

Jack Rueter, Adnominal Person in the Morphological System of Erzya, Helsinki 2010 (MSFOu 261).

Jack Michael Rueter's doctoral dissertation "Adnominal Person in the Morphological System of Erzya" provides a morpho-phonological and semantic analysis of the category of person in a range of parts of speech, establishes the compatibility of case and adnominal-person morphology, and examines the defectivity of the paradigm of possessive declension. Observations are based on a large-sized corpus compiled by the author, the author's field work materials, dictionaries and other published sources. The dissertation written in English is presented in the form of a monograph (236 pages). It includes five chapters and is provided with 129 tables, annotated examples of the Erzya language use, lists of corpora and bibliography. The major part of the dissertation is devoted to the description of the methods of research, analyses of data, and a discussion based on the results of research.

An introductory chapter gives information concerning the geographic and cultural background of Erzya, the dialects and major periods in the development of the literary language and language research. The author has drawn attention to the status of Erzya as a language. There are interesting facts, details, and reflections presented by a non-native author who knows well the Erzya language, the people and its culture. Behind details in some cases are extensive data processed by the author. For example, statistics concerning the degree of cohesion between Erzya and Moksha required an analysis of headword entries in the volumes of Heikki Paasonen's Mordvin Dictionary (over 2700 pages) containing dialect representations from the two languages. The introductory notes on the linguistic and cultural background of Erzya bear novelty in content and approach.

In a short survey of the salient phonological and morphological characteristics of the language the author notes that Erzya could be said to feature a relatively productive morphological system "with ample allomorphic variation and

regular affix-meaning cumulation, which might promote discussions in the definition of derivation versus declension and conjugation... Furthermore, prosodic and word order variation renders Erzya an even more desirable object of research" (pp. 25–26). The central part of this chapter deals with an in-depth description of adnominal morphology. The author provides definitions of the notions relevant to the research questions and gives specifications on such themes as the possessed noun hierarchy, paradigm defectivity, concatenation of case and person.

In a review of the previous research of adnominal person in Erzya, Jack Rueter acknowledges the early works and the major publications of contemporary authors. Taking into account the earlier research on the category of person in Erzya the author makes an interim conclusion: the category has been previously observed in studies of individual parts of speech; in the majority of cases, observations derive from separate dialects.

Subsequently, the author outlines the major assumptions to be tested in the research: "Cross-referential adnominal-person marking in Erzya is manifest in the range of noun phrases, personal pronouns and quantifiers, as well as, ad-positional and non-finite phrases. Although certain parallels can be drawn between these five sub-ranges with regard to concatenation ordering, there are other parameters, too. These might include the optionality of morphological marking, the variation between morphological and lexical marking of adnominal person, the defectivity of the genitive and dative slots of the possessive declension, and the disparity of concatenation in secondary declension strategies" (p. 44).

Chapter 2 gives a detailed description of the corpus and of the methodology of the analyses. In the choice of literary works in Erzya (including prose, poetry, and drama) the author gave pref-

erence to manuscripts, as representative of an individual language user's conception of language in context. A separate sub-chapter describes the procedures of analysis, in which a semi-automatic parser was used. An example has been presented to illustrate the process and rationale of the analysis and an account has been made of the problems dealt with in the procedures.

In chapter 3, which is subordinate to the major part, a phonological framework for the description of the category of adnominal person is defined. Taken as a whole, the phonological analysis draws attention to some of the unsolved problems of Erzya morpho-phonology, namely, the representation of phonetic variation at the morpheme boundaries in terms of phonology and transliteration. In tables 3.6 and 3.9 through 3.12, the author has shown statistics on the occurrences of vowel segments following consonants, ranges of vowel and palatal harmony, the phenomena occurring at morpheme boundaries — voicing and devoicing of consonants, vowel loss. These data serve in the work as support for performing the morphological analyses, including the development of strategies for the construction of an automatic two-level morphological parser.

In the central part of the dissertation, Chapter 4, the author first establishes the scope of analyses, i.e.: allomorphic variation in nominal-type word stems and declensions; linear ordering and co-occurrence of affixes (p. 69). In one of the preliminary steps, the problem of nominal-type word-stem morphology is considered. The stem-vowel versus linking-vowel option has been a debated question in literature. The author has discussed different points of view concerning the problem, including new suggestions and has opted for a solution that suits the purpose of this research — to indicate a vowel in a base form. In tables 4.1 and 4.2, stem types and variation in the stem — vowel retention vs. vowel loss — are illustrated. As to the justification for indicating a vowel in a base form, the author marked in the abstract to the dissertation: "Methods of description draw

upon the prerequisite information required in developing a two-level morphological analyzer, as can be obtained in the typological description of allomorphic variation in the target language". The question of the factors conditioning such variation is not discussed, but it has not been left unnoticed. The author remarks that this morpho-phonemic variation is seemingly non-semantic and its discourse-level origin might be of relevance (p. 71).

In the sub-chapters that follow there are detailed analyses of the morpho-phonological, semantic and syntactic facets of the nominal categories: case, number, deictic markers, nominal conjugation markers, the clitic *-gak* and the adnominal-type person in parts of speech. Specification is made concerning the notions and concepts of morphology under consideration. The frequency of the forms attested in the corpus is illustrated in a series of tables (for example, table 4.46). Commentary is provided as to the degree of regularity in rendering the category of number in the declension paradigms, the phenomenon of secondary declension, the grammatical categories of predicate person, number and tense, the enclitic marking dichotomy (present or not). The author has presented groups of sublexica displaying compatibility with possessive declension (pp. 150—151) and showed variation in the association of sublexica, case and possessor index marking (pp. 162—163). The data show that while there is a relatively high frequency of kin terms and body parts with possessive declension marking in the core cases, spatial entities and abstract referents are more typically the targets of local-case + possessor-index marking (p. 210). In a final sub-chapter, morphological phenomena involved in the Erzya secondary declension are described. The author reviews the earlier treatments of the theme and offers his interpretation concerning the morphology of some pronominal forms.

In the closing chapter, conclusions of the author on the results of analyses are presented. It is noted that the category of adnominal person in the morphological system of Erzya can be attested in

nouns, quantifiers, pronouns, adpositions and non-finite forms whereas obligatory adnominal person marking is only attested in a minimal set of nouns, quantifiers, pronouns and adpositions.

A systematic approach to the complexity of research questions in the dissertation allows viewing an interrelationship between a set of morphological entities with respect to the pivotal category of adnominal person. The use of an up-to-date methodology sets new standards and possibilities of research in the interface of morpho-phonological, semantic and syntactic phenomena in the Erzya

language. Empirical data obtained in the research present interest for writers of grammars and dictionaries, as well as for the development of the theory and practice of language teaching and translation. The dissertation enriches typological research in the Uralic languages and the theory of general linguistics.

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