



## Word Order Role In The Development Of Sentence Informational Structure In The Ergative Languages Of Dagestan

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### ABSTRACT

The article introduces an attempt to establish suitable principles of defining a subject as one of the main parts of sentence for ergative languages of Dagestan.

The problems of syntactic division of a sentence and peculiarities of its members in Dagestani languages are still examined only in general. Even the question of a number of principle members of the sentence is still under discussion. As the criteria for distinguishing of members of the sentence are traditionally used only semantic or pure formal features. There are no special researches in Dagestani languages studies, devoted to this question.

To distinguish the predicative of the sentence we suggest using three levels of the language: syntactical, semantic and pragmatic. However, we give advance to syntactical features as members of the sentence are syntactical category, and their specifics should be found in peculiarities of combination of words while forming a sentence. Formal criteria are also very important, but apart from morphology, syntax is interested not in forms of words separately, but in their combination with each other.

In some constructions of the sentences it is exactly the word order that is the only criteria of the subject as a principle member of the sentence.

Subject as syntactic element is characterized by definite relationship with other parts of sentence; therefore, word order is suggested to be the first identified feature of subject, the first left position in a sentence.

In every language there are some means which express syntactical connection between the words in the sentence, which provide "recognizing" the members of the sentence. These are morphological (structural), semantic and syntactical means. In ergative languages these means play different role for different structures of the sentence.

For absolute construction of the sentence morphological means of expressing the connection between the words in the sentence are rather important. Correlation is a morphological means of connection, as it is used through the forms of words.

For ergative construction of the sentence semantic means of expressing the syntactical connection are also very important. In this case semantic factor is leading in defining the members of the sentence. Defining the subject in this case is done by means of comparison of semantic contents of the sentence (only in the meaning), as functional homonymy of ergative and absolutive cases prevents distinguishing between the subject and the object of the sentence.

As for ergativoide (bi-absolutive) construction, their criterion is a pure syntactical means of expressing the syntactical connection, i.e. the word order.

For other types of constructions word order is not the main criteria for distinguishing members of the sentence, however, any change of word order influences the meaning of the sentence. In ergative and absolutive constructions syntactical connections and functions of certain words during the change of word order, in contrast to ergativoide construction, do not change, but the sentence as a whole gets rather a new shade of meaning. Thus, the word order in Dagestan ergative languages has a very important meaning for the structure and contents of the sentence.

## 1. Introduction

It is customary to identify the main (subject and predicate) and the secondary (attribute, adverbial modifier and object) members of the sentence in Indo-European studies. This tradition was also adopted by the researchers of the ergative system languages, including the Daghestani ones. However, ergative languages are characterized by other structures of a sentence as compared to nominative languages and other syntactic correlations, which complicates the allocation of sentence nominal members considerably.

A sentence takes a special place in the syntactic structure of a language due to its special role in the process of language communication. A characteristic feature of the Dagestani language syntactic system is the simultaneous functioning of several sentence structures. Here two main members of a sentence (subject and predicate) are presented only in the nominative structure of a sentence [Magomedov 1995: 39-44]. In the remaining structures (ergative, dative, locative and affective one), three main members of a sentence are distinguished traditionally: two nominal members (subject and direct object) and predicate. The variability of dative, locative and ergative construction application takes place in all Dagestani languages [Abdullaev 1986: 248-250]. The verbs of the same semantics in different languages or in different dialects of one language can form different structures. So, Z.M. Magomedbekova, singles out a group of verbs in Segobi speech of the South dialect of the Akhvakh language - "know", "see", "hear" - which require RS (real subject) in the ergative case, i.e. form the ergative construction of a sentence, "whereas the ergative case is not used for these verbs in the Andian languages (including the northern dialect of the Akhvakh language), as well as in the Avar language" [Magomedbekova 1977: 248]. In the Avar language, for example, one of the locative cases, superessive is used with the verbs of perception such as "know," "see," "hear," for example:

*Дуда    цебего    рагІана        гъеб        хабар.*

I-LOK heard for a long time ago -AOR it 3rd gr. of the cl. news -NOM

"I heard this news for a long time."

