

ABOUT TWO TYPES OF PASSIVE CONSTRUCTIONS IN THE VOTIC LANGUAGE

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One of types of constructions we can find in all the Balto-Finnic languages. Some authors call it “passive construction”, another ones use the term “impersonal construction”, and sometimes both terms are used as synonyms. The reason to choose the term “impersonal construction” instead of “passive construction” is that such forms can be developed from intransitive verbs as well as from transitive ones. L. Hakulinen calls such constructions in Finnish “onepersonal” because “subject in nominative is impossible in them” (Хакулинен1955:237). Generally, subject can be expressed in this type of constructions in no way; agentive complement can appear only in word-by-word translations from Swedish (see Хакулинен1955: 239). M. Vanhala-Anishevski as well claims that it is impossible to express agent here in non marginal cases (Ванхала-Анишевски 1992).

The Votic language does not permit explicit expression of agent in such type of constructions as well. Very seldom some examples, which are calks from Russian occur, but, as we can see, it is another type of phrase with verb in personal form 3SG:

- (1) ла'nē kā minua kilī päält revī-p po'ss
wave:GEN COM I:PART keel:GEN from surface disrupt-PRES:3SG away
'I am disputed from the keel with the wave.' (Ленцы 1930).

In Estonian agentive complement can appear in similar constructions (see, for instance, Эрельт 1977), but it is evidently the result of the late influence from the Indo-European languages Balto-Finnic languages have for a long time been in contact with.

L. Hakulinen (1955) as well as M. Vanhala-Anishevski (1992) points that agent of such constructions, which cannot be expressed in Finnish, is only person. Votic shows counterexamples. It is difficult to determine now if them have appeared as the result of Russian influence, or maybe Votic always had this deference from Finish:

- (2) üllä vään-ti tūle vassa
in the night turn-IMP:IMPERF wind:NOM toward
'In the night the wind turned toward' (Ленцы 1930).

The second type of constructions does not occur in all the Balto-Finnic languages. I mean so called “possessive perfect” (and plusquamperfect).¹ In Votic it is used often enough:

- (3) me'le' 2l-i siäl 2se-ttu m2iza
we-ADESS be-IMPERF(3SG) there byu-PAR:PASS:PASSIV farm:NOM
'There was bought by we' (Ленцы 1930).

The term “passive perfect” appeared in works on Russian north dialect syntax, when describing constructions like

у него уехано
at him gone
'he has gone',

which do not exist in the standard language. These dialects mainly extend on the Balto-Finnic substrate. Then this term began to be used for symmetric Balto-Finnic constructions. Some authors think that north Russian dialects more often use such constructions in the meaning of “clear agent” when Balto-Finnic languages are

¹ I do not mean here impersonal construction with passive perfect developed from intransitive verbs, which occur rather in all Balto-Finnic languages, “fin. *on tultu* ‘someone went’(<it is gone>)” (see Калинова 2000).

rather inclined to combine the meaning of subject with the possessive one (see Калинова 2000). It is interesting, that Finish, which does not have “possessive perfect”, has constructions with agentive participle, which do not occur in all Balto-Finnic languages:

- (4) isa-n teke-mä tuoli
 father-GEN make-PAR:AGEN chair:NOM
 the chair made by father

As we can see, the possessive case – genitive express here the “clear agent”. As of adessive, it has not only the possessive semantics; it is generally spatial case (compare expression of subject of transitive action by locative case in Ob-Ugrian languages).

In the Votic “possessive perfect” adessive has agentive but not possessive meaning. Let us compare the example (3) and the following one:

- (5) me¹lä² tš’edrā-tās vilła¹ i linā voki-l³
 we-ADESS spin-IMP:PRES wool:PART and flax:PART spinning wheel- ALLAT
 ‘In our place wool and flax are spinet with a spinning wheel’ (Ленцы 1930).

In (3) adessive has the agentive meaning (and not in (5)) that is marked in the form of the verb. In (5) speaker can belong as well as he or she can not belong to the set of people spinning wool and flax with a spinning wheel. So the agent is not determined and it is not known here if speaker is agent too, that is marked in the verb.

It is interesting that in Russian dialect of Votic speaking people “possessive perfect” is often used. For example, a woman spontaneously said a phrase:

- (6) У мужа много дров нарублено
 At husband a lot firewood cut
 ‘My husband has cut a lot of firewood’.

Husband of this woman dead rather longtime ago and has cut a so much firewood that she use it till now. Using of perfect ad not plusquamperfect has that raison that this construction has only agentive semantics, because the result takes a place in the present.

In (3) the plusquamperfect is used because by the moment of the speech the result is already cancelled: the text was written in 1929 when no farm can be private.

Two types of Votic constructions were superficially examined, in one type agent fall to zero, in another one to complement oblique. It remains still more questions than answers (particularly it is not known, why in the first type of constructions behaviors of nouns and pronouns as patients are different etc.). It seems, that such constructions have to be studied against all the argument-predicate structure of Balto-Finnic languages, which is very complicate and thought it was studied by known linguists (B. omrie, T. Itkonen, A. P. Volodin and others) it is not enough investigated.

² Dialectally some phonetic variances occur.

³ About using active and passive forms of perfect and plusquamperfect in the Russian dialect of Votic speaking people see (Агранат 2001).