person
3 – third person