

Insubordination and the establishment of genealogical relationship

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In my presentation I will explore the possibility of using “shared insubordination” as an argument in support of broader linguistic relationship. The focus will be on the much debated affiliation question of Transeurasian, a large group of geographically adjacent languages, traditionally known as “Altaic” consisting of the Japonic (J), Koreanic (K), Tungusic (Tg), Mongolic (Mo) and Turkic (Tk) families.

One of the most eye-catching developments shared by the Transeurasian languages is a recurrent tendency to grammaticalize non-finite suffixes to finite suffixes. In Robbeets (2009) I have referred to this grammaticalization pattern as “insubordination” because the phenomenon is triggered by the recruitment of main clause structures from subordinate structures. The finite forms do not show signs of embedding such as case-marking, nor do they indicate copula loss in their previous language states, which suggests a direct reanalysis of nonfinite predicates as finite ones, without needing an auxiliary verb (compare Evans 2007: 408-409 on Dyirbal and Kayardild).

Relying on comparative reconstruction as a basic tool, my presentation will necessarily be more oriented on morphology than on syntax. However, whereas the classical comparative method assesses potentially cognate morphemes with respect to form, function and paradigmatic coherence, my approach includes also the assessment of shared processes of grammaticalization insofar as they coincide with the sharing of morphological form. In my view, globally (.i.e. including form) shared grammaticalization is a strong indication of genealogical relatedness. (Robbeets forthcoming).

Shared insubordination is reconstructed for an individual morpheme when it displays a polysemy between nominalizing (NML), adnominalizing (ADN) and finite (FIN) functions. This assumes that the polysemy reflects the result of grammaticalization process with a nominalizer as a source and a finite marker as a target. When the non-finite imperfective and resultative forms are insubordinated, an actional interpretation is forced on an originally (ad)nominal and therefore more stative form. This leads to the development of tense distinctions from original aspect distinctions, a cross-linguistically well-attested process. The following six Transeurasian etymologies reflect shared insubordination in addition to sharing formal properties.

	(a) pJ	(b) pK	(c) pTg	(d) pMo	(e) pTk	pTEA
(1)	*-n NML / ADN FIN	*-n NML / ADN FIN	*-n NML/ ADN FIN	*-n NML/ ADN FIN	*-n NML/ ADN FIN	*-n NML/ ADN FIN
(2)	*-m NML/ ADN FIN	*-m NML FIN	*-mA NML/ADN FIN	*-m(A) NML/ADN FIN	*-m(A) NML /ADN -	*-mA NML/ADN -
(3)	*-rə NML/ ADN FIN	*-l NML/ ADN FIN	*-rA NML/ ADN FIN	*-r NML/ ADN -	*-(A)rV NML/ ADN FIN	*-rA NML/ ADN
(4)	*-ka resultative NML/ ADN FIN	*-kA- resultative	*-gA ~ *-kA resultative NML / ADN FIN	*-gA ~ *-kA resultative NML / ADN FIN	*-gA ~ *-kA resultative NML / ADN FIN	*-gA ~ *-kA resultative NML / ADN
(5)	*-sa resultative NML FIN	*-s resultative NML	*-sA resultative NML FIN	*-sA resultative NML	*-sA resultative NML FIN	*-sA resultative NML

Attributing the shared insubordination between the Transeurasian languages to genealogical

relationship does not necessarily imply that it was already completed in proto-Transeurasian and inherited as polysemy in the daughter languages. Rather, it may have developed independently on cognate suffixes after separation from proto-Transeurasian, a phenomenon which is known as "Sapirian drift".

References

- Evans, Nicholas 2007. Insubordination and its uses. In: Nikolaeva, Irina (ed.) 2007. *Finiteness. Theoretical and empirical foundations*. Oxford: University Press, 366-431.
- Robbeets, Martine 2009. Insubordination in Altaic. *Journal of Philology* 31. *Ural-Altaic Studies* 1, 61-79.
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