**ARTICLES**

# SOME PHENOMENA OF INTER-LEVEL ISOMORPHISM IN THE GRAMMATICAL SYSTEMS OF ASIAN LANGUAGES

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The phenomena of the level-structure of languages, of the inter-level relations inside that structure are the main constituents of the problem of the systemic character of the language as a whole. Precisely the development of a systemic approach to language is one of the principally important achievements of linguistic science in the 20th century.

Such an approach is especially efficient and helpful, to my mind, when a linguist is investigating a language which is structurally far different from those, studied from the old times and reflected in traditional linguistic schemata. In a language description – especially in its complete grammar – each unit and structural model must be given a proper place on a proper level, with consideration of its syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations inside that particular system.

In grammatical descriptions we are used to distinguish two levels: morphological and syntactical. The units of the first are root morphemes and words containing grammatical morphemes, affixal and inflectional, which serve to render either syntactical or referential meanings. It is evident that such an approach is applicable to the languages with synthetic word-forms. Besides these forms constituting morphological level, there are analytical devices, also indicating grammatical meanings, such as: particles, articles, pre- and postpositions, auxiliary verbs, and other minor words. A nuclear lexical (full) word, joined with one such marker, makes a binary unit. It has some grammatical meaning, but is it a morphological form? For me, it is evidently not, even when it is a member of a paradigm together with synthetic word-forms (as in English: open, opens, opened, opening, but: will open, does open, have opened, etc.). The notions of "analytical forms" and "analytical morphology", together with corresponding terms, can be pragmatically, but limitedly used inside a definite language description. However in the typological comparison embracing also languages of analytical structure, such terms should not be used as common signifiers.

Therefore, together with the usual binary (but able to be spread) phrase models consisting of full words, definite models of binary units that consist of a lexical main word and a minor word, functioning as a *grammatical marker*, must be singled out and systemically described.

I usually use for them the term *grammatical complexes*.

The lexical phrases are generated by the lexical semantic valency of the main word, while the grammatical complexes are produced by the grammatical valency of the main word defined by its general distributive capacity as a member of a definite lexical class or subclass. Both kinds of binary units belong to the syntactic level being its lower sublevel below the higher clause and sentence sublevels.

These problems particularly attract attention when a typologist is comparing both synthetic languages with more or less rich morphology and analytical languages without real morphological processes.

Such short preliminary notes are to my mind necessary to be done in connection with the topic of this article where one aspect of inter-level relations is singled out and typologically considered.

Some specialists on agglutinative languages proposed a general concept of "a frequential", a kind of frequentation rule that stated the presence of some permanent interdependence between the structures of phrases and of word-forms derived by agglutination or inflection, or, in other words, between structures and units of the morphological and syntactical levels.

The conception seems to be worth of attention in view of the study of the other Asian languages, because their data allow us to further substantiate, expand and enrich this theory.

The idea of iso-morphism between the morphological and syntactical levels of language structure was firstly formulated by a prominent Russian Turkologist N. Baskakov. He wrote: "In the Turkic languages the morphological structure of words corresponds strictly to the syntactical structure of word-groups and sentences (the defining before the defined, the complement before the complemented, the grammatical subject before the grammatical predicate), and, in the system of derivation, the distribution of root morphemes and affixes follows the same order: the more abstract categories stand in postposition to the concrete ones – the defined categories stand in postposition to the defining ones"– [Baskakov 1975: 38-39] (translated by me – N. A.). As we see, this author generally identified the defined categories with the more abstract ones.

This idea was adopted and developed by the other specialists in agglutinative languages, the first to be mentioned are B. Serebrennikov and N. Gadjieva who wrote in their book: "The place of the verb in a Turkic sentence does not contradict the order of positions of affixes in a word. Verbs express wider notions. Therefore the consistently realized isomorphism characterizes the structure of the Turkic languages. The syntactical structure of the Turkic languages, explicable through their specific morphological structure, naturally supports the stability of agglutinative structure (cf. the evolution of possessive affixes in connection with the actual rule "the defining – the defined", the emergence of izafet,

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the reproduction of clitics etc.)" [Gadjieva & Serebrennikov 1986: 24-25] (translated by me – N. A.).

