Contensive Typology and the Problem of Ergativity in Indo-Aryan

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The theoretical framework of the contensive typology elaborated in the works of G.A Klimov (e.g. 1973; 1976; 1977; 1983) has been widely criticized by Western scholars, particularly in the context of the ‘active’ languages. Despite the criticism, it appears that some of the ideas are still being reinterpreted (Wichmann 2008) and even applied to the reconstruction of the Proto-Indo-European alignment system (Bauer 2000; Lehmann 1989; 1995).

Within Klimov’s theory of ergativity (1973), the Indo-Aryan branch was assumed to have borrowed the ergative pattern from the neighboring Tibeto-Burman languages (as had been earlier suggested by Regamey (1954)). This line of thought was developed by Russian scholars (Zakharyin 1979; 1982), who tried to reconstruct the possible formation of ergativity in Indo-Aryan as an effect of syntactic borrowing reinforced by the possible existence of a language of the active typology, which was presumably spoken in the Himalayas and which must have assimilated with surrounding Indo-Aryan tongues.

The point of departure for the present paper is the question of whether we in fact have any language data which would support such claims. In order to give an initial answer, I propose examining briefly the inscriptions language sources of Eastern Pahari presented by Joshi (2009), which seem to show that the replacement of old synthetic markers by new postpositional ones actually served to maintain the continuity of the ergative and obligative patterns. It would also be feasible to demonstrate that the tendencies in the development of the ergative pattern in the Pahari tongues are different from those observed in the languages of the plains. Even though the content-oriented typologists consider the Indo-Aryan ergativity a shallow phenomenon, it will be interesting to see how some of their own main arguments, for example regarding the unidirectionality of alignment change (from active to ergative), can be reinterpreted.

Therefore, in opposition to the contensive typology claim, I will postulate that the ergative pattern in Indo-Aryan was not borrowed, but could have been reinforced due to foreign influence.

Then I would like to reexamine the set of anti-impersonal verbs (cf. Lazard 1985), which are conceived as an active residue in ergative languages (Klimov 1977). They constitute a well-attested phenomenon in the Indo-Aryan languages (Montaut 1991), and therefore a transition from active to ergative type within Indo-Aryan cannot be excluded.

References


Words: 379
In westernmost Indo-Aryan (Sindhi and neighbouring languages), Old Indo-Aryan unaspirated voiced stops are reflected as implosives (injectives) if they were preserved and not lost by internal lenition i.e., in initial position and when geminated by Middle Indo-Aryan cluster assimilation (cf. Turner 1924; Allen 1957). In neighbouring Panjabi, initial voiced aspirates are reinterpreted by plain voiceless stops, but there was no deaspiration in voiceless aspirates. This has been taken to mean that the voiced aspirates were never aspirated, but distinguished from the mediae by some other f The article raises the issues of neology and ecolinguistics. The authors specify the criteria of ecolinguistic approach to studying neologisms based on ecolinguistic monitoring which helps to elicit factors that influence the formation of new words, spheres in which they function in language as well as to define the type of new words and number of loanwords among them. The data under analysis is compiled by about 3,000 new words that appeared in English and Dutch in the last three decades. The authors elicit the main changes in the ecology of the Dutch language on different levels in the state development of ergativity in Indo-Aryan. It has usually been argued that ergativity could have been derived either from the passive or the originally PIE ergative construction. and areal typology shed new light on the problem. * This paper is a part of a research project which has been supported by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education grant N N104 2158 33.