## 2. The Methods Of Sentence Member Identification In Dagestani Languages

In Dagestani languages, belonging to the languages of ergative typology, subjects, depending on the type of syntactic structures of the sentence, are represented by different logical categories. For this reason, it seems to us,

that the subject in different syntactic constructions is formed by different cases [Magomedov 2000: 124-127]. In order to substantiate this thesis, it is necessary to determine the criteria which determine the members of a sentence in general and the subject, in particular.

As you know, there are certain logical requirements for any scientific classification: the first and the main requirement is that when you distribute the objects or the concepts to separate classes, you must take into account one and the same characteristic or the combination of the same characteristics. It is noteworthy that this principle is violated at the classification of grammatical relations. When the main members of a sentence are distinguished, formal characteristics are preferable, and in the selection of the secondary members, the meaningful characteristics are preferable.

Until recently, it was believed that the categories of subject and object belong to the universal linguistic categories, represented in all languages of the world. However, the universality of these categories does not imply their unambiguous interpretation at all. The most popular is the tradition of a subject identification is the most popular one, that is, there is the combination of different concepts: logical (subject) and grammatical (subject) [Mallaeva, Adukhova 2008: 110]. The attempts to combine different levels of concepts are evidenced by fairly common terms recently: "grammatical subject" and "grammatical object." The terms, in our opinion, are not very successful, because they represent a combination of different levels: a subject and an object are the categories of formal logic; grammatical relations are expressed by the concepts of subject and object. Obviously, therefore, these terms are the units of different levels of language analysis. So, the term "grammatical subject" is used for the subjects on some cases, and it is an active figure in other cases.

In this regard, it makes sense to turn to the experience of a subject universal definition, proposed by Edward Keenan, which justifies the insolubility of a subject unified definition problem for all languages and even for all types of sentences of the same language. There are no functionally equivalent subjects in each specific language and even in different sentences of one language. The syntactic properties of the subject are mandatory in some languages, and they may be optional for others. Therefore, the scale of the subject similarity is proposed [Keenan 1982: 252]. The essence of this approach is that E. Keenan uses the multifactor approach to determine a subject, based on the identification of all subject properties that are found in the basic sentences. The scale of subject similarity is composed of these properties. The nominal terms of a sentence, which have all the potential properties of subjects, are as close as possible to an ideal subject. And vice versa: the nominal terms of a sentence, which have the minimum properties of subjects or do not have them at all, are as far from an ideal subject as possible.

E. Keenan does not give a specific definition of a subject, since a subject as a language unit is not universal, he considers the inventory of subject properties and the ways of their potential combination with each other to be universal [Keenan 1975]

### **3. Subject Determination Criteria**

It is impossible to give a universal definition of a subject, since a subject is not identical with itself in different types of sentence constructions. In ergative languages, the subject as a multifactor concept is first considered by Hugo Schuchardt, who singled out three obligatory components from which a subject grammatical expression is composed:

- 1) the sound form: "nom." - "ergat.";
- 2) location: before a verb - after it;
- 3) voice increase: strong - weak [Schuchardt 1895: 11-15].

The traditional point of view, considering a subject as a universal phenomenon for all types of sentences

and for all languages, has been revised recently. The difference in views on a subject is reduced by A.E. Kibrik to the "presumptions that underlie these views. Perlmutter-Postal-Johnson proceed from the premise that a subject and other syntactic relations are syntactic primitives, and one should study not them, but by the processes connected with them. Cheif believes that a subject is a single and a universal category that can provide a single definition. Finally, most other researchers (Fillmore, Keenan, Shakhtar, Van Valin, and others) view the subject as a secondary entity, defined in terms of some other, more elementary properties or relationships. Summing up the attempts to explain the nature of a subject, we can state that a single theory with a single terminology has not been worked out yet and that the creation of such a theory is the task of the future" [<http://nashaucheba.ru/>].

