The problem of the part of speech identification in Khinalug and in Dzungar Tuvan

The talk will deal with the problem of the identification of parts of speech on the basis of a comparison between the Nakh-Dagestanian language Khinalug and the Turkic language Dzungar Tuvan. Khinalug is spoken in the Azerbaycanian Caucasus. Dzungar Tuvan is located in the North of Xinjiang. Khinalug is an ergative language (cf. Dešeriev 1959, Kibrik 1992), whereas Dzungar Tuvan has an accusative system (cf. Isxakov & Pal’mbax 1961, Mawkanuli 1999). Despite this difference, the two languages under investigation share notable typologic features.

Both languages form left-branching subordinate clauses by means of participles and converbs. The talk will discuss the question, if these infinite elements should be considered as verbs or nouns. Khinalug and Dzungar Tuvan use participles both in attributive position and as finite predicates. Furthermore, a supinal use of participles could be detected for Khinalug. In Dzungar Tuvan, participles can serve as nomina actionis, and thus form infinite complement predicates.

One criterion for the identification of a dominating verbal character of an infinite element is the maintenance of its valency dependent case government (cf. Tesnière 1959). As for Khinalug, the present state of investigation has not revealed any differences between the constituent marking in the finite and the infinite subsystem. In Dzungar Tuvan, all constituents are equally marked in both subsystems except the subject (cf. Ooržak 2002, Šamina 2001, 2010). Only the subject of converb clauses appears in nominative case without exception. The subject of attributive participles appears in genetive case. In this respect, the investigation shows that participial constructions with a head noun ‘time’ constitute an exception, requiring a nominative subject. These constructions have obviously passed into the converbial system, so that the participial construction as a whole can be regarded as a complex converb. Complements formed with an infinite predicate usually have a subject in the nominative case, which can be traced back to a nominativus pendens. Speakers do consider complements with genetive-marked subjects to be well-formed, however, in free speech, they clearly tend towards nominative subjects (cf. Rind-Pawlowski 2013).

Furthermore, the identification of pronouns may be problematic in both languages under investigation. In Dzungar Tuvan, the lexemes kisi ‘person’ and çıve ‘thing’ are used as indefinite pronouns denoting ‘somebody; one’, ‘something’ in certain contexts (cf. Skribnik 2008). If these semantically discharged elements are used as head nouns of participial clauses, they merely serve for the substantiation of the participle, forming an agent noun. Thus, in Dzungar Tuvan, the border between noun and pronoun cannot be drawn unequivocally, whereas in Khinalug participles can only be substantivized to an agent noun by attribution to a pronoun. The question arises if these should be considered as pronouns synchronically, or if they have become dependent morphemes denoting the substantivation of the participle.

Both languages under investigation provide evidence for the hypothesis that one word form is not necessarily assignable to one part of speech, and that word forms in a development process from one part of speech to another might be difficult to represent in a merely statistical approach.
Literature:


