

Reporting/quoting constructions and intersubjectivity in Nganasan conversations

Symposium: B8

Sándor Szeverényi

University of Szeged, Department of Finno-Ugric Studies

The analysis of Nganasan (and Samoyed) conversations is still in initial phase. The primary reason of its is the quantity of the language material. However, the same can be said for most of the smaller Uralic languages. No studies have yet been carried out to investigate the organisation of discourse in Nganasan, or grammatical phenomena whose realisation and use differs from those in the better known and analysed narrative texts.

Due to the lack of tradition of interactional linguistics and discourse analysis, the present talk is also a kind of methodological and theoretical pathfinding. My approach applies the basic frame of interactional linguistics and discourse analysis (e.g. Englebretson 2007, Selting 2000, Selting & Couper-Kuhlen 2001).

I look for relevant structures in morphology and syntax, taking into account ethnosyntactic aspects as well. I do not take intonation into consideration. Structures (markers of shared knowledge, common knowledge and intersubjectivity, epistemic stance) and their proportions in the conversations are different from narrative texts,.

The texts can be found in the NSL corpus (Brykina et al. 2018). In the analysis I focus on the following linguistic means of languages use such as (based on e.g. Wagner-Nagy 2019):

- morphological evidentials (inferential-mirative, non-visual sensory, reportative-quotative),
- inferential-epistemic lexemes (SEEM-verb, particles, adverbials),
- discourse-markers (mostly particles),
- sentence modality: interrogative verbs, WH-questions,
- negation,
- reported speech construction with speech verbs.

The presentation aims to contribute to our general knowledge and intersubjectivity through the language use of a specific socio-cultural community.

Certain story-telling strategies characterise the analysed conversations, e.g. the Abstract & Orientation introductory part is well separated. The reason for this is on the one hand, the

speakers' previous experience of being expected to provide texts by fieldworkers. On the other hand, it also corresponds to traditional story-telling, which is traditionally interactive in nature. The typical discourse strategies usually appear in the 2nd half of the conversation. As the conversation progresses, its characteristics become more reflexive. More particles and more speech verbs are included, but utterances are shorter, and there are more turning points. Evidentiality in contextualization during the dominant markers of intersubjectivity.

The reportive (evidential suffix) and the quotative means further differences in genres: the reportative evidential is the basic marker of perspective in conversations. The reported speech construction is always direct in narratives and conversations as well. There is no indirect quotation even in cases where the person quoted is present. This confirms our hypothesis that perspective persistence is a salient feature of the language.

The analysis also gives us an idea of individual language use characteristics, e.g. different proportions of certain particles for different speakers.

References

- Brykina, Maria - Valentin Gusev - Sándor Szeverényi - Beáta Wagner-Nagy 2018: "Nganasan Spoken Language Corpus (NSLC)." Archived in Hamburger Zentrum für Sprachkorpora. Version 0.2. Publication date 2018-06-12. <http://hdl.handle.net/11022/0000-0007-C6F2-8>.
- Englebretson, Robert (ed) 2007. *Stancetaking in Discourse: Subjectivity, Evaluation, Interaction* [Pragmatics & Beyond New Series 164] Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Selting, M. 2000. The construction of units in conversational talk. *Language in Society* 29: 477–517. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404500004012>
- Selting, M., & Couper-Kuhlen, E. (eds.) 2001. *Studies in Interactional Linguistics*. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Benjamin.
- Szeverényi Sándor 2021: Tense in Nganasan narratives. *Finnisch-Ugrische Mitteilungen* 45: 111-135.
- Wagner-Nagy, B. 2019: *A Grammar of Nganasan*. Leiden: Brill