Ya.G. Testeleets considers that there are serious reasons to believe that the notion of a subject is not a universal one: "Typological data make us doubt that a subject is a universal category" [Testeleets 2001: 317].

In order to distinguish the nominal member of a sentence as a subject U. Cheif uses the arguments of three language levels: syntactical, informative and pragmatic one. Of these, syntactic arguments are considered as preferred by him, because they "are classified easier and cause less controversy" [Cheif 2003: 280]. The main syntactic argument, according to which the status of a subject is determined in Indo-European languages, is a verbal agreement. This sign is unacceptable for most Daghestani languages, because the verbal agreement here depends on a name case form, and not on a sentence member status [Mallaeva 2002: 94]. It turns out that one of the formulas of traditionally established canonical definitions of the subject as a sentence member, with which the predicate is consistent, turned out to be unacceptable for the realities of the Daghestani languages.

Another canonical definition of a subject by a syntactic sign: a subject is the nominative case of a subject. This definition is also unacceptable for the overwhelming majority of Daghestani languages, since the case form of a subject in the Dagestani languages varies depending on a verb-predicate semantics. It can be a nominative with actual verbs, ergative with agent verbs, dative with the verbs of sensory perception, locative or affective with verbs of external perception, etc.

#### **4. The Role Of Word Order During Subject Definition**

A word order, namely, the leftmost position in a sentence can be called a general one for the nominative and for the ergative languages of the syntactic sign identifying a subject. In separate constructions of a sentence, it is the order of words that serves as the sole criterion which allows to distinguish a subject. S.D. Katznelson gave a great importance to the order of words: "A subject is the syntactic function for us inconceivable outside a linguistic form. But not only a case can be a subject form, but also a place in a sentence. In caseless languages, word order is the basic form of basic positional function detection for the nominal members of a sentence. The role of an order of words in this matter is so great that in some constructions the order of words appears as a more significant way of a subject isolation than the nominative case" [Katznelson 1972: 63-64].

In the Dagestani languages, the order of words in a sentence is relatively free one. Ordinary word order: subject-object-predicate (S-O-V). The change of such order of words is possible. As a rule, it is connected with a logical accent and it is used to change the semantic nuances of a message. The order of words is "an important means of semantic-syntactic relation expression in phrases and sentences" [Magomedov 2016: 45]. A strict order of words is mandatory, as in all languages of ergative typology, only in one of many constructions of a sentences, namely, biabsolute one (in other terminology, indefinite or ergativoid). In this construction of a sentence, subject-object names are characterized by case identity, and only the word order makes it possible to differentiate a subject and a direct object, since the subject is invariably located at the beginning of a construction, and the object follows it and it is located in the middle between a subject and a predicate [Nurmagomedova 2007: 17]. The structure (S-O-V) characteristic for this construction does not allow a word order change, because it will

lead to the change of a sentence subject, for example, in the Avar language:

*Эмен            вас            вецулев вуго.*

Father-NOM son-NOM praising.

"Father praises the son."

*Вас            эмен            вецулев вуго.*

Son-NOM father-NOM praising.

"The son praises his father."

*Дун            дов            какулев вуго.*

I-NOM he is swearing.

"I scold him."

*Дов            дун            какулев вуго.*

He-NOM, I-NOM scolding.

"He scolds me."

If an analyzed indefinite construction is the combination of a reasonable and an unreasonable subject, then the changing of the word order (the moving of a subject and an object) leads to the structure destruction, for example:

*Эмен            тIехъ            цIцIалулев вуго.*

Father-NOM, book-NOM reader is.

"Father reads the book."

But you can not say:

*ТIехъ            эмен            цIцIалулеб буго.*

Book-NOM Father-NOM reading is.

«The book reads the father».

*Вас            лълым            гъекъолев вуго.*

Boy -NOM water -NOM is drinking.

«The boy is drinking water».

But you can not say:

*Лълым            вас            гъекъолеб буго*

Water -NOM boy -NOM is drinking.

«The water is drinking the boy».

