

Hannah Wegener
University of Hamburg

Conjugation in Selkup: on two different types and their distribution

Selkup employs two types of verbal conjugation which have been referred to as subjective and objective or definite and indefinite conjugation. Albeit these expressions imply a potential function connected to the conjugational form their specific use is yet to be clarified.

As illustrated for Central and Southern Selkup by Bykonja et al. 2005 a consistent differentiation can be found in the singular. Persons 1-3 show different markers according to conjugational type. The dual forms offer different options for the first person. Second and third person are described to behave the same; likewise the plural.

The first question that arises is that of the distribution of the two kinds of conjugation; i.e. the context in which subjective and objective conjugation occur. In addition, the function of both types is of interest.

For Northern Selkup Helimski (1998) states that objective conjugation is used when the direct object is in focus. Another approach, put forward by Ristinen (1973a+b) suggests that in Samoyedic languages subjective conjugation is used to emphasize verbal action.

To address the questions, a corpus-based study focusing on the dialectal groups of Central and Southern Selkup was performed. The corpus¹ consists of 33.347 tokens, uttered by 37 speakers of both varieties.

Initially a bipartite conjugation was observed for the third person dual. First and second person on the other hand show no distinction between objective and subjective conjugation. Secondly, the number of subjectively conjugated verbs exceeds the number of verbs in objective conjugation (5356 vs.2516) by far. The number of direct objects, however, did not match the number of objective conjugational forms. In fact, it showed to be much lower (1523)². In addition the scope of the objective conjugation seemed to be multifaceted. Objective conjugation can be found, for example, in combination with NPs other than direct objects (cf. example 1 and 2). In (1) the NP affected by the verb is

¹ The corpus is currently compiled in the DFG funded project *Selkup Spoken Language Corpus* (WA 3153/3-1)

² Forms that do not differentiate between objective and subjective conjugation were excluded from the analysis.

marked instrumental and in (2) it shows illative case. Furthermore, objective conjugation occurs in instances without any kind of object (cf. example 3) in combination with intransitive verbs.

The present study suggests that the factors governing the distribution of the two kinds of verbal conjugation are manifold. It is assumed that the semantic role of the actors at play is an influencing factor. However, example 3 provides grounds for the assumption that a variety of variables may be at play. The presentation aims at identifying the factors responsible for the distribution of the verbal conjugation types in Central and Southern Selkup.

(1) *Hajə wes qojalžəqwam qajnaj n'etu.*

haj-ə wes qoja-lžə-q-wa-**m** qaj-naj n'etu.
eye-INSTR all go-INT.PF-ITER-AOR-**1SG.O** what-EMPH NEG.EX

“With his eyes he looked around, there was nothing.”

(SAA_1971_MoleWife_Var_flk.011)

(2) *Wot nač'idelle čanžeqwam man na k'il'en okər toboun.*

Wot nač'idelle čanžə-q-wa-**m** man na **k'il'e-n**
 look.here there climb-ITER-AOR-**1SG.O** I this **barn-**

ILL

okər tobo-und

one leg-PROL

“Look, I will climb the barn with one leg.”

(SAA_1971_MoleWifeVar_flk.010)

(3) *Fak wargehat.*

Fa-k wargə-ha-**t**
 good-ADV live-AOR-**3SG.O**

“They lived well.”

(KIA_2014_BraveSamoka_trans.007)

References

- Bykonja, V. – Kuznecova, N. – Maksimova, N. 2005. *Sel'kupsko-russkij dialektnyj slovar'*. Tomsk: State pedagogical university. 318-336.
- Helimski, E. 1998. Selkup. In Abondolo, D. (ed.): *The Uralic Languages*. London: Routledge. 548-579.
- Ristinen, E.K. 1973a. Some Remarks on the Function of the Subjective and Objective Conjugations in the Samoyedic Languages. *Journal de la Société Finno-Ougrienne* 72. 337- 347.
- Ristinen, E.K. 1973b. Observations of the function of the conjugations in Samoyedic. *Uralica* 1. 11-37.