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Dislocated Possessors, Possessor Left Branch Extraction and Modified Possessors in Samoyedic Languages – Implications for the NP ~ DP-dichotomy

It has been observed (by e.g. Ross (1967/1986)) that some languages of the world do not allow dislocations of the possessor in possessive constructions, whereas others do:

(1a)   *Whose did you see father?*

(1b)   *Čijeg   si   vidio   oca?*
          whose.ACC   be.2SG see.PTCP.PST   father.ACC
          'id.'
          (Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian; Bošković 2005: 2)

This phenomenon, called *Left Branch Extraction (LBE)*, has been explained via the NP ~ DP-dichotomy: DP[1]-Languages (like English) exclude LBE, whereas NP-languages (like BCS) allow it (cf. e.g. Corver (1992), Bošković (2005)). Moreover, it has been observed that DP-languages allow modified possessors, while NP-languages do not, i.e., example (2b) is ungrammatical under the intended reading (the neighbor is rich); *susedov* cannot be further modified in this construction:

(2a)   *rich neighbor's horse*

(2b)   **bogati   susedov   konj*
          rich   neighbor.POSS.ADJ   horse
          'id.'
          (Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian; Bošković 2005: 7)

The aim of this study is to examine how Samoyedic languages (focusing on Nganasan, Enets and Selkup) behave in this respect. The study is based on data of the following corpora: *Nganasan Spoken Language Corpus* (NSLC), *The Digital Corpus of Enets*, *INEL Selkup Corpus* and *Selkup Language Corpus* (SLC).

Regarding the fact that Samoyedic languages do not know articles, one would expect them to behave like NP-languages; empirical studies, however, show that this is not always the case. In all these languages constructions resembling the shown construction from BCS can be found: In adnominal as well as in predicative possessive constructions both possessor and possessee can be realized within a single phrase – be it a NP or a DP. In certain contexts, the possessor can be dislocated from its possessee, which is assumed to be characteristic for NP-languages. The following Selkup and Enets examples illustrate this:

(3)   [NP *Mač'ɨ-l*   *loːsɨ*]ᵢ *olä*   [NP tᵢ [NP *sajɨ-tɨ*]]   *mərqɨ ɛsa.*
          ravine-ADJZ   devil   as.if   eye-POSS3SG big   become.3SG
          'The ravine devil's eyes just became big.'
          (Taz Selkup; KNS_1966_Markincha_flk.152)

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[1] DP is here used in Abney's (1987) sense, meaning a phrase where an NP is headed by D⁰.

(4)　　[NP *Mod'*ᵢ]　　*tonin*　[NP tᵢ [NP *šuðib kɔ*　　*čiriː-jʔ*]]　　　　*tɔne.*
　　　　1SG　　　　there　　　big　barrel　caviar-POSS1SG　　　exist.3SG
　　　'I have a big barrel of caviar there.'
　　　(Forest Enets, En_W_BoDS_199111_ZweiMärchen_flk.045)

As for modified possessors, it can be observed that Samoyedic languages do have them, they therefore behave like DP-languages in that regard. The following Selkup and Nganasan examples illustrate this; in (5), *laŋal'* modifies the possessor *qumɨt,* in (6), *təndiʔ ŋünüʔũ͡aiʔ* unambiguously modifies *ŋanaʔsanuʔ*:

(5)　*Laŋa-l'*　　　*qum-ɨ-t*　　　*pɛl'a-qɨt*　　　*aj*　　*nɔːr*　*timn'ä-sɨ-t*
　　　ide-ADJZ　　　man-EP-GEN　　side-LOC　　　also　　three　brother-CRC-PL
　　　ɛ-ppɨ-ntɔː-tɨt.
　　　be-PST.NAR-INFER.3PL
　　　'On the Nenets (= ide people ~ people of the ide) side there lived also three brothers.'
　　　(Taz Selkup; SAI_1965_Palna_flk.022)

(6)　[…]　*təndi-ʔ*　　　*ŋünüʔũ͡ai-ʔ*　　*ŋanaʔsan-u-ʔ*　　　*ma-kitə*　　　*tuj-s'a* […]
　　　　　that-GEN.PL　　rich-GEN.PL　　man-EP-GEN.PL　　　chum-ABL.PL　come-INF
　　　'[…] coming from the/those rich men's chums […]'
　　　(Nganasan; ChND_080729_SevenNjote_flks.333)

Hence, the Samoyedic languages seem to behave inconclusively wrt. two of Boškovićs (2005, 2008) criteria for NP- and DP-languages, which already leads to the question whether these criteria are appropriate from a broader typological point of view. Given that the Samoyedic languages deviate from standard NP-languages in allowing modified possessors, the criterion of possessor modification has to be worked upon. Therefore, it will be examined which other factors (e.g. morphological category of the possessor, case agreement, basic word order) may play a role in (not) allowing possessor modification. All in all, the talk aims a) to shed some light on the behavior of Samoyedic languages wrt. the NP- ~ DP-dichotomy and b) to discuss and review some of the criteria for distinguishing NP- and DP-languages against the background of the analyzed language material.

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