

Marriage Bear-hunting & Dangerous Things

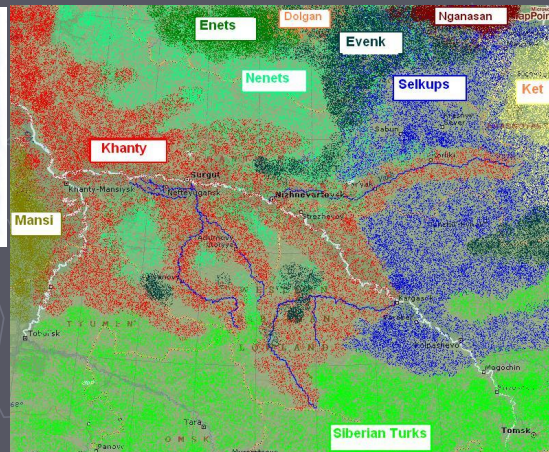
Eastern Khanty Agent-demotion constructions

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December 9, 2010

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Western Siberian Linguistic Area



Languages:

- Finno-Ugric:** Khanty, Mansi
- Samoyedic:** Selkup, Nenets, Enets, Nganasan
- Altaic:** Chulym Turkic, Siberian Tatar, Evenk, Dolgan
- Paleoasiatic:** Ket
- Indo-European:** Russian

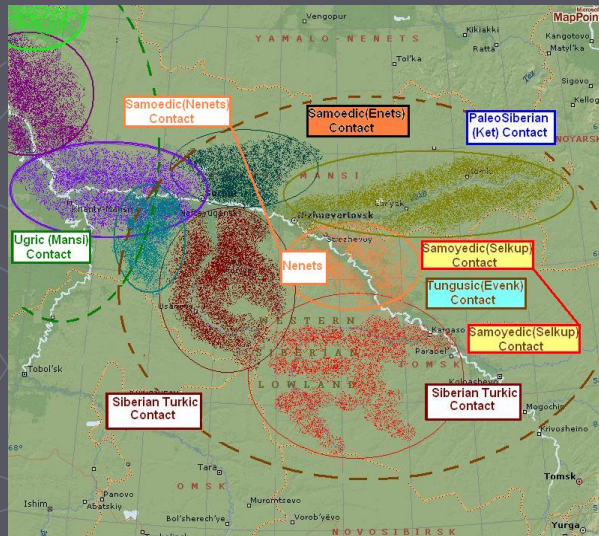
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Khanty Language – dialectal continuum

Dialectal clusters: western (north-west tundra) vs. eastern (south-east forests)
Language varieties - river dialects: Vasyugan, Vakh, Agan, Tromagan, Yugan, Pim, Sosva, Salym, Kazym, Shuryshkar, etc.

Western dialects: better description, devised written form, native language media

Eastern dialects: less described, endangered, no native teaching or native media, threat of extinction



Khanty Language – dialectal continuum

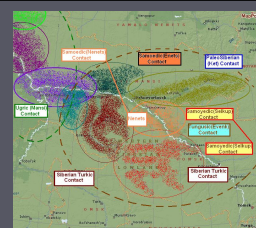
Western /x`anti/ vs. Eastern /q`antəy/

Tundra vs. Taiga-forest

Mutually unintelligible

Multi-factorial variation:

- phonology: consonant and vowel inventories, vowel length (west) vs. backness vowel harmony (east);
- lexicon: variation within both 200 and 100 Swadesh lists; conceptual variation in numerals: (west) “18” *nijel-xus* ‘8 towards 20’ vs. (east) “18” *jöy-ərki nilay* ‘eight over ten’;
- morphology: 3 nominal cases (west) vs. 10 nominal cases (east); 3 TAM forms (west) vs. 5 TAM forms (east), etymologically unrelated morphological markers, inventory and use of postpositions, nominalization strategies;
- **syntax: prototypical active-passive (west) vs. active-passive-ergative (east)**



premise, framework, terminology

Framework: functional grammar (Dixon 1994, Givon 2001)

- structural properties vs information structuring features.
- grammatical relations (Dixon 1994)
- semantic roles (Van Valin and Lapolla 1997)
- pragmatic functions and operations (Lambrecht 1994).

