

**Locative cases of the dual number of nouns in Forest Enets:  
a case study of ‘postpositional cases’**

The goal of the talk is to clarify the situation regarding the locative cases of the dual number in Forest Enets (FE). It has been reported many times (see, e.g. Tereščenko 1974, Mikola 2004:104) that Northern Samoyedic languages have no synthetic forms of dual locative cases (dative, ablative, locative, prolative), whereas there are corresponding singular and plural forms. These dual case forms are claimed to be built analytically using postpositions which serve functionally in the same way as synthetic case markers. However, based on the existing literature this claim seems to be true for Nenets, which has only the postpositional stem *nʹa-* for the dual locative cases (see Salminen 1997:118), but not for Nganasan, for which a variety of postpositions used in this context is reported (see Tereščenko 1979:73). No special research on this topic has been conducted previously for Enets, although Tereščenko (1966:442–443) reports the forms *ne?* for dative, *nen* for locative, *nez* for ablative and *neɹn* for prolative, and Prokof'ev (1937:80–83) describes the same forms as case affixes.

During field research on this topic, three issues were checked.

First, given that Enets is a strongly endangered language, it was checked whether the constructions in question exist in contemporary FE: both the dual number itself and complex constructions tend to disappear early.

Eliciting grammatical data with speakers of FE showed that although sometimes they avoided building the constructions in question, generally the postpositional forms of the dual number of the locative cases were readily produced, cf. in (1a-c) the dative forms for singular (1a), plural (1b) and dual (1c) number:

- (1) a. *kasa-xa-nʹ*    *ede-ma-zʹ*  
sibling-DAT.SG-OBL.SG.1SG      *be\_glad-AOR-1SG.S*<sup>1</sup>  
‘I was glad to (see) my brother’.
- b.     *kaʃi-xi-nʹ*    *ede-ma-zʹ*  
sibling.PL.POSS-DAT.PL-PL/DU.1SG      *be\_glad-AOR-1SG.S*  
‘I was glad to (see) my brothers’.
- c.     *kasa-xu-nʹ*    *ne-?*    *ede-ma-zʹ*  
sibling-DU-PL/DU.1SG      PS.DU-DAT      *be\_glad-AOR-1SG.S*  
‘I was glad to (see) my (two) brothers’.

Examples of the analytic dual locative cases in natural texts are not numerous, but still exist, and this strongly confirms the genuineness of these constructions.

Second, the morphological features of the postpositions that have the function of the markers of the dual locative cases were analyzed in order to see if there are any arguments to describe them as postpositions / analytical markers or as case affixes. There is strong evidence that the markers in question have significantly more phonological and morphological independence than affixes.

The phonological independence can be shown by the following facts. First, between the form of the dual number and the postpositional markers of the locative cases a short pause is possible. Second, the postpositional markers of the locative cases can have an independent stress. Both

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<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviations are used: 1 – 1<sup>st</sup> person, ABL – ablative, AOR – ‘indefinite tense’, DAT – dative, DU – dual, NOM – nominative, OBL – oblique cases, PL – plural, PL.POSS – stem for plural possessive forms, PS – postposition, S – ‘subjective’ conjugation, SG – singular.

options are absolutely impossible for the standard case affixes that are used in the other parts of the case-number paradigm.

The morphological independence becomes apparent in coordinated constructions. When two nouns in a locative case of the dual number are coordinated, the postpositional case marker may be used only once for the whole coordinated construction, as in (2). This is not possible for the standard cases affixes in FE.

- (2) mod<sup>i</sup> bunki-xu-n<sup>i</sup> te-xu-n<sup>i</sup> ne-ʔ tɔxa-zʔ  
 I dog-DU-PL/DU.1SG reindeer-DU-PL/DU.1SG PS.DU-DAT get\_used-1SG.S  
 ‘I got used to my (two) dogs and to my (two) reindeer’.

I am not aware of any facts that would, on the contrary, provide phonological or morphological evidence that the postpositions used to form the dual locative cases have any features that would distinguish them from other postpositions.

Third, potential variation between different postpositions used to fill the functional slot of the locative cases of the dual number was investigated. I checked if it is correct to make a statement about a functional correspondence in FE of the singular and plural locative cases on the one hand and of the dual combinations with *ne*-postpositions on the other hand. According to my field data, the distribution of the postpositional dual locative cases is exactly the same as the distribution of the synthetic singular and plural locative cases, and there is no variation between different postpositions used to build these forms for the dual number. For example, in (1c) and (2) the dual postpositional dative is used to mark the arguments of the verbs that determine lexically this case frame and combine also with singular and plural dative. In (3a) the lexically determined plural ablative is used, whereas in (3b) the postpositional dual ablative is used in the same context.

- (3) a. bunki-xit seju-j kan<sup>i</sup>  
 dog-ABL.PL heart-NOM.SG.1SG leave.3SG.S  
 ‘I was frightened of the dogs (lit. My heart left from the dogs)’.
- b. bunki-xiʔ ne-z seju-j kan<sup>i</sup>  
 dog-DU PS.DU-ABL heart-NOM.SG.1SG leave.3SG.S  
 ‘I was frightened of the (two) dogs (lit. My heart left from the (two) dogs)’.

Summarizing, I show that the description of the postpositional dual locative cases in FE as analytical case forms built with postpositions is correct, however paradoxical this may seem. The forms in focus indeed consist of two independent phonological words and therefore are built analytically with a postposition that is an auxiliary element. At the same time, these analytical constructions fill the same functional slot as corresponding synthetic singular and plural forms and therefore are a part of the basic case-number paradigm of the FE nouns.

## References

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