Here, logical categories reveal a complete isomorphism with grammatical categories. V. Schmidt allows the regularity of the fact that certain relations of reality, reflected by our consciousness, are regularly transmitted by very specific types of a sentence. Nevertheless, W. Schmidt does not agree "with the identification of conceptual structures (Denkstrukturen) and the structure of a sentence (Satzstruktur), since this would contradict our basic understanding of language and thought relationship as two inseparably connected, but nevertheless, different social phenomena, each of which has its own specifics" [Schmidt 1965: 294].

## 5. Case Differentiation Of Subject-Object Names

An indefinite construction is not represented in all ergative languages of Dagestan. This construction is not represented in the Lak, Lezgin, Tabasaran, Agul, in all the non-written Andian languages. In Dargin it is found in Mekega and Haidak dialects. For example, in Mekega:

*Ну            хъу            балиулера.*

I - NOM the field - NOM plowing

"I am plowing the field."

In the Darghin language, this construction is extremely rare, for example:

Дудеи                жуз                бучИули сай.

Father - NOM book - NOM reading

«Father reads the book.»

The reason that the ergatoid construction in the Dargin language is very rare and, for this reason, has a somewhat artificial character, is considered by Z.G. Abdullayev as follows: this construction disappears. The construction like Дудеи жуз бучИули сай is being developed as the replacement in the language. This process has not been completed yet, therefore, at the present stage of the language syntactic structure development, these structures coexist and form a correlation" [Abdullaev 1986: 235].

The languages of the nominative system also have sentence constructions, in which the subject-object names are characterized by case identity. In such sentences, a subject and a direct object can also be differentiated only by word order. For example, in Russian:

The daughter praises her mother.

The mother praises her daughter.

In German:

*Die Mutter lobt die Tochter.*

*Die Tochter lobt die Mutter.*

In English:

*The mother praises the daughter.*

*The daughter praises the mother.*

A special significance of word order for this structure is conditioned, first of all, by the lack of case-by-case differentiation of subject-object names. The violation of this word order leads to the change of subject, that is, not only the sense of an utterance changes, but also the grammatical characteristics of a sentence [Mallaeva, Adukhova 2008a: 83]. If such a construction is characteristic for the syntactic structure of the English language due to the absence of case-based inflection, they have a limited nature in Russian and German and are possible only in the cases where the forms of the nominative and the accusative coincide.

## 6. Conclusions

On the basis of the foregoing, it can be concluded that the languages with a "strict" order of words have a lot of exceptions that allow an arbitrary word order in any given positions. R.A. Budagov wrote about the conventionality of this division: "The languages with a "strict" order of words, have numerous "free" combinations of words, so the languages with a "free" order of words have a high role of a "strict" arrangement not only in separate word combinations, but also in certain types of sentences" [Budagov 1958: 174].

In principle, the division of languages into the languages with so-called "strict" and with so-called "free" order of words is very relative.

## 7. Summary

Thus, the study of word order role in the development of a sentence information structure in the ergative languages of Dagestan has shown that the definition of sentence nominal member status - one of an actively discussed and urgent issues of modern Dagestan studies - is of great importance both for the syntax of the Daghestani languages and for the general theory of language, as for the intra-genetic typology of ergative languages, and for the linguistic typology as a whole. The prospects of the solutions and approaches proposed in

the work are seen in the fact that they allow to overcome the differences in the allocation of sentence main members in various syntactic constructions of the Dagestani languages. Therefore, the study of various models of a sentence is very important not only from the theoretical point of view, but also for purely practical purposes - from the point of view of linguodidactics (the methodology of syntax teaching) and the linguistic picture of the world study within this ethnic-linguistic community.

The ambiguity of the interpretation and the absence of clear criteria for the allocation of sentence nominal members in the Dagestani languages creates problems not only in the study of the Daghestani language syntactic structure, but also in their teaching at schools and universities of the republic.

### **Conflict Of Interest**

The author confirms that the presented data do not contain a conflict of interest.

### **List of abbreviations**

LOC - locative; AOR - aorist; NOM - nominative; RS - a real subject.

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