There is no doubt that some interesting correspondences have been shown in the works of the authors mentioned above. Certainly significant is the idea that the structure of the syntactical level "naturally supports the stability of the agglutinative structure", that is of the morphological level.

However to my mind the statement about "the consistently realized isomorphism" has not been sufficiently and quite convincingly proved.

The first example: the usual combination "noun + possessive suffix/clitic" evidently illustrates the model "the defined + the defining": Turk. *ev-i* "house-his" and is in contradiction to the prevailing Turkish rule of the preposition of attributes that is actually realized in case of a full possessive pronoun: Turk. *onun ev-i* (and is in coordination with the Malayan rule of the postposition of attributes: Malay *rumah-nya* "house-his").

One more example. Turkish verbs used as predicates in finite form take position at the very end of a sentence, while used as attributes in participle form they normally stand before the defined noun. The same goes for adjectives: yeni ev "new house", but: *Bu ev yenidir* "This house is new" (the suffix *-dir* marks predication). Should we agree that the relation "the concrete – the abstract" in the two given examples is reversed? Or that the notion of object (*ev* "house") is more abstract than the notion of quality (*yeni* "new"), as it stands in the same position as the suffix ( cf. *yeni ev* and *yeni-dir*)? On the contrary, the same word can be a nucleus or an attribute; being the attribute it makes the meaning of a phrase more narrow and concrete: *my friend's son – my son's friend; the beautiful landscape – the beauty of landscape.* I am afraid, we cannot adopt hereby any logical semantical interpretation. At the same time, the meanings of derivational and grammatical suffixes, locative and possessive clitics are beyond any doubt more abstract than any lexical meanings.

Therefore we must admit that the correlation between morphological and syntactical levels does not seem to be quite so straight-forward and self-evident even in the Turkic languages which had given impulse to the ideas about isomorphism. Furthermore, if our understanding of concrete meanings of nominal words and abstract meanings of non-nominal, predicative words is adopted, than it seems more appropriate to speak about some kind of reversed isomorphism, not denying completely the idea of correlation existing as such. And we must bind our investigation firstly to the structure of subordinative phrases, or word-groups, binary as well as spread, and not to the clause models as whole, though the position of the predicate-verb is of importance also. In the Turkic languages we will speak about the left-sided dependent unit in a word-group (attribute + noun, object noun + verb) and about the right-sided affixal unit, i.e. suffix, inside a word.

The possessive clitics behave as suffixes, despite their attributive semantics. For example: *Turk-Azeri*: Men senden menim o iki kitabimi almadim( I you-FROM that/those two my book+my receive-not-PAST) "I have not received those two my books from you".

This rule mutatis mutandis is correct as a frequential for various languages. As the further comparing will follow with Malay/Indonesian, an Austronesian language, it seems necessary to give comments on the varieties of agglutination. The more usual and known to the linguists agglutination of the Altaic type, that exists in the Turkic, Mongolian and Japanese languages, includes the presence of suffixes only, a rich system of grammatical and derivational models of suffixation, many phenomena of synharmonism. The Austronesian type of agglutination is characterized by the prevalence of prefixes, important role of infixes and suffixes, specific nazalization at the prefix+base border, syncretism of grammatical and derivational functions of affixes, disyllabic structure of the majority of root morphemes.

In Malay/Indonesian and many other AN languages dependent words are on the right and affixes are on the left side, that is, they are prefixes. As to Malay, it has some classes of dependent words standing in preposition to nuclear nouns (numerals and quantitative attributes) and at the same time it has 3 suffixes and 3 pronoun clitics.

E.g.:

*Malay:* Saya belum menerima dua buku saya itu dari kamu (I not-yet ACTIVE-receive two book I/my that from you) "I have not yet received those two my books from you".

A note can be added that in the word-group constructions we can see their components join in more compact, more integral units if the dependent/defining words stand on one side of the nuclear word, while affixes and other clitics are put on its other side: kitab al*madim*; *men*erima buku.

Probably this internal rule helps the relations between sentence parts to be expressed by a speaker and to be perceived by a listener more easily.

