AGREEMENT IN THE LOCAL DIALECTS OF THE NORTHERN SELKUPS

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This paper proposes an analysis of agreement as one of the modes of expressing syntactic relations in Selkup texts. The material for the analysis is extracted from six corpora of Selkup folklore texts recorded over the last 80 years (from the 1920s through 2003). The size of the corpora is about 80,000 running words (a more detailed description of the material can be found in [Kazakevich 2003: 448]). The corpora represent the four functioning present-day local sub-dialects of Northern Selkup – the Middle Taz sub-dialect, the Upper Taz sub-dialect, the Baikha sub-dialect and the Upper Tolka sub-dialect.

In Selkup agreement can concern two parameters: person and number. Sometimes agreement can co-occur with government in one and the same construction.¹

The standard type of agreement in Selkup is person-number agreement of the predicate, expressed by a finite verb or a verbal representation (predicative form) of a noun, with the subject (this and only this case is considered in [Ocherki 1980: 370-373]). Examples:

1. Mat tašiny tønimyqo šitty p 䨦r cattysynap
   I-1Sg shoot-IdPst1SgOb
   ‘To recognize you I shot twice.’

2. Yläqyl t t ira nany sumpa
   man-NmSg shamanise-Pr3Sg
   ‘The Lower-earth man keeps shamanising for a long time.’

3. Qälyty tønty tuŋ ūyty
   Nenets-NmPl come-Pr3Pl
   ‘The Nenets came together.’

4. Irajmyũy ʑy ylimp ūy ɕoli(tyt) t ūy peläyyn
   man-CollDu live-Pstr3Du
   ‘A man and his wife lived on the other side of the river.’

5. Mat šölqum Ȑk
   I-Nm1Sg Selkup-Vb1Sg
   ‘I am Selkup.’

If the subject is expressed by a collective form of a noun, the 3d person singular is generally used (though plural also sometimes occurs):

6. T poison mannympyŋlyyn - nenyqo nennar ejiya aj nimyra, na pũnakos
   shímýmy ny tiływ ūyyn
   ash-NmColl fly-Pstr3Pl
   ‘Now you see, there are so many mosquitoes and midges, these are the ashes of that Punakos flying everywhere.’

Sometimes notional agreement of the predicate with the subject is possible, e.g. if the subject has an attribute expressed by a noun in instrumental case with the sociative meaning:

7a. JomBa ɨmyfandysä ɨlymB qy
   Iompa-NmSg grandmother-InSgPo3Sg live-Pstr3Du
   ‘Iompa with his grandmother lived.’ Compare:

¹ This research was carried out within the project “Local dialects of the Northern Selkups: a contrastive description and a data base of sound files”, grant № 01-06-80363.

² ABBREVIATIONS. Ac = accusative, Aud = auditive, Du = dual, Ger = nomen actionis (Gerund), Gn = genitive, Id = indicative, Ill = illative, Imp = imperative, Ins = instrumental, Lt = latentine (mood), Nm = nominative, Ob = objective conjugation, Pl = plural, Pos = possessive declension, Prol = prolate, Prs = present tense, Pst = past tense, Pstr = relative past tense, Vb = verbal (predicative) form of a noun, Sg = singular, Trans = transitive.
(7b) **Ica ilympa imyłantysä**
Icha-Nm3Sg live-Pstr3Sg grandmother -InsSgPo3Sg
‘Icha lived with his grandmother’ (where *imyłantysä* functions as a prepositional object).

If the subject has a postposed attribute expressed by the pronoun *muntyk* ‘all’, the predicate may agree in number with this pronoun (singular) and not with the subject (plural):

(8) **Tīnäity** (brother-NmPIOb3Sg) *muntyk tūga* (come-Pr3Sg) ‘His brothers all came.’

It is worth considering how agreement of the constituents of a compound nominal predicate (a copula and a subject complement) might be interpreted: either as agreement of each part with the subject or as agreement of the copula with the subject and of the complement with the copula:

(9) **Tat** (subject) *kuntyant* (complement) *eisant* (copula)
you-Nm2Sg who-Vb2Sg be-IdPst2Sg
‘Who are you?’