S - intransitive subject; A - transitive subject; O - transitive non subject
(Dixon 1994)

Agent - entity acting, intentionally/volitionally or not, in event, originating, causing event, most relevant to the success of event. Target - entity saliently affected in the event of the proposition (Van Valin, LaPolla 1997).

Pragmatic status, pragmatic function, pragmatic identifiability, activation.
Pragmatic centre (topic) = host of properties: presuppositional part of proposition, contextually accessible, active, in dislocation tests ("as for" and "about") = target clause, normally no clause accent, "the rest of the proposition is "about" it (Strawson, 1964; Gundel, 1976; Lambrecht, 1994).

Plan

- ▶ premise, framework, terminology.
- ▶ canonical Eastern Khanty clause, main GR features, information structure.
- ▶ agent-demotion constructions: "agented passive construction"; "ergative construction".
- ▶ morphosyntactic, semantic, pragmatic features of agent-demotion constructions, cultural context, discourse-pragmatic explanation of usage.
- ▶ generalizations, conclusions

Main Patterns: simple clause

Canonical Active-direct:

SOV, extended case system, double predicate agreement

- 1a) *mā* *men-l-əm* b) *mā* *sart* *wel-s-əm*
 1SG walk-PRS-1SG 1SG pike kill-PST2-1SG
 'I am walking' 'I caught a pike-fish'
- 2) *mā* *ajrit-əm* *tɪyl-a* *kari-mta-s-im*
 1SG canoe-1SG DET-ILL pull-MMNT-PST2-1SG/SG
 'I pulled my canoe here'

ABBREVIATIONS

DET - Determiner
 1SG/SG - predicate agreement: O=SG and S/A=1SG
 PST2 - Past Tense 2 (-s-)
 PRS - Present Tense

ILL - Illative
 PP - perfective participle
 1SG - 1sg Possessor
 MMNT - Momentative

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Main patterns: simple clause

Canonical Active-direct:

Verbal agreement inflection: S/A-V and O-V

- 1a) *mā* *men-l-əm* b) *mā* *sart* *wel-s-əm*
 1SG walk-PRS-1SG 1SG pike kill-PST2-1SG
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 1SG/SG - predicate agreement: O=SG and S/A=1SG
 1SG - 1sg Possessor
 MMNT - Momentative

ILL - Illative
 PST2 - Past Tense 2 (-s-)
 PRS - Present Tense

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Main patterns: simple clause

Canonical Active-direct:

O-V Agreement: *Definite ? Specific ?*

3) *mä tʃu qul wel-ɣäl-əm*
 1SG DET fish kill-PST1-1SG
 'I caught that fish'

4) *wojəy uy-əl nok tʃutʃ panə nurəytəy*
 animal head-3SG up turn.PST0.3SG and run.PST0.3SG
 'The animal turned up his head and ran away'

DET - Determiner
 PST0 - Past Tense (no marker)
 1SG - 1sg Possessor or Anaphoric Coreference

ABBREVIATIONS

1SG - 1sg Pronominal argument
 PST1 - Past Tense 1 (-ɣäl)
 3SG - 3sg Possessor or Anaphoric Coreference

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Main patterns: simple clause

Canonical Active-direct:

O-V Agreement inflection: Pragmatic status of O-referent

5a) *mä ɣant wel-s-əm, ələ*
 1SG pike kill-PST2-1SG big
 'I caught a pike-fish, a big one'

b) *ələ ɣant mən-nə löyöli-s-ım*
 big pike 1SG-LOC cut-PST2-1SG/SG
 'I prepared the big pike'

c) *terkä-s-ım iwes-nä*
 fry-PST2-1SG/SG stick-COM
 '(I) fried (it) on sticks'

COM - Comitative
 1SG/SG - Coreference agreement: O=SG and S/A=1SG
 PRS - Present Tense
 3SG - 3sg Possessor or Anaphoric Coreference

ABBREVIATIONS

LOC - Locative case
 PST2 - Past Tense 2 (-s-)
 1SG - 1sg Possessor or Anaphoric Coreference

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Main patterns: simple clause

O-V Agreement and Subjecthood:

O-V Agreement vs. Control over Reflexivization

6a) *wajay-nə ämp joy nirimtä-s-tä tʃimin ont-kat-al*
 animal-LOC dog home pull-PST2-3SG/SG there inside-house-3SG
 'The bear hid the dog inside his (bear's) / (dog's) house'

b) *wajay-nə ämp joy nirimtä-s-əyən tʃimin ont-kat-al*
 animal-LOC dog home pull-PST2-3SG there inside-house-3SG
 'The bear hid a dog inside his (bear's) house' / *(dog's) house.'

O-V Agreement vs. WH Questions

7a) *ämp qojoyi por / *por-əttə* - Who did the dog bite?
 dog who bite.3SG / *bite-3SG/SG

b) *ämp (tam) iki por / *por-əttə* - The dog bit a (this) man.
 dog (DET) man bite.3SG / *bite-3SG/SG

ABBREVIATIONS

COM – Comitative

3SG/SG – Coreference agreement: O=SG and S/A=3SG

PRS – Present Tense

LOC - Locative case

PST2 - Past Tense 2 (-s-)

3SG – 3sg Possessor or Anaphoric Coreference

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Main patterns: simple clause

O-V Agreement: Conclusions

discourse-pragmatic function of O triggers O-V agreement:

- syntactic flexibility, omissibility
- control of reflexivization
- inferability (pragmatic identifiability, activation)
- overall pragmatic promotion (degree of topicality)

→ O-V agreement

- syntactic rigidity
- obligatory overtness
- no control of reflexivization
- uninferability
- pragmatic function of Focus

→ no O-V agreement

(Lambrecht 1994; Givon 2001; Nikolaeva 1999; Filchenko 2006).

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Topic - Focus

- 8) *nu ej tovoj-nə... tovoj-nə men-s-əw quf-kan-tfa-tati ill-ati*
 OK one spring-LOC spring-LOC go-PST2-1PL fish-find-INF-SUP down-LOC
 'Once in spring..., in spring we went down to fish'
- 9) *mā sart wel-s-əm, əllə*
 1SG pike kill-PST2-1SG big
 'I caught a pike fish, big one'
- 10) *juγ jiyi jor-nə nuγ loyi-m-ayi*
 3SG river middle-LOC up lie-PP-PRD
 'In the middle of the river he floats, just resting there'
- 11) *loyi-wəl*
 lie-PST0.3SG
 'He stayed there (on the water)'
- 12) *tʃilayta-s-im rut' sayi "medwed"*
 cry-PST2-1SG/SG Russian manner "bear"
 'I cried in Russian "bear!"'

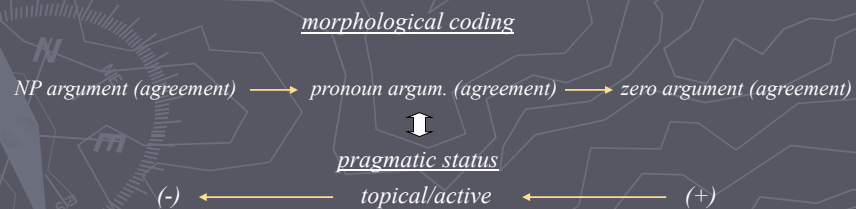
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Canonical active-direct clause structure

Information Structure:

- new referent = full NP (thetic); Topic = elision + predicate agreement.
- Agent = S/A = Topic = elision + predicate agreement inflection
- Non-agent = O = Focus = rigid OV order = full NP, no predicate agreement.

K.Lambrecht (1994): continuum between a morphological zero and maximal morphological explicitness is counter proportionate to the continuum between topicality and unidentifiability, inactiveness.



