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Extended Abstract

The typological study of agreement system in the Ayaski dialect (South Khorasan)

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Introduction

In the evolution of linguistics, it can be claimed that the trend of 19th-century studies was towards historical linguistics, and in the 20th and 21st centuries, the trend was towards investigating and discovering language universals. One of the approaches that deals with the study of language universals is language typology. In this approach, to achieve the universality of a language, numerous languages around the world are carefully studied. However, it is never possible to give a general and fixed verdict about a language because the rules in this approach are relative and are presented as a continuum. Linguistic typology is about 260 years old and deals with the classification of the world's natural languages into various categories, which are mainly based on phonological, morphological, and syntactic criteria. Comrie refers to typology as the systematic study of differences among languages and adds that general principles govern these linguistic differences (2001: 25; quoted by Dabir-Moghaddam, 2012: 2). The topic discussed in this article is the “agreement system”. According to the valuable book “Typology of Iranian Languages,” all common Iranian languages use the agreement system to formulate the grammatical roles of the subject and object.

Materials & Methods

The theoretical basis of this research is Comrie's five-fold system, which was proposed in his 1978 article. Based on the concepts presented in his article, we will determine the typology of the agreement system in the Ayaski dialect. In his 1978 article, Comrie raises the morpho-syntactic issue of ergative construction and thus introduces 5 possible case systems. For this purpose, he used 3 symbols: S (abbreviation of Subject and used to refer to the subject of the intransitive sentence), symbol A (abbreviation of Agent and used to refer to the subject

of the transitive sentence), and symbol P (abbreviation of Patient and used to refer to the direct object of the transitive sentence). He gives the case systems as follows:

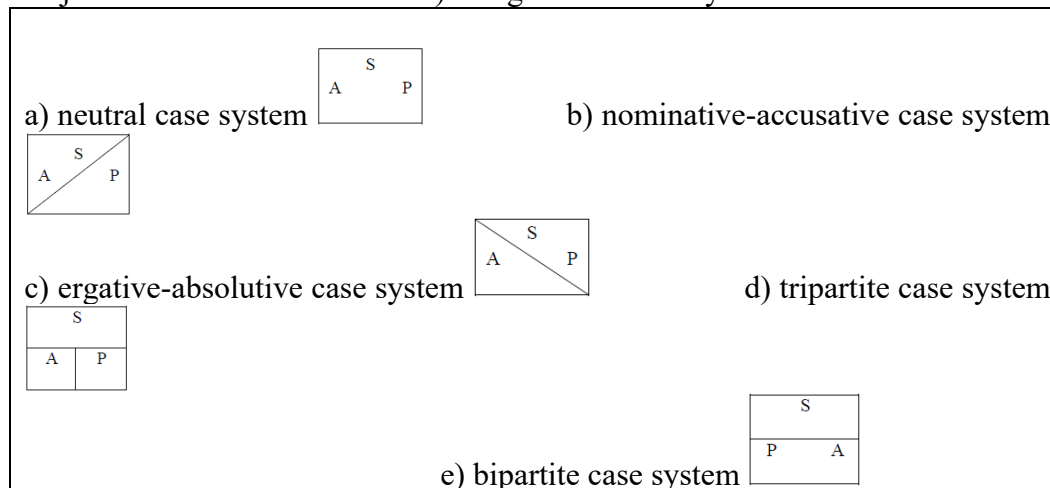


Figure 1. Comrie's five-fold case systems

The data of the current research has been collected through field methods such as observation and interviews with Ayaski speakers. In cases where the writer found it necessary (mainly due to the weak voice of older speakers), the speakers' voices were recorded and then used for writing after transliteration and morphological intersection. All the speakers have lived in Ayask for the past twenty years. The age range of the speakers was from 34 to 71 years.

Results & Discussion

Considering the tense of the verb in the sentence which can be either “+present” or “+past”, the patterns of the agreement system in the Ayaski dialect were formed in the form of nominative agreement suffixes and clitics, respectively. Therefore, it can be claimed that the agreement system in this dialect is split. This splitness is the result of being sensitive to tense. The clitic in this dialect is a type of enclitic. Additionally, since the subject in this dialect cannot appear in the role of the host for nominative agreement clitics, these agreement clitics are referred to as “oblique clitics”. Initially, the formation of the nominative agreement in intransitive and transitive sentences with the “+present” tense was investigated. To obtain the agreement suffixes, the inflection of the intransitive verb *goftæn* “to say” was used. The verb identifiers were the same with the present stem in intransitive and transitive verbs. These identifiers refer to the subject, not the object, of the sentence. It is worth mentioning that these identifiers behave differently from the past stem. To determine the accusative agreement clitics in the Ayaski dialect, sentences without the presence of an explicit object were proposed. By removing the object, oblique clitics were used to agree with the object. In the mentioned examples, the nominative agreement that appeared as a suffix appeared before

the accusative agreement (clitical) in the verb structure. After determining the agreement mechanism of intransitive and transitive verbs with the subject, which was made with the present stem, it was determined how the same agreement with the past stem can be built. Unlike the “+present” tense, in the “+past” tense, the agreement does not appear as a suffix on the verb. All three grammatical positions (A, S and P) have a zero sign or take an oblique clitic. As observed, as the verb is not inflected, the presence of all separate pronouns is mandatory. To determine the oblique agreement clitics, intransitive verbs (such as *geristaen* “to cry”) were given as examples. Accusative clitics here are the same as accusative agreement clitics in the previous section. Then, examples with transitive verbs were presented without the presence of separate pronouns.

Conclusion

Based on the examples and analysis presented, it can be said that the agreement system in the Ayaski dialect has a different form according to the present or past tense; and as a result, it is split. In the unmarked form of the present tense, the agreement suffixes refer to the subject of the sentence. Agreement with the subject is formed through morphological affixes attached to the verb. That is, we witness a “direct agreement”. Therefore, it can be said that in this dialect, the nominative-accusative agreement is established in the present tense. This agreement does not depend on the intransitive or transitive verb, so the agreement system in the present tense is not sensitive to the transitivity of the verb. Accusative agreement is also manifested with the help of oblique agreement clitics. In the constructions obtained with the past stem of the verb, if the subject of the intransitive verb, the subject of the transitive verb and the object of the transitive verb are present in the sentence, all three syntactic positions are formed without agreement. However, if these three noun phrases are removed from the sentence, all three of them were formed with oblique enclitics. According to Comrie's five-fold system, the agreement system with the present tense in the Ayaski dialect belongs to the type “b” or nominative-accusative. But the agreement system with the past tense belongs to type “a” which is neutral.

Keywords: Language Typology; Agreement; Clitic; Suffix; Ayask

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