CLAUSE STRUCTURE IN THE RUSSIAN-CHINESE PIDGIN

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1. CLAUSE STRUCTURE IN THE RUSSIAN-CHINESE PIDGIN. The pidgin in question is known as the Kyachta language, the Maimachin idiom, the Far East Pidgin Russian or the Siberian pidgin, yet the most usual name is the Russian-Chinese pidgin (RChP). This name presupposes that the main contributing languages in the formation of this pidgin were Russian and Chinese. Was it really so? Certain features in the clause structure may contribute to the solving of this problem.

The RChP in its basilect form practically lacks the inflectional morphology which contrasts with a very complicated morphological structure of the lexifier. In the Russian language the clausal structure is overtly expressed by the system of grammatical cases and prepositions and to a lesser extent by the word order. The RChP lost both grammatical case and prepositions so the clausal arguments are interpreted mainly by the general semantic context:

Agent-Patient
(1)   Eta   l'udi   patom   dzimli   kapadzi (K)
       This person   then   ground   dig
          'Then this person dug the ground.'
(2)   Hedzu --   liba   kupi-la (Sh)
       Hedzu---   fish   buy-PAST
          'Hedzu bought fish'

Other arguments
Location
(3)   Sam   --- gorod   pashol   jivo.' (FEP)
       Himself- city   went   3Sg.
          'He himself went to the city'
(4)   My   prijehal kareisa   fanza (Tz)
       1Pl   came   Korean   house
          'We came to the Korean houses.'
Instrument
(5)   Buldozera   rovno delaj (K)
       bulldozer   even make
          '<they> leveled the ground with the help of bulldozer.'

All arguments are identically expressed by noun phrases which may consist of a noun with or without dependant words (demonstratives or adjectives) or a personal pronoun. Thus, we rely mostly on the semantic role of the argument in order to determine its grammatical role in the clause. The Pidgin has only the active voice so the semantic role of agent always corresponds to the grammatical relation of the subject and the semantic role of patient corresponds to the grammatical relation of the direct object, cf (1) and (2).

Thus the actual interpretation of the grammatical structure of the clause is mainly based on the general semantic context. It may also be interpreted by the word order.

2. WORD ORDER. As has often been pointed out the RChP tends to have the SOV word order. If the clause contains both the Object and the Benefactive or other arguments, the Object occupies the place nearer to the Verb.

(6)   evó   dúmaj   majá **jevó** čéna daváj (Ja)
       3Sg   think   1Sg 3Sg   price give
          .'He thinks that I give him the <real> price.'

(7) Nada   lipahoza   kater cho vazi-la (K)
     Necessary   lumber.company   cutter what carry-PAST
        .'It was necessary to carry things to the lumber company by motor boat.'

All the secondary arguments (Location, Instrument, Means of transportation etc), with the exception of the adjunct of Time tend to occupy the position between S and V:

(8) Eto   kotory   l'udi   kalotsa   lazi-l (K)
     This   which   person   well   climb-PAST
        .'That man who climbed into the well'

As RChP was always an oral auxiliary language it probably never had any norm, even a norm "de facto". Therefore the grammatical rules were often violated and the word order was never really strict. Cf. (3), (4), (17). Without the strict word order rule the task of argument interpretation of a clause becomes almost impossible taking into account the lack of both inflectional morphology and prepositions. The last resort here would be to use the general context of the expression.

3. CONTEXT INTERPRETATION. The exact interpretation of a single clause is impossible in RChP. In fact, the expression *kaban taskaj* (wild.pig drag) would be probably understood as "wild pigs usually drag (steal)", because the word *taskaj* is highly polysemantic in the pidgin. It may mean "pull, drag, steal, carry". But the wider context makes it possible to figure out the real meaning of this clause: "<we had> to carry <carcasses of> wild pigs <to the riverbank>".

(9) Isho   kada   kasa   stali,   kaban   taskaj,   panty
     So   when   sand.bar stop   wild.pig drag   antlers
     pili   chivo, a   dom   dal'oko (FEP)
     saw   something but   house   far
        'When we stopped at sand bars, it was necessary to carry <carcasses of> wild pigs <to the boat>, to saw off antlers <of elks>, but the house was far away <and it was necessary to bring all that home>.'

In order to make the argument structure more transparent the whole situation is often cut into minor situations so that each predicate would have only one or at the most two arguments.

(10) Hedzu   liba kupi-la,   eta   liba pamilaj netu, eta   vada
     Hedzu   fush buy-PAST   this fish die   NEG   this   water
     puskaj-la,   eta   liba   ubizha-la (Sh)
     let-PAST this fish   escape-PAST
        'Hedzu bought a fish< it was alive and Hedzu put it into the water <river>, so the fish went away.'
(11) Tak hudo hodi, ego   mogu strel'aj. Ego   dumaj,
     so   bad walk 3Sg can   shoot   3 Sg think
     nasha   chushka est' (Ar).
     1Pl   pig   be
        'We shouldn't walk like that, they may shoot taking us for wild pigs'

The segmentation of the text into very simple clauses is a characteristic feature of all variants of the RChP. Practically all the texts available, be it modern recordings, citations in fiction or examples in linguistic articles present this feature.

4. LEXICAL MEANS OF EXPRESSING THE CLAUSE STRUCTURE. At some point of its history the RCHP was expanding. This process was connected with the formation of new grammatical means on the basis of lexical items. The RCHP was clearly in the process of forming a class of postpositions. Postpositions are also characteristic for Govorka, the Taimyr Russian-based pidgin. In Govorka the posposition *mesto* is used to mark different adjuncts. In RChP certain nouns, adjectives and adverbs could also be used as postpositions

Nouns

(12) ja   companija   hodi (FEP)
     1Sg   company go
       'He went with me'

(13) Ivana   doma sepasibo   (Ch)
     Ivan   house thank.you
       'thanks to Ivan's house'

Adverbs

(14) sidi   trava   r'adom (FEP)
     sit   grass   near
       'He sat in the grass'

(15) reka   popereza (Ch)
     river   across
       'across the river'

Adjectives

(16) trava   adinakavy   ivo (FEP)
     grass   alike   3Sg
       'It was green'

Another model is presented by the use of deictic adverbs which help to define more precisely the meaning of a Locative argument. Such adverbs do not necessarily follow the argument and can be put elsewhere, though they also express a certain tendency of following the argument in question.

(17) Lan'se   ja   pasho-la   toka lipahoza   des'a (K)
     Before   1sg go-PAST only   lumber.company   here
       'I used to come only to the lumber company'

(18) Ivo   suda   hodi   Vostok (FEP)
     3Sg   to.here   go   Vostok
       'He came to Vostok'

5. CONCLUSION. While expanding the RChP clearly had a tendency to establish the SOV word order, the system of postpositions and the system of deictic adverbs make the locative arguments more precise. The first two features are not characteristic of either the Russian or Chinese languages but are common for languages of the Altaic family which is spread all over Siberia. Native speakers of theses languages often used the RChP for communication with Russians and other Europeans, as it is attested by the sources for the RChP. It seems obvious that this pidgin probably originated in the process of Russian-Aborigine Siberian trade and only after that it began to be used by the Chinese. As J. Nichols pointed out "the contribution of the Chinese … was not so much the nature of the pidgin as its stability" (J. Nichols, Pidginization and foreign talk: Chinese Pidgin Russian \\ Papers from the 4th Int. Conference on historical linguistics, John Benjamins, 1980, 405). The name Russian-Chinese pidgin seems erroneous and it seems more adequate to speak about the Siberian pidgin formed on the Russian lexical basis in the course of communication with Altaic speaking peoples of Siberia.

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