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Agent-demotion Constructions

• Agented passive

- 13) *min atfisa-kən men-käl-men wəl-m-äw qat-a*
1DU brother-DU go-PST1-1DU live-PP-1PL house-ILL
'we, two brothers went to the house where we lived'

"inactive nature of passive subject...", has "the effect of shifting the perspective from the agent to the patient, and from the beginning to the end of the event" (Shibatani 1985).

- 14) *min lel-em-nat jaqget-am-nə internat-i nok wej-ojmən*
1PL brother-1SG-COM parents-1PL-LOC school-ELA up take-PS.1DU
'My younger brother and I were taken by our parents from the boarding school'

- 15) *sem porlei-nə li-l-i*
eye something-LOC eat-PRS-PS.3SG
'The eyes are smarting with the smoke' (Lit. *the eyes are eaten by something*)

- 16) *pamí söy pä wetf-γel-γäl-i*
hay bunch also light up-RFL-PST1-PS.3SG
'The hay bunch also caught fire' (Lit. *hay bunch also got lit up*)

Lack of control, authority, volition, inanimate, supernatural agents, idiomatic expressions, "Force" semantics, "process" without visible cause, "automatic", similar to anti-causative constructions (Kulonen 1989)

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Agent-demotion Constructions

- Agented passive: Northern Khanty

i) *pe:tra:j-e:n xo:p-na mo:jl-ə-s-a*
 Peter-LOC boat-COM give-EP-PST-PS.3SG
 'He was given a boat by Peter'

ii) *kul'-na joxət-s-a*
 devil-LOC come-PST-PS.3SG
 'A devil came to him'

The passive indicates that the agent argument does not correspond to the topic role (detopicalization) (Nikolaeva 1999: 30-31).

iii) *la:jəm ta:kan se:wər-m-ə-s-a jux xosa*
 axe fast cut-MOM-EP-PST-PS.3SG tree to
 'They put the axe fast in the tree'

Semantic elimination of the agent of generic or indefinite interpretation. Subject = non-agent argument of the transitive or intransitive verb (Nikolaeva 1999: 31).

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Agent-demotion Constructions

- Agented passive

17a) (∅) *opəl-əm qot mutfə puran pir-i quyt-əm,*
 (1SG) sister-1SG home until skidoo back-ELA trod-PST0.1SG

b) *tu lat-nə aj āmp-əli nə-nə ilə-ti asl-i*
 DET time-LOC small dog-DIM 1SG-LOC front-ELA let.go- PS.3SG

'(I) ran behind the skidoo all the way to my sister's house, where the small dog was let go by me'

18) (∅) *puran pir-i qot-m-əm-nə näyt-əm, ot' liypil lan-m-əm-a*
 (1SG) skidoo back-ELA trod-PP-1SG-LOC laugh-1SG yard inside enter-PP-1SG-ILL

imat sar-nam näy-ta jəy-əm
 more ahead-LAT laugh-INF become-1SG

'While running behind the skidoo (I) laughed and having entered the front yard, (I) laughed even more'

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Agent-demotion Constructions

• Agented passive

19a) <i>os</i>	<i>mä</i>	<i>avet-a</i>	<i>əntə</i>	<i>imt-əm</i>
but	1SG	sled-ILL	NEG	sit-PST0.1SG
'But I did not sit in the sled,...'				
b) <i>aj</i>	<i>ämp-əli</i>	<i>mə-mə</i>	<i>kur-γət-i</i>	<i>katl-i</i>
small	dog-DIM	1SG-LOC	leg-PL-ILL	hold-PS.3SG
'...with small dog held by me by the legs,...'				
c) <i>panə puran</i>	<i>pir-i</i>	<i>ti</i>	<i>quyt-əm</i>	
and skidoo	back-ELA	DET	trod-PST0.1SG	
'...I ran behind the sledge'				

- Active-direct (a): Topic₁ = Agent = S/A + predicate agreement.
- Passive (b): Topic₁ = Agent = backgrounded = O argument = Loc-marked; Topic₂ = Target (low agentivity) = foregrounded = S argument + predicate agreement.
- Active-direct (c): Topic₁ = Agent = S/A (elided = PTE) + predicate agreement.