(10) **Qajyn** (complement) *eis ływ* (copula)
what-Vb3Pl be-IdPst3Pl
‘What are they?’

An Attribute agrees with its head only in two cases, both involving an attribute that is postposed to the head:

(A) if the attribute is expressed by an emphatic / reflexive-personal pronoun *onty* ‘him/herself’: man (I-1Sg) *onąŋ* (myself-1Sg) ‘I myself’, tan (you-2Sg) *ontanty* (yourself-2Sg) ‘you yourself’, lōś-ira (devil-NmSg) *onty* (himself-3Sg) ‘the devil himself’, etc.;
(B) if it is expressed by a personal-collective numeral *(mē* (we-1Du) *śittä mį* (two-1Du) ‘we two’, *tę* (you-2Du) *śittä lį* (two-2Du) ‘you two’, etc.).

All other cases of agreement in Selkup texts involve agreement of the possessive form of a noun with its formal or real possessor, whereby possessor and possessive form can be syntactically related or not (in the latter case it is arguable whether we have agreement or congruence - see [Melchuk 1993]). The examples given below will be analysed in the paper.

**Agreement of head with its attribute** takes place if the attribute is expressed by a 1st or 2nd person pronoun in the genitive:

(11) **Ma** irakotam tünäta
I-Nm/Gn1Sg man-3SgPos1Sg
‘My husband-my came.’

(12) **Ilympa ukkur p ėr mē łytmyn**
we-Nm/Gn1Pl warrior-NmSgPo1Pl
‘Once there lived our warrior-our.’

**Subject - direct object agreement:**

(13) **Ira  muntyk q nnyt, nmy tyntena kyB ijaty iinyty**
man-NmSg son-NmSgPos3Sg take-IdPrs3SgOb
‘The man killed all (of them), then he took that small son-his.’

(14) **myty na šıtëikunä, ijäm Dy nimasä na mikunty**
mother-NmSgPos3Sg son-AcSgPos3Sg give-Aud3SgOb
‘So his mother woke up (it is heard), she gave her son her breast (with her breast).’

**Subject - indirect object agreement:**

(15) **Ijaty nifcik k tyty asyntynyk**
son-NmSgPo3Sg say-IdPrs3SgOb father-Dt-AlSgPos3Sg
‘The son said to his father.’

(16) **T mty-jecyk, qy q naş! Qurmaqanty tulaceńtynty!**
death-IllSgPos2Sg reach-IdFt-2Sg
‘Temty-Yechik, don’t go! You will find (reach) your death.’

(17) **Qurma-ntó q ntyloryńtiynty**
You are seeking your death!’

Selkup-NmSg take-LitPrs3SgOb
‘And the Selkup seized the short (small) side’; see also (7b).

In a non-finite clause with a nomen actionis, the possessive form of the nomen actionis agrees in person and number with the subject of the clause expressed, as a rule, by a nominal form in genitive:

‘If you come earlier, smear your nose’s blood on the back side of the poles!’

Negation of the verb in the past tense indicative represents a particular case of this construction:

‘His dog didn’t smell well (lit.: his dog’s smelling lacked).’

At the beginning of folklore texts, it is very common to find possessive constructions in which possessor and possessed are coordinated, whereby the possessed agrees with the possessor in person and number:

‘There lived a man, he had a wife, he had a daughter, he had a son, a small son (lit.: One man lived, his one old woman, his one son, his small son).’

‘A merchant, his one son and his one daughter.’

It is difficult to agree with the statement in [Selkup 2002: 308] arguing that there is no agreement in Selkup at all. In fact, this appears to be rather a terminology game: what is called agreement by G.N. Prokofiev [1935] and in [Ocherki 1980] is simply renamed ‘coordination’ in [Selkup 2002] (whereby the term is used in an untraditional way to describe the relation between subject and predicate).

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