In comparison to Turkish and Malay, the situation is much more complicated in Tagalog where the dependent words can be both in pre- and postposition and affixes also are prefixes, infixes and suffixes; the latter are less numerous but are used with great frequency. This language, though also agglutinative, does not give any confirmation to the concept of isomorphism. Nor does Russian that is so different from Tagalog in morphological structure! Is there a bit of common feature in these two languages? One feature can be named: rather great freedom of word-order. And herein the rule of isomorphism demonstrates its negative implication: no stable position of elements in word-groups is naturally connected with no prevalence of prefixes or suffixes.

In view of the great role of analytical devices in the languages of Southeast Asia – many of them are 100% analytical – I have tried to consider the question from one more side, in connection with the wide use in these languages of grammatical markers with specific meanings: syntactical (actant/case, attribution) and referential (tense/aspect, space, modality) that are used in specific syntactical binary units – *grammatical complexes* mentioned above. Various sorts of words can function as grammatical markers: special minor words, including locatives, possessive clitics, prepositions and postpositions, various particles, and some full words which mainly have rather abstract meanings or lost con-

crete components of their semantics: for example: *Malay*: sudah (1)"accomplished", (2) temporal / aspect marker; hampir (1) "to come, approach", (2) phase marker "almost"; Viet: con (1) "child"; (2) classifier; o' (1) "to be somewhere", (2) preposition with wide locative meaning made concrete by neighbouring words.

The analytical grammatical markers usually form a paradigm, a privative opposition at least, with definite grammatical or grammatical-like meanings; therefore they can, to some degree, be compared to morphological elements – prefixes and suffixes. From this point of view whithin the syntactical level (just syntactical, as no morphology exists) an analogy can be seen to the rule of the reversed isomorphism; some correlation is found between the two syntactical sublevels: between the positions of nuclear words in binary phrases, that is free combinations of lexemes, and in binary grammatical complexes containing analytical grammatical markers. For instance, in highly analytical Vietnamese, Khmer, Thai and Cham the dependent words in phrases stand in postposition, while the grammatical markers in complexes are in preposition to nuclei. A similar situation occurs in Malay/Indonesian, where, besides affixes, grammatical meanings are expressed by several inventories of prepositional analytical markers.

There is an opposite situation in Chinese with its preposition of dependent words in attributive phrases: the grammatical markers stand in postposition; most of them adhere to verbs and there is one suffix for nouns (rendering plurality). The regressive word-order rule in Chinese is not applied to verbs with object complements, the main sentence structure being S-V-O. The position of verbal predicates in Burmese and Kachin sentences is final (S-O-V) with the object complement on the left and all the verbal referential (in Kachin also personal) markers on the right.

The consideration of the enumerated correlations between morphological structures from one side and various syntactical models from the other side shows the complexity of the problem of isomorphism.

Perhaps considering such languages as Malay there is enough ground to speak about a frequential rule of direct structural isomorphism in the sphere of expressing grammatical relations, that is between affixed words and analytical grammatical complexes. This direct relation exists in interaction with the reversed correlation between the two grammatical structures and free syntactical word-groups and phrases.

In Malay/Indonesian the neutral position of predicate verb is after the subject, though it can be freely put before it, but for the AN languages generally, including other Malayic idioms, the initial position of such a verb is the most usual.

As a general conclusion I propose to express some rule – also frequential, not universal – regarding the interrelation between language levels in the following two formulas:

1. Suffixes and postpositional grammatical markers correlate with left-sided, prepositional dependent words in phrases (attributes to nouns and actant nouns to verbs); the predicate verb is in the final clause position.

2. Prefixes and prepositional grammatical markers correlate with right-sided, postpositional dependent words in phrases; the predicate verb is in the initial clause position.

The exposed approach encourages a diachronic supposition that in the direct correlation between the structures of affixed words and analytical grammatical complexes some potential exists in the language evolution, namely, for the direct transformation of free morphemes (grammatical markers) into bound ones as affixes are. This is highly possible and actually shown by the investigations for possessive and locative bound morphemes, but in many other cases the known reconstructed facts of evolution do not give evident and solid testimony for such transformations. Anyhow this is already leading us away from the purpose of this article to consider synchronic language structure.

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