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Agent-demotion Constructions

Agented passive construction

- type frequency in the narratives ~ 8%;
- Target mapped to S grammatical relation, controlling the S-V agreement;
- Agent is mapped to non-S/A grammatical relation, marked by Loc case;
- marks change in pragmatic status of referents, temporary foregrounding non-Agent, promoting to S relation; backgrounding Agent, demoting to non-S relation;
- at clausal level, pragmatic status – altered
- at overall discourse level, agent maintains activation, canonical expression (elision + agreement inflection);
- passive = marked construction type, special arrangement of referents, outside canonical pattern (pragmatic function - semantic role - grammatical relation)

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Agent-demotion Constructions

Agented passive construction

Cultural Context:

- marriage in exogamous, patrilocal, patrilineal society.
- *woman* = Topic = Target of "give", "take", "keep"; *man* = volitional Agent.

i) *mä non-at kit-l-əm, pərkaʃnikə, panə noŋ-at rut' iki-ja mə-l-əm*
 1SG 2SG-ACC send-PRS-1SG shop.assistant and you-ACC Russian man-ILL give-PRS-1SG
 'I'll send you to study for a shop-assistent and give you away (to marry) a Russian man'

ii) (Ø) *əntə mən-ŋ-an wöy-nä tul-uj-ən*
 (2SG) Neg go-CND-2SG force-COM take-PS.2SG
 'If (you) are not going (to marry), (you)'ll be taken by force'

iii) *nuŋ mej-ä-jən pun-ən etəp maXmoX-uj-a*
 2SG give-PS-2SG hair-COM grow forest.man-EP-ILL
 'You'll be given (to marry) to a forest animal-man with a hairy body'

iv) (Ø) *jeŋ-ən-nə mej-ä-jən, (Ø) tu-l-əm noŋ-at*
 (2SG) father-2SG-LOC give-PS.2SG (1SG) take-PRS-1SG you-ACC
 'If (you) are given (to marry) by your father, then (I) take you'.

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Agent-demotion Constructions

Agented passive construction

Other Contexts:

interactions with children, domestic animals:

14) *min lel-em-nat jaqget-am-nə internat-i nok wej-ojmən*
 1PL brother-1SG-COM parents-1PL-LOC school-ELA up take-PS.1DU
 'My younger brother and I were taken by our parents from the boarding school'

17) *tu lat-nə aj ämp-əli mä-nə ilə-ti asl-i*
 DET time-LOC small dog-DIM 1SG-LOC front-ELA let.go- PS.3SG
 'At this time, the small dog was let go by me'

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Agent-demotion Constructions

Khanty passive construction with motion verbs

i) *tut* *p̄rnə* *juγ* *ont-nam* *ti* *mən-i*
DET after forest inside-LAT DET go-PS.3SG

'After this we went to the woods' (Lit.: *the forest was went to*)

ii) ∅ *äj-qu-nə* *os* *joyt-i*
(3SG) young-man-LOC again come-PS.3SG
'the young man came to him again' (Lit. *(he) was come to by the young man*)

Gulya 1966, Honti 1984, Kulonen 1989, Nikolaeva 1999.

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Agent-demotion Constructions

"Ergative" construction

- 20a) *tʃilayt-əs-əm* *rut'* *sayi: "medved!"*
 cry-PST2-1SG Russian manner "bear"
 '(I) cried in Russian "bear!"'
- b) *moʃət* *jiyi-nə* (Ø) *qol-wayta-l-il*
 "maybe" 3PL-LOC (3SG) hear-ATTEN-PRS-3PL/SG
 'Maybe **they** would hear **(it)**'
- c) *nu* *jem-aki,* *jiyata-l-im,* d) *aʃa,* *wajay*
 "nu" good-PRD look-PRS-1SG/SG OK, animal
 'Ok, (I) look, there it is, the animal'

ABBREVIATIONS

PRD – Predicator

3PL/SG – Coreference agreement: O=SG and S/A=3PL

PRS – Present Tense

LOC - Locative case

PST2 - Past Tense 2 (-s-)

ATTEN – Aspect, Attenuative

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Agent-demotion Constructions

"Ergative" construction

- 21) (Ø) *pestätıl* *tom* *toy-əm-al* *pelk-a* *nöröy-wəl ...* *i* *tʃel-wəl*
 (3SG) fast DET go-PP-3SG side-ILL swim- PST0.3SG "and" cry-PST0.3SG
 '(He) swims to the other side ... and yells'
- 22a) *män-nə* *əfo ...* (it) *joyo- ta* *əntə* *uspet* *wer-s-äm,*
 1SG- LOC again... (SG) shoot-INF NEG "be.on.time" do- PST2-1SG/SG
 'I didn't manage to shoot **(it)** in time.'
- b) (Ø) *tʃerä* *nöröy-wəl*
 3SG fast swim-PST0.3SG
 '(it) swam so fast'
- c) (Ø) *tʃa* (he) *nuy* *aləm-s-əttə,* *män-nə* *tʃa* *liyelta-s-əm*
 (3SG) then head-3SG up move-PST2-3SG/SG 1SG-LOC then take.aim-PST2-1SG
 'Then **(he)** got **his head** out, **I** aimed'

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Agent-demotion Constructions

"Ergative" construction

- Frequency: average 10%
- Agent = explicit, free pronoun or NP (high agentivity, human/animate, identifiable, accessible), Loc case
- Loc-marked Agent = grammatical relation A, control of predicate agreement
- predicate = typically perfective, unclear affect on Target, underlyingly intransitive/de-transitive ('take aim', 'look at', motion, 'shoot at', body part manipulation)
- Target = typically a full NP, mainly identifiable, accessible contextually, landmark of motion, direction of looking or shooting

?

Motivation for the choice (origin) of the "ergative" construction Nom-Acc Khanty?

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Agent-demotion Constructions

"Ergative" construction

- Reflexive or middle events - low control/volition context:

23a) *män-nə kit-äm (mil-näm /%toyoj) iyi-käs-əm kitfäy-nä*
 1SG-LOC hand-1SG (touch-RFL/away) cut-PST3-1SG knife-COM
 'I cut my hand with a knife (incidentally / %on purpose)'

b) *mä kit-äm kitfäy-nä (mil-näm / toyoj) iyi-käs-əm*
 1SG hand-1SG knife-COM (touch-RFL/away) cut-PST3-1SG
 'I cut my hand with a knife (incidentally/on purpose)'

- modal predicates of cognition, similar to perception predicates ('look at', 'aim at'):

24) *män-nə onəl-l-əm tom qu ju-wəl*
 1SG-LOC know-PRS-1SG DET man walk-PRS.3SG
 'I know the man, who is walking there'

consistent with established low Target affectedness and reduced agentivity, control.

ABBREVIATIONS

DET – Determiner
 COM/– Comitative case
 PRS – Present Tense

LOC - Locative case
 PST3 - Past Tense 2 (-käs-)
 RFL – Reflexive

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Agent-demotion Constructions

"Ergative" construction

- Non SAP:

25) *Igorenka Sashka-nə sam-a tʃi-näm joyo-wəl*
 Igorenko Sashka-LOC mug-ILL this-LAT shoot-PRS.3SG
 'Sashka Igorenko shot at the (bear's) mug'

26a) *Matrena Jakowlewna, temi nuŋ rabota-n muyuli təm wər-s-ən*
 Matrena Jakovlevna DET 2SG work-2SG what DET do-PST2-2SG
 'Matrena Jakovlevna, is this your job? What did you do here?'

(b) *(temi) əntə män-nə, metali-p əntə-s-əm*
 (DET) NEG 1SG-LOC some-TOP NEG-PST2-1SG
 '(That's) not me, I did not do anything (nothing happened)'

consistent agentivity/salience avoidance

ABBREVIATIONS

DET – Determiner
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 – Present Tense

LOC - Locative case
 PST3 - Past Tense 2 (-käs-)
 RFL – Reflexive

PR3

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Agent-demotion Constructions

“Ergative” construction

Cultural Context – high frequency - bears, large animals, hunting.

BEAR:

- significant cultural agent, biggest and most dangerous predator
 - cultural / ritual status – equal to human
 - complex ritualized behaviour - taboo, restrictions: *wont-iki* 'forest master', *qaqi wajay* 'brother animal', *wajay* 'animal' (taboo - *jiy* 'bear')
 - complete set of taboo terms for body parts:
kil 'bear's stomach' vs. *qon* 'human/animal stomach'
layl'ip 'bear's tooth' vs. *pöjk* 'human/animal tooth')
- etc.

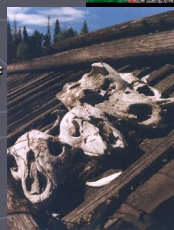
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Agent-demotion Constructions (Linguistic Analysis vs. Cultural Context)



'Bear feast' mask worn by hunters in re-enactment of a bear-hunting scene.

'Bear-mark' on a tree, documenting hunting.



Special way of disposing of Bear skulls/bones.

Trophy demonstration (bear skull) demonstrated by a prominent hunter.



Agent-demotion Constructions

“Ergative” construction

Cultural Context – bears, large animals, hunting.

BEAR:

- significant cultural agent, biggest and most dangerous predator
- equal to human
- ritualized behaviour, taboos: *wont-iki* ‘forest master’, *qaqi wajay* ‘brother animal’, *wajay* ‘animal’ (taboo - *jiy* ‘bear’)
- complete set of taboo terms for body parts: *kil* ‘bear’s stomach’ vs. *qon* ‘human/animal stomach’; *lay’ip* ‘bear’s tooth’ vs. *pōŋk* ‘human/animal tooth’, etc)
- bones never broken, specially disposed, skulls kept on house roofs
- hunting and feasting - extreme significance and ritual value
- concealment of identities (masks, nicknames)
- avoid possible retaliation
- successful hunter - prominent social status.

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Agent-demotion Constructions

“Ergative” construction

Generalizations

Loc-marked agent constructions:

- mixture of subject and non-subject features
- non-canonically marked S/A arguments - predicates of low control & volition
- oblique case marking - decreased transitivity

(Onishi 2001)

(+) agent's subjecthood
(+) control/volition
(+) Clause/event transitivity

Nominative

(-) agent's subjecthood
(-) control/volition
(-) Clause/event transitivity

Locative

↔ canonical ↔

↔ non-canonical ↔

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Agent-demotion Constructions

Conclusions

- choice of constructions - cognitive faculty, discourse coherence in context, structuring information, affecting linguistic form (morphosyntax).
- system's grammatical resources - pragmatic and semantic properties - speaker's choice.
- agent-demotion constructions = de-transitive events, multiple referents, competing salience.
- agented passive and ergative constructions = parenthetical shifts in agent salience, gradience in discourse prominence, primary and secondary topicality = promotion/demotion, foregrounding/backgrounding, Loc.case, grammatical relation shift.

Implications

- discourse salience = multifactorial, gradient, culturally motivated.
- cultural = pragmatic - lexical semantic - morphosyntactic.
- ergative and agented passive constructions = Agent's association with subjecthood or grammatical relation of S is strong.
- not impenetrable for cultural preferences, speaker intentions and pragmatic pressures.
- agent-demotion constructions: S = firmly tied with discourse salience (occasional secondary topicality) and clause initiality.
- choice of construction = speaker's intentions + system's prevailing patterns: word-order, clause-initiality, semantic role – grammatical relation – pragmatic function.

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Acknowledgements

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Department of General Linguistics, University of Helsinki, Finland

Funding:

Rice University Linguistics Department, NSF, NEH, Yale Endangered Languages Foundation;
Russian Foundation for Fundamental Research, Tomsk State Pedagogical University,
INTAS, ELDP, Russian Foundation for Humanities.

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